Dialog on Language Instruction
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Editor
Jiaying Howard

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I am pleased to write a foreword to this very special issue of Dialogue on Language Instruction. That pleasure comes from several sources.

First, it is satisfying to see that DLI’s investment in the academic preparation and support of its faculty has had such a significant benefit. It is also satisfying to know that these authors (faculty members) continued, in a number of cases, their doctoral studies through self-funding when DLI funding had to be curtailed, thanks to a deep commitment to self-development, the improvement of knowledge, and, in Army terms, to be all that they could be. Well-done!

Second, it is a pleasure to see the diversity that these dissertations represent. We are indeed a multi-cultural, multi-oriented, multi-talented group of professionals who bring a wide range of perspectives to our mission of educating the cryptologic linguists, foreign area officers, and language and culture experts of tomorrow, on whose skills our national defense relies.

Finally, it is an immense pleasure to know that DLI has the kinds of talent and the kinds of thinkers that these doctoral dissertation abstracts represent. This talent is needed for the challenges that lie ahead. This talent will take us to the next level of proficiency — in teaching.

My congratulations to those who have put in the effort to do the study and writing required to reach this level of academic standing, and my thanks to all of you (authors of these dissertations) who have shared your work with all of us.

I encourage others to follow in your footsteps. There is no better time than now to begin climbing the stairway to the next (and highest) academic level. The Provost Office is here to provide guidance and help for the next generation of “doctors.”

Betty Lou Leaver, PhD
Provost
DLIFLC
This special issue of *Dialog on Language Instruction* contains 19 doctoral dissertation abstracts, contributed by faculty and staff at the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC) who attained doctoral degrees between 2005 and 2015. The studies explore innovative approaches in language curriculum, methods, assessment, technological integration, learning strategies, teacher training, and program administration. The critical questions and valuable findings stated in these studies spark our curiosity and imagination, and move us towards a deeper and better understanding of teaching and learning foreign languages.

In addressing curriculum design, instructional techniques, and material development, De Santis (pp. 25-27) examines whether *textual enhancement* facilitates acquisition of grammatical forms by drawing learner attention to form and meaning; Cobb (pp. 16-19) investigates the effectiveness of *focused oral-communication tasks* that generate student interaction in the classroom for mastery of specific grammatical features; Friedman (pp. 34-37) explores the practice and benefits of *distorted audio transcription* during the early stages of foreign language learning; Dzakula (pp. 28-31) analyzes the role of *explicit counterinsurgency training* in raising students’ pragmatic competence in intercultural negotiations; Abdrabo (pp. 5-8) focuses on aspects of the curriculum for the Arabic special assistance program.

Viewing technological integration as a complex, integrated process involving people, procedures, ideas, devices, and organizations, Khoshaba (pp. 41-44) inspects the effect of instructional technology on listening and speaking proficiency; Qasem (pp. 57-60) studies the relationship between teacher belief in student-centered learning and the use of educational technology; Larsen (pp. 45-48) studies how foreign language instructors and administrators assess their own technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge, which is vital to effective technology integration; Saleh (pp. 61-62) reports on an endeavor to improve the student learning experience by using technological devices.

Focusing on learning strategies, Bairaqdar (pp. 9-11) delves into the connection between speaking strategies and speaking proficiency; McCaw’s research (pp. 53-56) expands to a broader sphere: the impact of learning strategies (cognitive, memory, compensation, affective, social, and metacognitive) on language proficiency in listening, reading, and speaking; De Hoyos’s study (pp. 20-24) concentrates on learning strategies and effective listening skills.
Hsueh’s investigation (pp. 38-40) of the ways in which the learning environment is impacted by the instructor’s technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge, Bey’s emphasis (pp. 12-15) on the importance of practice teaching in pre-service teacher training programs, Tovar’s research (pp. 68-72) into effective evaluation strategies and processes, Fahmy’s examination (pp. 32-33) of dynamic assessment, Lyu’s study (pp. 49-51) of the acquisition of linguistic forms, Jravani’s survey (pp. 63-67) of the format of homework assignments, and Zhang’s inquiry (pp. 73-76) into spirituality in living with an acquired physical disability convincingly demonstrate the breadth, depth, and complexity of foreign language education.

This special issue provides readers an encapsulated view of the full-length dissertations now available for study in the Aiso Library’s collection of Theses and Dissertations. All are valuable resources for advancing our knowledge of language teaching and learning.

Jiaying Howard, PhD
Editor
Dialog on Language Instruction
Learners' Beliefs about the Strengths and Weaknesses of the Modern Standard Arabic Special Assistance Program in Semester One at the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center

Dissertation Abstract

Nasr D. Abdrabo

This study investigates the strengths and weaknesses of the current Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) Special Assistance Program (SAP) during Semester One at the Defense Language Institute, Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC) and makes recommendations for improving this program in the future. The researcher, a specialist in applied linguistics, L2 acquisition theories and applications, is an Assistant Professor in the Middle East School One (UMA) at the DLIFLC, in assessing and assisting students of MSA and Egyptian dialects to move confidently from the second stage of their cognitive development — other regulation — to the final stage — self-regulation. The study consists of the following five chapters:

Chapter One: Introduction
Chapter Two: Literature Review
Chapter Three: Research Methodology and Design
Chapter Four: Findings
Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendations

Chapter One covers an overview of the study; the problem statement; purpose of the study; the researcher's conceptual framework; the two theoretical foundations of the study: Sociocultural Theory of Mind (SCT) and Communicative Language Teaching Theory (CLT); the study assumptions; research questions; definition of terms; limitations of the study; delimitations of the study; and significance of the study.

Chapter Two focuses on Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Mind (SCT) as well as its four core components: mediation, internalization, imitation and, most importantly, the zone of proximal development (ZPD). It also highlights scaffolding as external instructional assistance taking place within the learners' ZPDs; scaffolding as a formative assessment tool; semantic encoding and schema theory; teaching FL in the learners' ZPDs; scaffolding techniques and
strategies; K-W-L (Know-What-Learn) Strategy; CMRBA (Cause, Means, Result-based-Analysis) Strategy; the origin and development of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as well as the application of CLT in L2 acquisition.

Chapter Three explains the research method and design: A descriptive qualitative study using a phenomenological approach to illuminate and identify the beliefs of the participants — its strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations for the current Special Assistance Program. Thirty participants were recruited from the three Arabic schools at DLIFLC as follows: 10 from Middle East School I; 10 from Middle East School II; and 10 from Middle East School III, who were from the four U.S. military services — the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps. They participated in three focus-group sessions during which the researcher-developed instrument was used. The instrument included eight semi-structured questions addressed to the participants during each focus group session.

This chapter also addresses the validity and reliability of the study; i.e., credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability; methodological limitations; data collection procedures; protection of human subjects; and data analysis and interpretation.

Chapter Four summarizes the study's methodology, participant demographics, instrumentation, and presentation of data. Participants responded to eight semi-structured questions:

Q1. What does your teacher do to help you develop your listening comprehension (LC) during the Special Assistance sessions?
Q2. What does your teacher do to help you develop your reading comprehension (RC) during the Special Assistance sessions?
Q3. What does your teacher do to help you develop your speaking (SP) skill during the Special Assistance sessions?
Q4. What does your teacher do to help you develop your writing (WR) skill during the Special Assistance sessions?
Q5. What can your teacher do to improve the way s/he helps you develop your LC during the Special Assistance sessions?
Q6. What can your teacher do to improve the way s/he helps you develop your RC during the Special Assistance sessions?
Q7. What can your teacher do to improve the way s/he helps you develop your SP skill during the Special Assistance sessions?
Q8. What can your teacher do to improve the way s/he helps you develop your WR skill during the Special Assistance sessions?

The purpose of addressing these eight semi-structured questions was to elicit the participants’ responses that would answer the three research questions:

1. What do learners see as the strengths of the Modern Standard Arabic Special Assistance Program in Semester One?
2. What do learners see as the weaknesses of the Modern Standard Arabic Special Assistance Program in Semester One?
3. What recommendations do learners believe would improve the current Modern Standard Arabic Special Assistance Program in Semester One?

The participants’ responses to the eight semi-structured open-ended questions were transcribed and analyzed by means of NVivo 10 for Windows. The coding format, following a method of independent analysis, featured four emerging themes/categories:

Themes

1. Listening
2. Reading
3. Speaking
4. Writing

Each of the themes generates three nodes:

Nodes

a. Strengths
b. Weaknesses
3. Recommendations

A total of 12 nodes were generated pertaining participants’ perceptions of the strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations of the Modern Standard Arabic Special Assistance Program in Semester One:

1. Listening comprehension (LC) strengths during special assistance sessions.
2. Reading comprehension (RC) strengths during special assistance sessions.
3. Speaking (SP) strengths during special assistance sessions.
4. Writing (WR) strengths during special assistance sessions.
5. Listening comprehension (LC) weaknesses during special assistance sessions.
6. Reading comprehension (RC) weaknesses during special assistance sessions.
7. Speaking (SP) weaknesses during special assistance sessions.
8. Writing (WR) weaknesses during special assistance sessions.
9. Listening comprehension (LC) recommendations for future special assistance sessions.
10. Reading comprehension (RC) recommendations for future special assistance sessions.
11. Speaking (SP) recommendations for future special assistance sessions.
12. Writing (WR) recommendations for future special assistance sessions.
Chapter Five concludes the study by providing recommendations to DLIFLC instructors, the profession, and future research. The recommendations address issues in teaching MSA at the DLIFLC in general and in the Special Assistance Program in particular. Among the issues are teaching methodology; selection of appropriate authentic materials; teaching and learning strategies in all skills; and understanding students' learning styles and modalities.

It also recommends that the DLIFLC Arabic schools conduct more descriptive qualitative studies, using the phenomenological approach. Investigating the strengths and weaknesses of the Special Assistance Program and students’ recommendations during Semesters II and III will also help evaluate this program more broadly to benefit future participants. Finally, L2 learning and teaching strategies are recommended as topics for future research in the language schools at the DLIFLC.

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The Impact of Speaking Strategies on the Speaking Proficiency of Arabic Language Adult Learners

Dissertation Abstract

Marwan Bairaqdar

Speaking is considered a crucial skill in foreign language learning since it is the means by which a person gets to know the target language. Mastery of speaking is deemed solid evidence of second language acquisition. This skill has a strong effect on language learning and the learner’s developmental ability.

The purpose of this study was to identify strategies that help foreign language learners attain proficiency in speaking Arabic. Studies have revealed the positive impact of applying language learning strategies on improving speaking proficiency. O’Malley and Chamot (1990) succeeded in training their learners in metacognitive, cognitive, and social-affective strategies for improving their speaking skills. Dornyei (1995) was also successful in teaching his Hungarian learners the use of communication strategies in speaking a foreign language.

According to Mendez (2011), speaking strategies that can help improve a learner’s speaking proficiency are considered vital components of language learning strategies. Speaking strategies are essential in language learning; they are oral communication strategies or conversational tools used by learners to communicate in the target language in varying situations, or to solve communication problems. Verbal strategies, such as verbal circumlocution, are used to compensate for a communication breakdown or to enhance communication; these strategies often help students achieve higher scores on their speaking tests. They also help foreign language learners “in negotiating meaning where either structure or sociolinguistic rules are not shared between a second language learner and a speaker of the target language” (O’Malley & Chamot, 1990, p. 43). Numerous studies have reported considerable use of speaking strategies by students and the impact on their speaking proficiency (Chen, 2007).

Nakatani (2005) emphasizes the importance of speaking strategies in foreign language learning. He states that speaking strategies help students achieve significant development in their oral test results. Stern (1992) also refers to the importance of communicative strategies in keeping the course of communication...
going. He recommends the use of speaking strategies, such as paraphrasing or asking for repetition or explanation, as a way to avoid interrupting the course of communication. These strategies allow learners to use verbal or nonverbal instruments to facilitate the transfer of knowledge. A speaker usually uses such strategies when facing some trouble facilitating communication, such as difficulty in carrying on a conversation or causing misunderstanding among other participants in a conversation. Under these circumstances, a speaker can employ communicative knowledge to remain active in the conversation.

Alcaya, Lybeck, and Mougel (1994) classify three speaking strategies—pre-speaking, speaking, and post-speaking. The pre-speaking (before speaking) strategies are subdivided into those used for lowering anxiety (relaxation), preparing and planning (purpose of speaking), and planning responses and contributions (organizing thoughts). Speaking strategies are further subdivided into strategies for feeling in control, staying involved in the conversation, and monitoring performance. Post-speaking strategies are subdivided into evaluating speaking performance and planning future tasks (Alcaya et al., 1994).

This is a descriptive type of research that uses a mixed-method approach in understanding the impact of speaking strategies on speaking proficiency of adult Arabic language learners. The participants in this study included students of the Arabic, Levantine, and Iraqi Basic Courses who outlined strategies that helped them improve their speaking proficiency at varying levels (ILR levels 1, 1+, and 2). Based on their study of the MSA and Arabic Dialects in the basic courses and the strategies that helped them to improve their speaking proficiency, the participants provided information that enabled the researcher conduct an effective investigation of the impact these strategies had on the speaking proficiency of adult learners.

The researcher developed a questionnaire, conducted an in-depth oral interview, and conducted focus group discussions to elicit information from students based on their performance in the course. These methods were used to find a solution for improving students’ speaking proficiency based on their speaking performance at the beginning and the end of Semester II.

The study’s findings have provided foreign language teachers with valuable data in teaching speaking skills to adult foreign language learners. These speaking strategies could very well help learners in increasing the quality and efficiency of their listening and reading comprehension. Finally, the use of speaking strategies might also facilitate students to achieve Level 2 in speaking proficiency that is now required by the DLIFLC’s new graduation standards.
Note

1. The reference list is included in the full text of the dissertation.

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Marwan Bairaqdar, Ed. D. (Argosy University). Associate Professor, Middle East School II, Undergraduate Education, Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center. Specializations: Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and Levantine instruction, Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) testing. Email: marwan.bairaquadar@dliflc.edu
An Evaluation of the Impact of the Preservice Teacher Education Program at the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center on the Foreign Language Teaching Beliefs of Preservice Language Instructors

Dissertation Abstract

Claudia Bey

Statement of the Problem

The beliefs of preservice teachers about teaching and learning have been of central interest to teacher educators, because these teachers can be resistant to change and act as filters for information provided in teacher preparation programs (Brody, 1998; Calderhead, 1996; Fang, 1996; Hollingsworth 1989; Holt-Reynolds, 1992; Richardson, 1996, 2003; Tabachnick & Zeichner, 1984). Teacher beliefs are defined as those mental constructs that drive actions in the classroom and comprise the roles of the teacher and learner and the foreign-language teaching methodology (Richardson, 2003).

Long before prospective teachers enter a professional preparation program, they have formed beliefs about what constitutes good teaching (Levin & He, 2008; Minor, Onwuegbuzie, Witcher, & James, 2002; Richardson, 2003; Tsang, 2004; Virta, 2002). These beliefs stem from the thousands of hours in classrooms, a phenomenon that Lortie (1975) referred to as the “apprenticeship of observation.” A multitude of studies researched the impact of this apprenticeship and concluded that teacher preparation programs are a “weak intervention” (Richardson, 2003). Because the view that preexisting beliefs about teaching and learning are, by their very nature, almost impenetrable, an extensive debate exists about the effectiveness of teacher education programs in the literature. Kagan (1992b) criticized that teachers leave such programs with the same beliefs with which they entered (cf. Borko & Putnam, 1996; Hollingsworth, 1989; Holt-Reynolds, 1992). Recently, however, there have been several studies that suggest that teacher education programs can change beliefs and attitudes of teaching candidates (Bramald, Hardman, & Leat, 1995; Farrell, 2009; Leavy, McSorley, & Bote, 2006; Levin & He, 2008).
At the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC), a wide variety of foreign languages are taught by native speakers who have learned English as a foreign language in their home countries. Their perspectives on language teaching and learning were shaped by the cultural and educational contexts of their countries, which might differ greatly from those in the United States. The preservice program at DLIFLC is designed to bring about a change of perspective in the educational beliefs of the novice teachers in the course of a 4-week intensive preservice program; in the light of the scholarly literature, this endeavor might prove futile.

The purpose of this study was to examine the transformative effects of the preservice teacher-education program at DLIFLC on the foreign-language teaching beliefs of preservice teachers using the theory of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1990, 2000). This theory specifically addresses the learning processes of adults who have established ways of thinking and viewing the world, or frames of reference. Transformation can occur because of a single incident that cannot be integrated into the existing meaning frames or through incremental processes that involve transforming habits of the mind. These incremental processes are supported by critical self-reflection and reflective discourse with others to create an awareness of one’s perspectives, and thus make them available for scrutiny and transformation. For example, the question of what it means to be a good foreign-language teacher could be explored in the preservice program.

**Methodology**

**Research Design.** This evaluation study used a pre/posttest designed to examine the transformative effects of the preservice teacher education program at DLIFLC on the foreign language teaching beliefs of preservice teachers. The research was conducted during four iterations of the Instructor Certification Course (ICC) that took place during the months of January to April, 2011. The survey method was chosen to obtain direct responses from preservice course participants about their views on the importance of various training techniques, the teaching approaches they experienced as language learners, and on their beliefs about foreign language teaching.

**Population and Sample.** The population of the study is defined as all foreign language teachers enrolled in the ICC given at the DLIFLC in Monterey, CA over a 4-month period. During the time of this study, there were 103 civilian and military prospective foreign-language teachers enrolled in the course. A total of 89 teachers submitted both the pre- and the post-ICC Foreign Language Teaching Beliefs Survey (FLTBS).

**Instrumentation.** The researcher developed a pre-course and a post-course instrument based on the BALLI by Horwitz (1985) and The Effective Foreign Language Teacher (Bell, 2005). The researcher-generated FLTBS instrument
was used to obtain data about what preservice language teachers believe about communicative language teaching (CLT) methods and, specifically about (a) the role of the teacher, (b) the use of the target language, (c) methods of error correction, (d) drills and memorization, (e) the teaching of grammar, (f) the teaching of vocabulary, and (g) the value of pair and group work.

The pre-course survey consists of three parts that address the foreign-language learning experiences and foreign-language teaching beliefs of the survey participants. The second part of the instrument consists of 35 items about different aspects of foreign language teaching such as the role of the target language, error correction, the teaching of grammar, and vocabulary. Demographic information such as gender, age, and previous teaching experience was collected in the third part of the FLTBS.

The post-training survey contains the same 35 items about foreign language teaching beliefs as the pre-training survey, with an additional item that asked survey takers to select which activities in the methods course were most influential for their current perspectives about foreign-language teaching. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics and yielded the following findings.

**Findings**

Findings from this study suggest that the beliefs of foreign-language teachers might have changed after the preservice program. These findings, however, have to be interpreted with caution, given the limitations of the one group pre/posttest design. The newly formed beliefs about foreign-language teaching predominantly reflected communicative foreign-language teaching pedagogy as propagated by professional foreign language teacher organizations (ACTFL) and the field of second-language acquisition. Despite the claim that educational experiences are the source of teacher beliefs, this study found no association between these two variables. Furthermore, preservice teachers favored lesson planning and practice teaching, rating them most influential for their views about foreign language teaching at the end of the ICC.

This is the only study to date that investigates the effectiveness of a short, intensive teacher preparation program that is situated in the work context of the attendees, and that emphasizes critical reflection and integrated practice teaching. It focuses on a heretofore under-researched population of teachers of less commonly taught languages, who are native speakers of these languages and migrated to the United States.
Conclusions

The findings of the study may warrant the cautious conclusion that beliefs about teaching foreign languages might be amenable to change due to the influences of a teacher education program. The preservice program at DLIFLC contains elements of critical reflection, integrates practice-teaching opportunities in the actual context of a teacher’s work assignments, and models effective teaching practices in the course. It might be possible that these factors could have triggered a transformation of beliefs.

To enhance the transformative effect of a teacher preparation program such as the ICC, it is recommended that multiple opportunities for practice teaching be incorporated. These teaching events combined with reflection before action and after action (Boud, 2001, Tillema, 2000) could be powerful change agents.

Note

1. A complete list of references can be found in the dissertation.

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Meta-Analysis of the Effectiveness of Task-Based Interaction in Form-Focused Instruction of Adult Learners in Foreign and Second Language Teaching

Dissertation Abstract

Marina Cobb

The issue of what constitutes effective grammar instruction frequently gives rise to heated debates in the field of foreign and second language teaching. Previous research into the effectiveness of task-based interaction in acquisition of specific grammatical structures of the target language has been scarce and sometimes has presented conflicting findings. This study employed a meta-analytic approach to examine research into the effectiveness of focused oral-communication tasks involving student interaction in the classroom as an instructional technique for improving mastery of specific grammatical features (i.e., target structures).

The present meta-analysis involved quasi-experimental and experimental studies where the treatment included teaching of foreign or second language grammar through interactive classroom practice activities that by design predispose learners toward using specific targeted structures repeatedly, but, unlike mechanical drills, require the learners to engage in exchange of real meaning. Even though the terms used to refer to this type of practice may vary in the SLA literature, all of these activities are similar in the following sense: (a) they combine focus on specific target structures with focus on meaning, (b) the learners are given a nonlinguistic purpose for their interaction, for example, to solve a real-world problem; predict, negotiate, come up with a joint plan of action; and so forth, as opposed to drills where utterances are formed exclusively for language-display purposes, and (c) there is an observable outcome, that is, the solution to a problem; prediction, plan, ranked list, schedule; and so forth.

The effectiveness of task-based-interaction treatments used in the primary studies was assessed by means of the basic index for the effect-size value, Cohen’s $d$, that is, standardized mean difference. The effect-size values were calculated by subtracting the mean of the control or comparison group from the mean of the experimental (task-based-interaction) group and dividing the difference by the pooled standard deviation. For a subset of studies that
investigated pretest to posttest score differences for a single group, Cohen’s $d$ was calculated as the *standardized mean gain* by dividing the mean gain value (i.e., the difference between the mean posttest and the mean pretest scores) by the pooled standard deviation of the pre- and posttest values. The resulting standardized-mean-gain effect-size values and standardized-mean-difference effect-size values were aggregated and analyzed separately.

Following the established practice for research syntheses and meta-analyses in the field of language teaching and learning (meta-analyses by Keck et al., 2006; Mackey & Goo, 2007; Norris & Ortega, 2000), the overall mean effect size for the task-based interaction was interpreted as a suggestive (rather than definitive) finding. Differences between specific task-based-interaction treatments, (e.g., presence of explicit grammar instruction in the pretask or posttask stage), participants (e.g., L1, proficiency level, age, etc.), target TL grammatical structures (e.g., whether they are morphological or syntactic, simple or complex, etc.), outcome measures (i.e., types of pre- and posttests used in the studies) as well as characteristics pertaining to study research designs were treated as potential moderator variables that mediate effects of task-based interaction. Therefore, multiple separate analyses were completed for subsets of studies that shared certain coded substantive or methodological characteristics.

The following were the research questions that the present meta-analysis addressed:

1. To what extent is oral task-based interaction that occurs in focused (structure-based) communication tasks (in FL and L2 instruction of adult learners) effective (i.e., how large is the standardized-mean-difference effect size resulting from task-based interaction treatments compared with other types of grammar instruction for the learners’ acquisition of the target grammatical structure)?
2. Is the standardized-mean-gain effect size (i.e., effect size based on the pre- to posttest differences) larger for task-based interaction treatments as compared with other types of grammar instruction?
3. Is there a difference in effect-size values based on the type of focused communication task (e.g., information-gap vs. opinion-gap, closed vs. open, etc.) used in the task-based interaction treatment?
4. Is there a difference in effect-size values based on other factors such as the type of grammatical structure targeted by the task-based-interaction treatment, duration of instruction as well as miscellaneous other teacher-related, learner-related, and contextual variables?
5. Is there a difference in effect-size values based on what type of outcome measure (i.e., posttest measuring acquisition of the target grammatical structure) was used in the primary research study (e.g., metalinguistic judgment vs. selected response vs. oral-communication task)?
Previous meta-analyses had provided some evidence of effectiveness of task-based interaction in learners’ morphosyntactic development (Keck, Iberri-Shea, Tracy-Ventura, & Wa-Mbaleka, 2006; Mackey & Goo, 2007). The present meta-analysis adopted a somewhat different perspective from one or both of the previous meta-analyses through the following features: exclusion of studies that focus only on effects of corrective feedback, inclusion of both published and unpublished studies to expand the search domain, imposing of more stringent criteria for oral-communication tasks, focusing on adult learners and face-to-face, rather than computer-mediated interaction, and so forth.

The meta-analyst reviewed all published and unpublished (e.g., doctoral dissertations) studies in the domain to identify those that fit the research purpose. Only 15 primary studies were included in the meta-analysis based on the rather stringent inclusion criteria established for its purpose. On average, learners who received task-based interaction treatments through completing focused oral-communication tasks with native or nonnative interlocutors performed better than learners who received no focused instruction in the target structure and somewhat better than learners who received other types of instruction such as traditional grammar instruction, input processing activities, and so forth. The effect sizes were medium and small, respectively. Both the learners who received task-based interaction and those who received other instruction showed large within-group gains, whereas the gains demonstrated by the learners who received no instruction in the targeted form were insignificant or small based on Cohen’s 1977 classification. The effects of task-based instruction were durable (i.e., sustained long-term as demonstrated by delayed posttests.)

The analysis of the characteristics of tasks, target structures, educational settings, and so forth as moderator variables has identified statistically significant differences for some of these factors. The analog to the analysis of variance identified the complexity of the target structure, the nature of participant assignment to groups (nonrandom vs. random), and the difference between long-delay and short-delay posttests as factors that can account for variability in effect sizes. The meta-analytic findings expanded the scope of understanding of the effects of task-based interaction and were instrumental in formulating suggestions for future research in the domain.

The contention in this meta-analysis was that task-based interaction as an instructional technique is beneficial not only for developing the learners’ overall proficiency in the TL but also for facilitating the development of learners’ mastery of specific grammatical structures when specially-designed, high-quality focused tasks are used. This contention is supported by evidence in the present study, especially when this evidence is aggregated with the findings from the previous meta-analyses in the task-based interaction domain. This meta-analytic study has implications for FL and L2 teachers, curriculum developers, teacher educators, and language program supervisors. Integrating
the teaching of formal features of the TL with the development of communicative skills is a state-of-the-art instructional technique that is misunderstood or not accepted by some language teachers. It was, therefore, important to synthesize up-to-date empirical data that provide evidence of its effectiveness as well as capture best practices in form-focused instruction.

**Note**

1. Refer to the full text of the dissertation for a complete list of references.

**Author**

Critical Listening Effectiveness in Adult Learners in a Second Language Spanish Program

Dissertation Abstract

Tanya de Hoyos

Over the past few decades, world events have increasingly brought to the forefront the need for critical listening effectiveness in second language usage (Larson, 2010). This is because second language listeners may be “exposed to many kinds of messages…but it isn’t always clear how to separate the truth from the messages that are misleading or even blatantly false” (Wrench, Goding, Johnson, & Attias, 2011, p. 1). The purpose of this quantitative descriptive research is to learn which listening styles and effective listening skills second language adult learners of Spanish use and how the styles and skills contribute to their critical listening effectiveness. Critical listening effectiveness is essential for foreign language students; they need to use critical thinking to interpret different type of messages. Military linguists, in particular, need effective listening to avoid conflict and misunderstanding and to improve mission performance (Anderson, 2000). “Skills of effective listening are vital to individuals’ professional and personal well being” (Wolvin, 2010, p. 141). This research was conducted (a) to identify the listening behaviors of second language adult learners of Spanish at the DLIFLC, as measured by the Listening Styles Inventory (LSI) and HURIER surveys and (b) to explore the possibility of a significant positive relationship between scores on listening styles/effectiveness (as measured by the LSI), listening effectiveness (as measured by the HURIER), and listening comprehension scores (as measured by the DLPT5). The LSI questionnaire is a tool for determining listening effectiveness. Pearce, Johnson & Barker (2003) include four types of listening styles in the LSI questionnaire: Active, Involved, Passive and Detached. The HURIER listening survey (Brownell, 2013) consists of six chronological steps for effective listening: Hearing, Understanding, Remembering, Interpreting, Evaluating, and Responding.

A way to help students enhance their listening in a foreign language is to first identify and then provide feedback to their listening styles and the listening effectiveness skills they use. “Effective listening provides the students with
valuable longterm benefits: competence, confidence, and productivity in their academic, personal, and professional lives” (Thompson, Leintz, Nevers, & Witkowski, 2004, p. 239). This study was based on a dual–process theory framework. The conceptual framework—comprising the elaboration likelihood model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981), the heuristic–systematic model (Chaiken, 1980), and attitude change theory (Hovland, Janis & Kelley, 1953) inform critical listening effectiveness for adult learners in second language Spanish course. Dual–process theory helps to (a) examine the underlying “social judgments and behavior” (Gawronski & Creighton, 2011, p. 1), (b) identify listening in a systematic and organized manner (Bodie, 2008; Gawronski & Creighton, 2011), and (c) accurately detect and interpret a set of phenomena (Berger & Chaffee, 1987). Accordingly, “Critical listening is particularly relevant to persuasive communication situations” (Brownell, 2013, p. 223) and “challenge[s] the speaker’s message by evaluating its accuracy, meaningfulness, and utility” (Pearson, Nelson, Titsworth, & Harter, 2008, p. 116), which, in turn, enhances critical listening skills.

Demographic information was collected from 52 Basic Course Spanish students who attended different courses from June 2013 to February 2014 at the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC). Students took the LSI and HURIER surveys from November 2013 through February 2014. The demographic survey included seven questions regarding general characteristics of the participants: name, gender, age group, ethnicity, native language, other languages spoken, and highest level of education completed.

The LSI revealed that 48% of the participant population used involved listening with a starting mean score of 38-43, which falls into the average range of involved listening as defined by the ISI; 46% used passive listening (start mean score 28-37) as their behavior when listening to Spanish as a second language. Tables 1 and 2 show students’ listening behaviors and the LSI’s interpretation of such behaviors.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LSI Behavior Frequency, Percent, and Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2  
*Interpretation of the LSI*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>45-50</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>Full attention when others are talking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38-44</td>
<td>Involved</td>
<td>Most of the attention to the speaker’s words and intentions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-37</td>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>Seldom expends any noticeable energy in receiving and interpreting messages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-27</td>
<td>Detached</td>
<td>Becomes the object of the speaker’s message</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The overall HURIER listening survey revealed that students believed they were good listeners. The starting mean score range was between 3.3 and 3.8 from a 5-point scale (see Table 3). The data met statistical levels of significance.

Table 3  
*Interpretation of the HURIER Inventory*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 – 4.1</td>
<td>Excellent listener</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 – 3.3</td>
<td>Good listener</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 – 2.5</td>
<td>Listening skills adequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 – 1.5</td>
<td>Some problems in listening behavior</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The overall listening styles score of the LSI and the overall listening effectiveness score from the HURIER indicated that there was a statistical level of strong positive relationship between the two variables (Table 4).

Table 4  
*Pearson Product-Moment Correlation of Overall LSI Score and Overall HURIER Score*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall listening styles/effectiveness LSI score</th>
<th>Overall HURIER listening effectiveness score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson correlation</td>
<td>.568 (*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The statistical analyses for the relationship between LSI listening styles/effectiveness scores and the listening comprehension scores measured by the DLPT5 are displayed in Table 5. The overall LSI data indicated a no or
negligible relationship linearity existed in each of the dimensions of perceived listening scales.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension of the Overall LSI Score and Listening Comprehension (DLPT5)</th>
<th>Listening comprehension DLPT5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall LSI Score</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson correlation</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 displays the two positive $r$ values of the listening effectiveness from HURIER questionnaire and the listening comprehension scores from the DLPT5, Understanding and Responding had a weak positive relationship. The overall listening effectiveness and the listening comprehension scores showed a no or negligible relationship.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HURIER Listening Survey positive values and Listening Comprehension Scores</th>
<th>Listening comprehension DLPT5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson correlation</td>
<td>.107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson correlation</td>
<td>.224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall HURIER listening score</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson correlation</td>
<td>.187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This research yielded findings that would help students improve aspects of their listening comprehension. “Only through effective listening can individuals share meanings and align their behavior to accomplish goals” (Brownell, 2010, p. 141).
Note

1. References are in the full text of the dissertation.

Author

Tanya de Hoyos, Ed. D. (Argosy University). Assistant Professor, European and Latin American School, Undergraduate Education, Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center. Specializations: second language listening styles, active listening, critical listening, and listening effectiveness. Email: tanya.dehoyos@dliflc.edu
Text Enhancement and the Acquisition of English Verbal Morphology by L1 Haitian Creole Speakers

Dissertation Abstract

Paulina L De Santis

Recent second language acquisition (SLA) empirical studies have accepted the central role of attention in learning as a foundation for their research and have therefore explored different ways of directing learner attention to problematic input areas. The bulk of this research has demonstrated the effectiveness of including specific forms in the input that will direct learner attention to them (Berne, 2000; Carroll & Swain, 1993; De Keyser, 1995; Grenslade, Bouden, & Sanz, 1999; Jensen & Vinther, 2003; Sanz & Morgan-Short, 2004; Sharwood Smith, 1993; VanPatten & Cadierno, 1993). One approach used to concentrate learner attention on form in the written input is known as textual (typographical or visual) enhancement. The aim of textual enhancement is to specifically draw learner attention to the problematic feature to achieve an integration of attention to form and meaning. This implicit and unobtrusive means of enhancement (Doughty & Williams, 1998) employs varying techniques to increase the perceptual salience of the problematic target forms embedded in the reading passage: the use of color, italics, boldface, highlighting, capitalization, underlining, increased type sizes, multiple typefaces, and other perceptually prominent features. Five previous studies have demonstrated the facilitative effect of textual enhancement on the development of learner interlanguage (Doughty, 1991; Jourdenais, Ota, Stauffer, Boyson, & Doughty, 1995; Leeman, Arteagoitia, Fridman, & Doughty, 1995; Shook, 1994; Williams, 1999). However, only one of these five studies has investigated variables and linguistic forms in L2 English (Doughty, 1991), and no studies, to the best of my knowledge, have explored the way in which nonacademic adult learners can focus attention on form and meaning with the help of text enhancement.

In consideration of the inconclusive nature of the previous studies which investigated the effect of text enhancement, and in light of the greater need for research on the role of attention in SLA, the reported study investigates the potentially facilitative effects of textual enhancement on the acquisition of the target language verbal morphology by a population that, to date, has gone uninvestigated: adult L2 speakers of English with limited classroom experience who have been exposed to the target language over a long period of time and who have failed to acquire numerous linguistic features via naturalistic aural
input. Specifically, this dissertation research examines the acquisition of two English grammatical features—the bound morpheme -s in the third-person present indicative verb (3PS) and the free morpheme will-future—by 72 adult L1 Haitian Creole speakers. The majority of the target group participants moved to New Orleans, Louisiana, directly from Haiti; some relocated to New Orleans from New York and others from Florida at different times. On the average, the participants of the study have lived in this country for fifteen years, and have been exposed to English conversational forms in their occupations as taxi drivers and hotel housekeepers.

The major research questions addressed are (1) whether typographically enhanced input of 3PS and will-future facilitates “noticing” and subsequent acquisition and (2) whether learners receiving textually enhanced input of the free morpheme will demonstrate a more accurate ability to recognize and produce this target feature than learners receiving enhanced input of the bound morpheme –s.

A controlled experimental study addressed these questions, with two separate experiments conducted on each variable. Half of the research participants engaged in the experiment with 3PS, half in the experiment with will-future. Participants were further divided into two treatment groups within each experiment: the Enhanced group and the Control group. Enhanced treatment group participants read a passage orally while attending to visually enhanced learning targets (enlarged and boldfaced, or colored red). Control group participants read a passage orally without enhancement. “Noticing” in the current study was measured by two tasks—a grammaticality judgment task that assessed how the participants noticed the target form metalinguistically, and a reading task that assessed how they noticed the target form perceptually. “Acquisition” of the target forms was measured by a picture description task and a free response task. For the picture description task, the participants were asked to produce target forms under regulated circumstances, where the use of the appropriate form (3PS in Experiment 1 and will-future in Experiment 2) was essential for grammatical accuracy to occur. For the free response task, each participant was asked a question targeted at eliciting a spontaneous response that would require the target form usage. This elicitation technique was implemented to stimulate a potentially more natural performance than the picture description task with relatively few constraints within meaningful communication.

The major findings of the current study are: (1) textual enhancement did not improve participants’ metalinguistic knowledge of 3PS but did improve their metalinguistic knowledge of will-future, as measured by grammaticality judgment tasks; (2) textual enhancement promoted perceptual noticing of both target features, as measured by reading tasks; (3) textual enhancement promoted the acquisition of both target features in a constrained environment, as measured by picture description tasks, although it positively affected only the acquisition
of will-future, not the acquisition of 3PS in a less constrained environment, as measured by free response tasks; (4) the present study found a weak relationship between noticing and acquiring the targeted grammatical forms; (5) textual enhancement did not affect acquisition per se since no subject met the acquisition criterion of 90% set at the beginning of the study.

The results of the current study are consistent with the claim that formal instruction has positive effects on SLA processes (Long, 1983; Noris & Ortega, 2000; Pienemann, 1987, 1989). Moreover, the finding that enhancing a grammatical feature that learners need to learn aided noticing suggests that this technique can be explored in the classroom to draw learner attention to problematic target features. At the same time, the fact that no statistically significant results were obtained that demonstrate the relationship between noticing the target features and subsequently acquiring them raises a concern about the relationship between noticing and learning. It is possible that the relationship between the two is not as direct as may be generally assumed in the SLA literature, and that noticing target features does not necessarily lead to their acquisition. Given that not all forms are equal in terms of the applicability and effectiveness of instruction (Williams & Evans, 1998), the choice of instructional intervention should take into account the differing circumstances under which SLA takes place, namely the learner population, the learning context, the learners’ L1, and the linguistic feature, all of which may affect decisions regarding the type of instruction. The more language teachers and curriculum developers understand the processes, learning constrains, and learning universals that accompany adult second language acquisition, the more insightful and learner-centered classroom instruction and materials can become.

Note

1. Refer to the dissertation for a complete list of references.

Author

Paulina De Santis, Ph. D. (Tulane University). Associate Professor, Faculty Development Support, Academic Support, Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center. Specializations: SLA, attention in SLA, input-interaction, task-based language teaching, assessment in TBLT, dynamic assessment, diagnostic assessment, defossilization. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to paulina.desantis@dliflc.edu
Successful Counterinsurgency: The Perception of Pragmatic Competence in Intercultural Negotiations Resulting From Explicit Training

Dissertation Abstract
Maida Dzakula

To achieve cross-cultural competence, learners of foreign languages (FL) must develop pragmatic competence; this may be accomplished with explicit instruction of negotiation and metapragmatic skills. The main purpose of this pragmalinguistic study was to investigate whether a two-week explicit and implicit training had any effect on participants’ pragmatic competence and their perception of pragmatic competence in intercultural negotiation. Particular attention was paid to incorporating pragmatic and negotiation skills into a foreign language and testing them to improve military effectiveness and cross-cultural awareness. Discourse Completion Test (DCT), a multiple-choice pragmatic competence video rating task and a questionnaire that assess participants’ perception of pragmatic competence, was developed and used both as a pre- and a post-test to measure the effect of the online training. The results of the post-test indicated that participants’ perception of pragmatic competence and their pragmatic competence and intercultural negotiation skills improved. The findings are also encouraging for the use of explicit pragmatic training in military and civilian foreign language classrooms to develop not only a higher pragmatic competence but also a higher level of L2 proficiency.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical framework of the study included several theories in relation to the explicit instruction of pragmatics in pre-deployment training to improve military effectiveness: Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Pragmatics, and Military theories for addressing Counterinsurgency (COIN) and Counterterrorism (CT). The discussions also comprised the testing of the incorporation of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic aspects, communicative competence, cross-cultural pragmatics, the learners’ willingness to talk, and negotiation in a COIN and CT.

The results have revealed that students who received instruction improved significantly in not only pragmatics and cross-cultural communication but also
in foreign language proficiency. Speech act theory, originally introduced by Austin (1962), proposed the notion that sentences have meaning beyond their truth values and that speakers actually accomplish actions with many of their utterances. The military theory addresses negotiations in a COIN situational awareness environment, negotiations in a contemporary operational environment, and cross-cultural negotiations, all of which are central to military leadership. The theory of COIN focused on unique characteristics of negotiations between military personnel and the local population, focusing on security, rebuilding projects, and civil affairs. The U.S. Army has prescribed cultural awareness as an important skill for COIN- and CT-operating environments, realizing that it is not sufficient to brief soldiers before a mission with specific interaction protocols (i.e., dos and don’ts).

**Method**

A descriptive research method was used in the current study to examine the effect of explicit instruction on the participant’s perception of pragmatic competence in intercultural negotiation. Data were collected through various online forums (e.g., Facebook, emails) and telephone interviews.

**Design**

A mixed-methodology design was used to collect data from participants. Two versions of the training were designed, one explicit and the other implicit. The explicit group received metapragmatic information about sociopragmatic factors, appropriate pragmatic functions, and discourse strategies, whereas the implicit group received no metapragmatic information. Sixteen participants received two weeks of training in pragmatics with a follow-up assessment of negotiation skills and pragmatics. The rating criterion was based on five aspects and each aspect was rated on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (quite easy) to 5 (not easy at all).

**Instrument**

The data collection procedure consisted of three parts. The first part of oral production pre- and post-test consisted of (a) OPI, role-play; (b) the elicited conversation (sociolinguistic interviews), and (c) semi-structured interview with open-ended questions (after role-plays) to assess participants’ perception of pragmatic comprehension before and after training. The second part was a written production test and the third part consisted of (a) rating assessment tests, and (b) multiple-choice discourse completion test (DCT).

**Data Analysis**

The study adopted a mixed methodology design combining qualitative (semi-structured interview questions) and quantitative (ILR levels after OPI test, a pragmatic appropriateness judgment, and pragmatic ability). Data analysis was done by: ILR Skill Level Description (both Speaking and Competence in Intercultural Communication), DCT data analysis, a five-point Likert scale, and
a Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks test. A Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks test was used to see whether there were statistically significant differences when comparing the pre-test with the post-test and to measure participants’ perceptions of pragmatic competence in intercultural negotiation.

This nonparametric test was most appropriate for the study’s relatively small sample size. The number of students for whom scores increased from the pre-test to the post-test was compared with the number of students for whom scores decreased. All the data obtained after applying these nonparametric statistical procedures were coded and processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, version 16). An alpha level of $p<0.05$, the standard for the applied linguistics, was chosen as the significant level.

**Conclusion and Implications**

The data support the main claim of the study regarding the effects of pragmatic training on participants’ perception of pragmatic competence in intercultural negotiation. The results showed that there are statistically significant differences/improvement between the pre-test and post-test in both the explicit and implicit group. The explicit group increased their oral performance and pragmatically appropriate use of speech acts for suggestion. The findings seem to prove the effectiveness of instruction because both the explicit and implicit group significantly improved their use of pragmatically appropriate speech acts for intercultural negotiations and for discourse completion and pragmatic competence. The current study expands the understanding of the need to examine learners’ perceptions of pragmatic competence in intercultural negotiation and has the potential to make a valuable contribution to military training by focusing on: (a) the need to implement explicit instruction of pragmatic competence and (b) learner’s awareness, interest, and production of the speech acts of negotiation.

Because there is no evidence of an existing study dealing with military learners based on the development of FL pragmatics and negotiation skills, new results and information could result in a modification of old instructional designs and the introduction of new processes as a result of a systematic review. In contrast to the previous military approach to counterinsurgency, the new approach emphasizes the government’s need to understand its adversaries, training in cultural knowledge, and ethnographic intelligence.
Acknowledgements

This dissertation would not have been possible without the help and support of my former students and colleagues, and military linguists who took part in the study. I am grateful to them for taking time out of their mission to help in reading this study, for long conversations, and for making suggestions.

Note

1. The reference list is in the full text of the dissertation.

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Dynamic assessment (DA) is based on Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural theory and his supposition of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). ZPD is the range of abilities bordered by the learner’s assisted and independent performances. Previous studies showed promising results for DA in tutoring settings. However, proficiency-based rubrics were not used to measure student progress, and the studies did not mention the method of using DA practically in classrooms. Moreover, the literature shows that task-based language instruction (TBLI), which is also based on ZPD, is effective in adult classrooms.

This study combined DA with TBLI to answer four questions:

1) What is the change in the structural control of spoken Arabic based on DA/TBLI instruction?

2) How do Oral Proficiency Interviews (OPI) without DA assistance and OPIs with DA assistance compare, relative to the evaluation of Arabic speaking?

3) How do the experiences and perceptions of DA/TBLI instruction compare between teacher-researcher and OPI testers?

4) What are the student perceptions of the DA process?

To answer these questions, the study was conducted in three phases: pre-DA, DA, and post-DA. In the pre-DA phase, 12 volunteers from the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC) completed unofficial OPIs, intellectual style surveys, biographical background questionnaires, and interventionist-DA interviews. During the DA phase, the teacher-researcher used DA/TBLI instruction and Interagency Language Roundtable-based (ILR) rubrics to promote learning and to diagnose students’ needs on a daily basis. These lessons were observed by certified OPI testers. In the post-DA phase, the six selected participants were reevaluated through OPIs and interventionist-DA interviews. Students and observers were interviewed, but only students responded to a survey.
The results of comparing different evaluations in both the pre- and post-DA phase showed that the structural control of Arabic improved for all participants. There was a parallel coefficient of 1.0 between the OPI with and without DA assistance for evaluating the participants’ speaking proficiency. DA/TBLI instruction was practical and successful in making a difference in the participants’ learning process. The ILR-based rubrics were accurate in diagnosing students’ abilities, whether in the interventionist-DA interviews or in the daily interactionist DA. In comparison, the OPI without DA assistance could not provide accurate diagnostic feedback in detail.

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Instructional Plan Effectiveness
Using Distorted Audio Transcription during Early Stages of Adults Learning a Foreign Language

Dissertation Abstract

Doron Friedman

The presented study is part of an institute-wide effort to improve graduates’ ability, in all languages, to understand distorted audio materials resembling the authentic situations that they encounter in their mission assignment. This research suggested a practical and efficient way to teach distorted audio materials in the early stages of second language acquisition.

The purposes of the study were (a) to develop level-appropriate distorted audio materials for early-stage learners of Hebrew, and (b) to evaluate the effectiveness of an instructional plan for beginning L2 learners in the transcription of these distorted materials. The research question was: “Which teaching materials and teaching techniques appear to be most effective in helping learners acquire the ability to cope with low-quality audio?”

This research consisted of piloting an instructional intervention for learners in the beginning phases of the Basic Hebrew Program at the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC). Distorted listening materials were introduced to students between the end of the 1st semester and the middle of the 2nd semester (week 13-23, for 11 weeks). The materials were selected from the current available curricular course materials or prepared by teachers. The rationale for early introduction of distorted audio as a tool to enhance listening skill was:

1. *Increased practice time.* Early introduction to materials similar to authentic distorted materials that the students will deal with can help them better develop the listening flexibility. Teachers applied the concept of increased practice time on a daily basis. One consideration for early introduction is that at the beginning of the course *everything* is new to the student; therefore, this is a critical time for students to learn what to expect when using the instructional materials. Early introduction of distorted auditory materials sets higher standards of difficulty. Early introduction also gives students more
time over the duration of the course to adapt their hearing and enables them to focus on the information sought in listening tasks. Assuming that students need a period of assimilation to authentic distorted materials, the researcher believed that the long-term stress level would be about the same for students who either received early exposure to authentic materials or used the standard curricula.

2. **Tailored instructional materials relevant to job performance.** Another assumption is that as long as students are exposed to materials that are at their Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) level, they do not need additional language training simply because the audio is distorted. To best cope with the difficulty that the audio presents, students need more experience in selective listening that will enable them to hear through the distortions and focus on the information they need. This enhanced listening ability may contribute to students’ job performance. One example is how aircraft controllers accomplish their job. Aircraft controllers throughout the world communicate in English; although their English may be poor in terms of ILR level, they are still able to perform an important task while dealing with multiple accents and distorted audio communication. They do not need a high ILR level to perform because they can function with a finite professional vocabulary (numbers, directions, names, etc.), using defined, simple, professional syntax and grammar rules. Hence, controllers adapt to their work environment and develop the proficiency needed to function in a limited work environment despite the auditory difficulty.

3. **Availability of instructional support.** Students needed extra support, such as instructional techniques, to help them with the additional challenge. This support was available as part of the instructional program.

In this intervention, 12 students in the first semester were exposed to materials appropriate to their proficiency level at the time (i.e., at each exposure, they were able to understand and employ their knowledge of the language). Tailored instruction helped them cope with the presented distortions.

The pilot program employed the existing materials that were in use for the standard curriculum in the Basic Program, but the materials were presented to the students in distorted versions. These audios had background noises added to them or were processed to simulate a phone transmission. No unmodified original version of the audio materials were used in the pilot program. In addition to the distorted materials, the intervention incorporated various teaching methods, such as top-down, bottom-up, and other language-specific, tailored methods. At the end of this intervention (middle of the 2nd semester, week 22), all of the students were asked to reflect on their experience and provide feedback.

The study used mixed methodology. The qualitative part of the study used students’ weekly feedback regarding their experience in the task of transcribing
audio files. The quantitative part analyzed the transcriptions and produced numerical values. The study has its limitations; due to the small population sample (12 students), the qualitative results were used for discussions of trends.

The main results showed that (a) the development of distorted audio was efficient and it was possible to produce unlimited amount of realistic, authentic-sounding, and level-appropriate materials, and (b) the teaching plan was effective and improved the students’ proficiency in transcription. The research suggested that the results were valid for any foreign language. Other schools at DLIFLC could easily duplicate this effort with the existing human resources through adapting current curricular materials and formulating a tailored instructional plan applicable to students of all languages.

The following two figures summarized the quantitative findings. Figure 1 showed students’ quality of transcription improved, and Figure 2 demonstrated that students’ errors decreased over time.

Figure 1: Students’ Quality of Transcription
Participants in the pilot program provided excellent feedback. As a result of the research, the use of distorted audio materials became part of the teaching program in the following years and received positive feedback from students. The program is currently used in the Hebrew department.

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An Investigation of the Technological, Pedagogical, and Content Knowledge Framework in Successful Chinese Language Classrooms

Dissertation Abstract

Su-Ling Hsueh

With the prevalence of instructional technology, such as one-to-one computer access, language educators have endeavored to discover the most effective and motivational methods and content that would facilitate language learners in advancing their language proficiency. This qualitative case study investigated whether technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge (TPCK) was balanced and integrated in Chinese language classrooms. The study utilized purposive sampling, using a small sample size to demonstrate a representative sample. Three expert Chinese teachers serving as team leaders in technology-enhanced classrooms, 40 Chinese language learners, and one Chinese Mandarin academic specialist were observed and studied. The participating team leaders were exemplary instructors who were enthusiastic about integrating technology, pedagogy and content. They had an average score of 3.7 or above on the four-point scale in the Teacher Effectiveness portion of the End-of-Course Student Questionnaire (ESQ). Two of them received more than two Excellent Teaching Awards from the Defense Language Institute (DLI). Data were collected over a period of four and a half months, through classroom observations, interviews, reflective journals, focus group discussions, and document analysis. A three-way coding was adopted in this study: descriptive, topical, and analytical (theming). NVivo 7.0, a computer software program designed to facilitate the analysis of qualitative research data, was employed to import, store, manage, code, and analyze electronic data.

The findings from the study afforded both theoretical and practical implications of TPCK. The context, goals, culture, requirements, and tools afforded by educational institutions not only influenced the teachers’ ways of teaching, thinking, and planning, but also determined their use of pedagogy and technology. Content knowledge was expansive and the institution influenced the scope of selection in order to accomplish the institution’s mission. Likewise, pedagogical methods (signature pedagogy) and technological tools were constrained by the institute’s logistical and strategic operations. Teachers also had the tendency to rely on whatever technological tools the school had
provided in their attempt to make instruction effective and enjoyable. Therefore, content, pedagogy, and technology use were all under the sponsoring organization’s influence (in the case of this study, DLI’s influence). Within the overarching context of the sponsor, teachers adapted and discovered the most suitable and effectual instruction to help students succeed. The content, pedagogical, and technological knowledge was the dynamic and sequential process that occurred during course planning and preparation. Teachers tended to study specific instructional content first, thereafter deciding upon effective pedagogical methods and technology. Pedagogical approaches and technological aids were interactive and mutually influenced. When teachers implemented their teaching plans, the presentation of the lesson was the observable integration of the teacher’s content, pedagogy, and technology knowledge. The four practical implications for educational practitioners and teacher trainers were: a) integrating content and pedagogy knowledge in technology training, b) fixing learning routines and allowing flexibility, c) providing one-on-one or individualized learning in technology-enhanced curriculum, d) having alternative plans when technology failed to work.

Observable behaviors and outcomes of TPCK framework were found in classroom instruction in the study. The framework of TPCK knowledge was not equally distributed during teachers’ course preparation. To continually fine-tune the effective delivery of instructional activity, teachers displayed the content on the technological tools or platforms as their instructional aids and thereby pinpointed the content knowledge that students should acquire. Teachers viewed technology as an effective tool to display their instructional content and pedagogical sequence. Nevertheless, content knowledge was their preeminent focus, with subordinate consideration accorded to technology and pedagogy. Teachers constantly observed students’ performance in comprehension and mastery of content knowledge. Teachers did not evaluate student performance based on the degree of technology used. Trained teachers frequently and consciously considered pedagogy, because pedagogy entailed how teachers facilitate student learning of the content. Technology was treated as a practical tool for implementing pedagogy. To summarize, a teacher’s ultimate goal was to expedite student achievement, which was derived from the intended learning outcomes dictated by the imposed sponsor’s schedule and timeframe. Teachers were generally open to the use of any reasonably accessible pedagogy and tools that would help with the achievement of instructional goals.

In conclusion, four basic findings were derived from the study. First, the TPCK framework reflected an observable instructional process for communication between teachers and students. However, teachers did not knowingly integrate technology, pedagogy and content in technology-enhanced classrooms. Second, content was the focal point during the course preparation process. Teachers did not consciously attempt to negotiate a balance between technology, pedagogy, and content. Third, students preferred human interaction with teachers and individualized learning with teachers’ assistance in technology-enhanced
learning environments. Fourth, educational context and culture did influence the way that teachers taught, selected content, and employed technology.

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Student Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Using Instructional Technology in Acquiring Listening and Speaking Proficiency in Arabic

Dissertation Abstract

Fawzi Khoshaba

This research examines students’ perceptions of the effectiveness of instructional technology, such as iPad, MacBook, and iPod Touch, as well as Web-based tools, such as the SMART Board and Sakai in acquiring listening and speaking proficiency in the Arabic Basic Course at the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC). The purpose of this quantitative study is to determine the following: (1) the technologies students prefer to use; and (2) those programs and applications helpful in acquiring proficiency in listening and speaking. The researcher also wants to ascertain students’ perceptions about the integration of instructional technologies in the classroom as an alternative to the traditional method of teaching (face-to-face meetings), and the effectiveness of these technologies in improving long-term proficiency in listening and speaking skills.

Participants and Data Collection

Forty-four students, 34 males and 10 females, all Arabic Basic Course students, participated in this survey at the Middle East School II of the DLIFLC on July 31, 2014. They represented four classes in two different semesters. Most were high school graduates and ranged in age from 18 to 40.

This study utilized a descriptive method. Data were collected through a survey method — three surveys (1, 2, and 3) were administered. Questionnaires (labeled A, B, and C) amounted to fifty items. Most items in the survey followed the five-point Likert Scale, and were used by permission via emails from the original source. The researcher used SurveyMonkey.com to administer the electronic survey. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SSPS) version 20 was used to analyze the data.

The results indicated that the majority of students, approximately 85%, believed that iPad and MacBook were instrumental in acquiring proficiency in the Arabic language. Students also asserted that iPad was an effective tool for learning new
vocabulary through a digital program called Rapid Rote. Furthermore, the results showed that students preferred to use Apple devices rather than Web-based tools in the classroom. Results also revealed that there was a statistically significant difference among students’ preferences for the five means: iPad, MacBook, iPod Touch, SMART Board, and Sakai.

When asked about the effectiveness of using iPod Touch in daily learning, most students had a neutral response. They had no opinion about the benefits of iPod Touch because they did not have it when they started learning the Arabic language in 2014. The DLIFLC’s administration discontinued providing this device to students in early 2014 and replaced it with iPad.

In regard to the SMART Board, a tool that is available in all Middle East School II classrooms, students indicated that they used this when they collectively listen to audio materials in the curriculum or authentic materials, such as news clips, when a teacher was present. In addition, most students noted that the SMART Board occasionally encountered technical difficulties during class, complicating their efforts to learn the Arabic language.

Pertaining to Sakai, a tool to which students have access at the Middle East School II, the data results indicated that approximately 84% of the students disagreed with the statement using Sakai increased my listening skills (survey statement 17). Moreover, they reported that they hardly used it during their study of the Arabic language. No reasons were given.

**Discussion of the Results**

Since the data collection was effected in three surveys, the descriptive statistics section was also divided into three parts. Survey One indicated an agreement with the survey statements about computer products when learning Arabic. The following four statements received the highest level of agreement:

1. **Using MacBook in the classroom helped me finish listening activities** (survey statement 12);
2. **MacBook will help me be more proficient in listening skills in the future** (survey statement 24);
3. **My overall experience with listening activities loaded on MacBook was positive** (survey statement 21); and
4. **My overall experience with listening activities loaded on iPad was positive** (survey statement 20).

By contrast, the two statements on the use of Sakai technology received the response of neutral or no opinion.

Survey Two revealed that students perceived Apple devices as motivating instrumental tools, which encouraged their participation in daily classroom
activities. The following two survey statements received students’ strongest agreement:

1. *I paid more attention to the listening task(s) when using the MacBook device* (survey statement 30); and
2. *I paid more attention to the listening task(s) when using the iPad device* (survey statement 28).

Survey Three revealed the students’ opinions about the use of technology in learning Arabic. The three survey statements with which students agreed most strongly:

1. *Technology makes learning Arabic easier* (survey statement 41);
2. *I feel I accomplish more in class because of technology* (survey statement 40); and
3. *In general, I feel that using MacBook for the Arabic course was very effective* (survey statement 44).

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

The current study found that most students preferred to use devices such as iPad and MacBook because they believed that these two devices were instrumental in acquiring listening and speaking skills. Furthermore, students’ overall views of technology were positive. These findings supported the Institute’s technological innovation and development of creating a “more technology-equipped foreign language learning environment” (Hu, 2011, p. 24).

Technology improves with time, leading to more effective methods of teaching and providing infinite potential to enrich language learning. As Bush (1997) noted: “the effect of technology would likely be far-reaching, noting that there is no aspect of foreign language learning that will not be influenced by the technological revolution” (p. xiv).

Based on the findings of the study, its recommendations are as follows:

a. Encourage students at the Middle East School II to use Sakai daily. As a collaborative learning tool, Sakai facilitates student-centered learning; and

b. Replicate this study at institutions of higher learning and among student populations in order to verify the effectiveness of iPod Touch and Sakai in the classroom.
Acknowledgment

I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Georgette Jabbour of the Levantine Department of the Middle East School II for her assistance and constructive feedback.

Note

1. References are available in the full text of the dissertation.

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Examining the Differences in Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) Self-assessment Scores of Foreign Language Instructors and First-line Supervisors in Six Institutes of Higher Education (IHE) in California

Dissertation Abstract

Nadezda A. Larsen

The tools available in the field of educational technology have increased at an exponential rate in the last decade. However, some scholars suggest that these tools failed to transform the classroom (Alayyar, et al., 2011; Wildavsky, et al., 2011; Pamuk, 2012; Zelkowski, 2011). One of the reasons is that the use of innovative tools to support classroom instruction requires specific knowledge of how the technology can be used for educational purposes (Kessler, 2006; Kopcha, 2010; Mouza & Karchmer-Klein, 2013, Prensky, 2001). Literature supports the notion that this failure can be remedied through Technological, Pedagogical, and Content Knowledge (TPACK) implementation into curriculum and professional development (Alshehri, 2012; Amkraut, 2011; Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010; Wetzel & Marschal, 2011; Yurdakul et al., 2011).

There is strong evidence in the literature suggesting that in order to effectively integrate educational technology in the classroom, educators need to apply the TPACK framework in their lesson design (Alshehri, 2012; Graham, 2011; Greenhaus, 2014; Tai, 2013; Wetzel & Marschal, 2011). In addition, Kereluik, et al. (2011) noted that TPACK can be useful in the case analysis of effective transformational technology integration in various spheres of education.

The challenge in this transformation is for leaders to encourage the change that is required (McKee, et al., 2008; Rivard, 2010). The principal drivers of such change are technology leaders and supervisors (Kouzes & Posner, 2006; Rivard, 2010). Positive change in educational technology training and implementation can only occur if supervisors are involved not only in learning and teaching, but also through TPACK professional development (Bell, 2001; Zhan, 2011). Little research has been done on higher education leadership, particularly first-line supervisors (FLSs), as the prime movers of effective technology integration.
Learning how to incorporate technology by foreign language (FL) educators and supervisors has been an area of considerable research for the past decade (Chapelle & Hegelheimer, 2004; Hampel, 2009; Johnson, 2009). There is, however, a shortage of research on how well in-service FL instructors and supervisors are prepared for technology integration into their classroom instruction (Chapelle & Hegelheimer, 2004; Lam, 2000; Rodriguez, 2006; Tarone & Allwright, 2005; Van Olphen, 2008a). This study tackled the issue of differences in TPACK scores of in-service FL instructors and first-line supervisors in six institutes of higher education in California by analyzing the differences in self-assessment scores related to the seven domains of TPACK between these two groups.

The study uses the Technological, Pedagogical, and Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework proposed by Koehler and Mishra (2006) to describe the relationship between Technological Knowledge (TK), Pedagogical Knowledge (PK), and Content Knowledge (CK). The TPACK framework is based on the work of Shulman (1986), whose theory on the relationship between TK and PK informed the research in teacher training in response to the emergence of new technologies and the need to prepare teachers to use tools designed for a 21st century classroom (Alshehri, 2012; Amkraut, 2011; Kollikant, 2009; Zelkowski, 2011). Kohler and Mishra (2006) added a third layer to Shulman’s (1986) framework, arguing that effective technology integration is a result of the interplay between the teacher’s technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge (Matas, 2014). The TPACK framework connects technology to curriculum content and pedagogical approaches, and describes how teachers’ understandings of the three knowledge bases interact with one another to produce effective discipline-based teaching with educational technologies. This framework has had a significant effect on research and practice in various academic disciplines (Koehler, Shin, & Mishra, 2012, p. 17). As a result, various educational disciplines and schools of thought have adapted the definition of TPACK to fit their purposes (Tai, 2013; Webb, 2005; Wiebe & Kabata, 2010; Zhan, 2011). In the context of foreign language instruction, and for the purposes of this study, TPACK was defined as a conceptual blueprint for FL educators who envision a seamless and pedagogically meaningful integration of technology into their classrooms and curricula. This definition guides the focus of the study; i.e., furthering the understanding of foreign language teachers’ cognition as it relates to infusing technology into content areas, which in turn advances students’ second language competence (Van Olphen, 2008a).

The purpose of this two-group, quasi-experimental quantitative study was to examine whether differences exist in Technological, Pedagogical, and Content Knowledge (TPACK) self-assessment scores between FL instructors and first-line supervisors (FLSs) in higher education. By shifting the focus from the importance of educational technology (ET) implementation to the TPACK assessment of FL instructors and first-line supervisors, the study focuses on building an awareness of TPACK in foreign language education (FLED).
The research tested the Technology Knowledge (TK), Pedagogical Knowledge (PK), Content Knowledge (CK), Technological and Content Knowledge (TCK), Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (PCK), Pedagogical and Technological Knowledge (PTK), and the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) of these two groups of foreign language educators. It used a Likert-scale 2012 TPACK survey (Da Silva, 2012), modified and validated from a 2009 TPACK survey (Schmidt et al., 2009-10) to address FLED.

The study population consisted of foreign language educators (teachers and supervisors) from six institutes of higher education (IHE) in California: three community colleges and three state universities with one or more departments of foreign language teaching, world languages, and/or English as a Second Language (ESL). These IHEs were: Monterey Peninsula College (MPC); San Jose State University (SJSU); California State University, Sacramento (CSUS); California State University, East Bay (CSU East Bay); Allan Hancock Community College, Santa Maria, California; and Glendale Community College, Glendale, California. The study sample included 57 instructors and nine FLSs.

The data was analyzed quantitatively, using the two-sample t test and a corresponding Mann-Whitney U test. The data revealed that FLS evaluated themselves significantly higher in TPACK domains related to technology: TCK, TPK and TPACK. Instructors evaluated themselves significantly higher in PCK. The study provided recommendations to IHEs that have foreign language departments: utilize the results of this study to raise TPACK awareness in FLED through TPACK faculty assessment and TPACK-enhanced professional development trainings; and improve the effectiveness of technology integration into the content areas to advance students’ second language competence (Van Olphen, 2008a).
Note

1. Refer to the full dissertation text for a complete list of references.

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A Grammatical Approach to Topic and Focus:
A Syntactic Analysis with Preliminary Evidence from
Language Acquisition

Dissertation Abstract

Heeyoung Lyu

The objective of this dissertation is to argue that the topichood of sentence topics and contrastive foci result from structural differences in the left periphery. Child language acquisition data from Korean, a free word-order language, are provided to support this claim. Topics and contrastive foci have structurally different properties, and different derivations are expected for sentence topic phrases and contrastive focus phrases. The left periphery is the edge of a clause above the Tense Phrase (TP) and includes the functional projections, such as Topic and Focus. Working within the minimalist framework (Chomsky, 2001; 2004; 2007), I suggest that topic phrases merge (a shortened form of “merge, not move”) in the topic field of the left periphery, preceding contrastive foci, whereas contrastive focus phrases move to the focus field of the left periphery.

Topic phrases, especially sentence topics, are mainly sentence-initial, indicating what sentences are about (Chafe, 1976; Chomsky, 1977; Davison, 1984; Erteschik-Shir, 1993; Givón, 1983; Gundel, 1974; 1985; 1999; Kuno, 1972; Prince, 1981; Reinhart, 1981; Strawson, 1964; Vallduví, 1992). A sentence topic phrase in the leftmost position has a wider scope than the rest of the elements in a sentence. Contrastive focus represents a subset of contextually given sets for which the predicate phrases can hold, and contrastive focus move to the specifier of a functional projection (É. Kiss, 1998). Topic and focus have been discussed mainly in the semantics and pragmatics literature, but they have also been important topics in the syntax literature since Rizzi (1997) suggested the left periphery. In addition to Rizzi (1997; 2001; 2004), several scholars have suggested structural analyses of the left periphery (e.g., Aboh, 2004; Benincá & Poletto, 2004; Lipták, 2010). The goal has been to describe the left periphery in detail, assuming different functional projections for topic and focus, as well as for other projections in information structure. In the suggested structures, Force, the head of the highest projection in the left periphery, which encodes the illocutionary force or clause type of the sentence and topic projections, for instance, precedes the focus projections.
Syntactic approaches to topic and contrastive focus provide the cartography of functional projections for topic and contrastive focus in the left periphery, mainly based on fixed word-order languages such as Italian and Hungarian. In these languages, the difference in the positioning of topics and contrastive foci is represented overtly in sentences, and contrastive foci may undergo A′-movement as wh-movement. Free word-order languages are different from fixed-order languages, especially in movement phenomena: free word-order languages share the property of scrambling, in which words may scramble in sentences, resulting in various surface orders without a change in meaning (Erteschik-Shir, 2007). On the other hand, free word-order languages and fixed word-order languages share some properties, such as merging a phrase in the left periphery or left-dislocation, wherein a phrase occurs outside a clause boundary to the left and has a co-referring overt/covert pronoun in an argument position within the clause boundary. Merged phrases in the left periphery can be sentence topics in both free word-order languages and fixed word-order languages.

In Korean, topic and contrastive focus are realized morphologically with the marker–nun. Nun-marked phrases (nun-Ps) may occupy sentence-initial positions or other positions, receiving topic readings or contrastive focus readings. Topic phrases primarily occupy the leftmost position of sentences, preceding contrastive foci (Benincà & Poletto, 2004), and only sentence-initial nun-Ps receive topic readings. If not in the leftmost position, nun-Ps receive only contrastive focus readings. The positional differences represent the structural differences of topic nun-Ps and contrastive focus nun-Ps. Topic nun-Ps are comparable to left-dislocated topics in German (Frey, 2005), English (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, & Svartvik, 1985; Frey, 2005), and Italian (Benincà & Poletto, 2004), which merge in the left periphery and have resumptive pronouns in the argument positions. Sentence-initial nun-Ps have overt/covert co-referring pronouns in argument positions along the lines of left-dislocated topics, which have resumptive pronouns. I argue that topic nun-Ps merge in the left periphery, assuming that the topic nun-Ps merge in TopP to check the topic feature [top(ic)]. Nun-Ps may scramble leftward, showing island effects. Scrambled nun-Ps receive only contrastive focus readings. The claim in this study is that the contrastive focus nun-Ps scramble leftward, assuming that they eventually land in the left periphery to check a focus operator feature in FocP by the contrastive focus operator movement. The scrambled nun-Ps retain their phonetic features at the landing sites, and the nun-Ps leave their copies on the way to the FocP.

It is a consistent syntactic phenomenon in many languages that sentence-initial topics are followed by contrastive foci. Multiple nun-Ps show that topics precede contrastive foci, supporting the claim that the left periphery includes both topic projections and focus projections and that the topic is projected above the focus projection. The consistency of the structural properties of topic and contrastive focus in free word-order languages and fixed word-order languages
shown in this research is a strong source for cartography of the left periphery, which all languages share in the sentence structure.

In the process of language acquisition, the derivational and structural differences between topic phrases and contrastive focus phrases may have influences on the developmental order of grammar acquisition. Assuming that derivational and structural differences influence language acquisition, I reviewed two-year-old children’s acquisition data, which had been recorded over the course of one year, and discussed the acquisition order of topic nun-Ps and focus nun-Ps. In acquisition data from two-year-old Korean children, topics emerge earlier than contrastive foci, indicating that topic and contrastive focus are also acquisitionally different. The syntactic and acquisitional distinction of topic merge and contrastive focus movement is compatible with the semantic and pragmatic approaches to topic and focus.

The properties of the language acquisition device (LAD), which provides human beings with a set of procedures allowing them to acquire the grammar of their native languages, must be simple enough to function for any language. This is the assumption on which the Minimalist Program relies (Chomsky, 1995). Therefore, this research, which provides some evidence of the structural similarity between fixed word-order languages and free word-order languages, may be relevant for work on the properties of the LAD in that it could show that simplicity is preferred in the acquisition of a language.
Note

1. A complete list of the references is in the full text of the dissertation.

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Language Learning Strategies of Adult Learners in an Intensive Foreign-Language Learning Program

_Dissertation Abstract_

Tatiana McCaw

**Introduction**

One of the national security goals of the United States is to develop and maintain a cadre of qualified military linguists. The data about language learning strategies used by successful language learners in an intensive foreign-language program can be utilized for facilitating better language learning. Linguistic proficiency can be enhanced with the use of effective Language Learning Strategies (LLSs).

This study employed a mixed-methodology approach to determine the relationship between the use of LLSs (cognitive, memory, compensation, affective, social, and metacognitive) and Language Proficiency (LP) levels in listening, reading, and speaking. A total of 88 (N = 88) graduating students from the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC) participated in the study. The participants in the quantitative component of the study numbered 77 (n = 77). Eleven (n = 11) students were interviewed for the qualitative portion of the study.

The study was guided by four research questions:

**Research Question One (RQ1):** Is there a significant positive relationship between the use of language learning strategies (cognitive, memory, compensation, affective, social, and metacognitive), as measured by the _Strategy Inventory for Language Learning_ (SILL), and language proficiency levels in listening, reading, and speaking, as measured by the Defense Language Proficiency Test 5 System (DLPT5) and the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI)?

**Research Question Two (RQ2):** Which language learning strategies included in the _Strategy Inventory for Language Learning_ questionnaire do students perceive to be effective in an intensive foreign-language learning program?
Research Question Three (RQ3): Do students learning foreign languages in different language categories vary in their strategy use and in their perceptions about the effectiveness of the language learning strategies included in the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning questionnaire?

Research Question Four (RQ4): What perceptions do students who exceed graduation standards in an intensive foreign-language learning program have about effective language learning strategies?

The quantitative portion of the study used the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) for English speakers learning a new language, version 5.1 to determine the specific LLSs used by the participants. An additional scale was used to measure the perceived effectiveness of each strategy. The findings from the questionnaires were correlated with each student’s LP scores, as measured by the DLPT5 and the OPI. The researcher analyzed quantitative responses using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS-20) software.

The qualitative component of the study examined student perceptions about effective LLSs. This was accomplished through face-to-face interviews with graduates who reached proficiency levels of 2+/2+/2 or higher. An open-ended interview protocol, the Language Learning Strategies Interview Protocol, was used to examine student perceptions about effective LLSs. This was the basis of the semi-structured, one-on-one interviews, which included ten open-ended questions. The researcher analyzed the qualitative data via NVivo 10 software.

Data Analysis and Findings

Research Question One was answered by using descriptive and correlation statistics. A Spearman’s rank-order correlation was run to assess the relationship between six groups using LLSs and LPs in listening, reading, and speaking. The statistical analysis revealed that out of six groups of strategies, only one group, cognitive strategies, had a significant relationship with speaking proficiency. There was moderate to low positive correlation between cognitive strategies use and LP in speaking, \( r_s (77) = .335, p < 0.01 \).

Additionally, a Spearman’s rank-order correlation was run to assess the relationship between the use of each strategy in the SILL and LP in listening, reading, and speaking. The examination of the values of the correlation coefficient allowed determining the strengths of the correlation. Twenty strategies were associated with language proficiency: fourteen strategies were associated with speaking proficiency; two strategies with reading proficiency; and six with listening proficiency.

Research Question Two was answered by using descriptive statistics (i.e., frequencies and percentages). The pairwise comparison test was used to determine if the difference between the means of LLSs perceived effectiveness
was statistically significant. The mean scores, from high to low, were social strategies ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.126$); metacognitive strategies ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 0.20$); cognitive strategies ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 0.16$); affective strategies ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 0.17$); memory strategies ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 0.28$); and compensation strategies ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 0.51$). Social strategies were perceived to be the most effective, whereas compensation strategies were perceived to be the least effective of the six groups of LLSs.

Out of the top ten strategies perceived to be the most effective for improving language proficiency, five belonged to the cognitive group of strategies, four to the metacognitive, and one to the compensation group of strategies. Out of the ten strategies perceived to be the least effective, five were compensation, five memory, and one affective.

The pairwise comparison test was used to determine if the difference between the means of LLSs perceived effectiveness was statistically significant. There was no statistically significant difference between means of social, metacognitive, and cognitive strategies or between means of the affective, memory, and compensation strategies. Social, metacognitive, and cognitive strategies were perceived to be significantly more effective than memory, affective, and compensation strategies.

Research Question Three was answered by using t-tests to determine if the mean difference between students learning foreign languages in different language categories was statistically significant in terms of strategy use and perceived effectiveness. The confidence level was set at 95% with $p \leq 0.05$. Descriptive statistics provided information about the frequency of the strategy use and the perceived effectiveness for each group and for the entire group of the participants. Mean scores of each strategy category and of each individual strategy were calculated.

Spanish students used more strategies ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.38$) than Korean students ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 0.34$). Out of six groups of strategies, Spanish students used more strategies in each group than did Korean students, with the exception of compensation strategies (statistically significant difference). Spanish students perceived five out of six groups of LLSs to be more effective than did Korean students, with the exception of affective strategies.

Research Question Four was answered through content analysis of the interview transcripts. Respondents provided answers to ten open-ended questions from the Language Learning Strategies Interview Protocol. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed afterwards. The researcher reviewed and cross-referenced final transcripts with the recording to ensure accuracy of the transcription. Data were analyzed with NVivo software. As a result of the analysis, twelve major themes emerged:
1. Developing effective LLSs;
2. Strategies for listening;
3. Strategies for overall proficiency;
4. Biggest challenge;
5. Strategies for speaking;
6. Strategies for reading;
7. Recommendations to a new student;
8. Top 3 strategies;
9. Vocabulary strategies;
10. Test-taking strategies;
11. Using LLSs;
12. Ineffective LLSs.

The DLIFLC language-learning program is the beginning of a military linguist’s career. It is the time when learners build the foundation of their strategic behavior. LLSs may be tools to help students become better language learners. Teachers can help students master this tool, thus promoting lifelong language learning.

Note

1. A reference list is available in the full text of the dissertation.

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The Relationship between Postsecondary Foreign Language Teachers’ Beliefs in Student-Centeredness and Their Educational Technology Practices

Dissertation Abstract

Ra’ed Qasem

Investigations of the educational technology practices of postsecondary foreign language (FL) teachers suggested that they have not fully exploited the available computer technology to maximize student-centered language instruction and learning (Arnold, 2007; Cummings, 2008; Erben & Sarieva, 2008; Zhao, 2005). There is a lack of studies that have examined the reasons for this underuse among this particular segment of teachers. Research from K-12 FL instruction and other general education disciplines suggested that teachers’ beliefs in student-centeredness affect the way and the frequency with which they use computer technology for FL student-centered language instruction and learning (Levin & Wadmany, 2006; Matzen & Edmunds, 2007; Park & Ertmer, 2007; Palak & Walls, 2009). In contrast to those holding traditional teacher-centered beliefs, teachers with stronger beliefs in student-centeredness and constructivist teaching successfully integrate technology (Judson, 2006; Park & Ertmer, 2007; Wang, 2002; Windschitl & Sahl, 2002). Other researchers suggested that there is no relationship between teachers’ beliefs in student-centeredness and their educational technology practices (Judson, 2006; Wang, 2002; Windschitl & Sahl, 2002).

This dissertation addressed the lack of studies that attempt to unravel reasons behind computer technology underutilization among postsecondary FL teachers. Specifically, it addressed the need for a clear-cut expression of the correlation between beliefs and educational technology practices among postsecondary FL teachers. The specific problem addressed in this study was how beliefs in student-centeredness relate to educational technology practices among postsecondary FL teachers. Although the term Educational Technology can refer to the different types of analog technologies that teachers can use to support learning, here it refers specifically to the ethical practice of making learning easier and enhancing performance using digital computer technology and electronic hardware and software (Januszewski & Molenda, 2008). Student-centeredness is defined as an approach that minimizes lecturing and direct transmission of factual knowledge and maximizes opportunities that involve the
student in discussions, discovery learning, problem resolution; applied, analytical, and Web-based activities; research, group, and cooperative learning groups; and Internet use, word processing, the World Wide Web, and presentation software (Di Benedetto, 2005; Leu & Price-Rom, 2006).

The theoretical framework for this study was grounded primarily in Zhao and Cziko’s (2001) Perceptual Control Theory and was also informed by studies conducted by Ertmer (1999, 2005). Both frameworks operated upon the conviction that effective use of computer technology in learning and teaching could be promoted or inhibited by the teachers’ pedagogical beliefs. The research question that guided this study was this: what is the relationship between postsecondary FL teachers’ degree of belief in student-centeredness and the frequency with which they (a) use particular types of software in class; (b) direct students to use particular types of software for learning in class; and (c) employ various means of integrating computers in class.

The research method for this study was quantitative; the research design was correlational; and an online survey was the technique used for collecting data. A correlational design seemed the most appropriate because it allows for establishing the nature of the relationship between the variables without the need to manipulate or control them. Furthermore, a survey approach was preferred because of its effectiveness in describing the beliefs of a large sample.

The investigation conducted in this dissertation differs from existing studies in terms of the subjects studied, analytical approaches, and the implications of the findings, and it is significant for five reasons. First, the sample of this study is from in-service FL teachers who teach 17 languages in a postsecondary context. Second, this study is significant from an analytical perspective because FL teachers’ use of computer technology in the classroom was not regarded as a single, unitary construct (Bebell et al., 2004). Third, the study is significant because it identifies the nature of the relationship between student-centered beliefs and well-integrated computer technology, using technology in various ways for student involved learning. Fourth, the results of the study could be used to guide and design training and workshops that help postsecondary FL teachers advance from the entry level of technology integration to the levels of adoption, adaptation, appropriation, and invention. Finally, given the substantial financial investments in educational technology, it is important to the instructional leaders to understand how frequently and in what manner teachers use the available technology as well as how the pedagogical beliefs of teachers relate to their use of computer technology.

Through the use of a self-report, an online survey, teachers’ educational technology practices were measured in terms of the frequency with which they (a) use particular types of software in class; (b) direct students to use particular types of software for learning in class; and (c) employ various means of integrating computers in class. Teacher’s beliefs in student-centeredness, the
predictor variable, were measured in terms of the degree of belief in the centrality of the learner. By means of an internal email system, 1,200 faculty members received an email containing the consent form as well as the link to an electronic survey. After the deactivation of the survey, 248 teachers throughout the educational institute had responded to the survey.

In addition to a section soliciting demographics and background information, the instrument consisted of 50 items divided into four sections: Teacher software use (14 items); student software use (14 items); computer integration instructional strategies (12 items); and teacher beliefs in student-centeredness (10 items). The first three sections measured the three outcome variables, whereas the last section measured the predictor variable. The first three sections were adapted from the Perceptions of Computers and Technology (Hogarty, Lang, & Kromrey, 2003), and the last section was adapted from Mathews’ (2008) questionnaire about teachers’ beliefs in student- and teacher-centered approaches.

After the responses to the electronic questionnaire were collected, categorizing and coding the data commenced. The second step was selecting 0.05 as the significance level. The third step was using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 15, to ensure that the data met assumptions for correlational analysis. The fourth step was generating scatter graphs to assess the strength and direction of correlation between the predictor variable and each of the three outcome variables. Finally, because the variables’ measurement was in ordinal scale, the fifth step was calculating the Spearman’s rho to determine the direction and strength of correlation between the predictor variable and each of the three outcome variables.

Data analyses revealed that there is no correlation between beliefs in student-centeredness and teacher software use, student software use, or technology integration practices among postsecondary FL teachers. The finding calls into question the premise upon which current research approaches technology integration among teachers. Rather than assuming that teachers’ beliefs drive their actions, it is plausible that other factors such as their knowledge of technology and educational material (Pierson, 2001) affect their use of technology. This suggests that future researchers should consider focusing on exploring other factors that affect technology integration. Subsequent research could focus on those teachers who utilize the computer technology for high-level uses (Barron et al., 2003) to understand the reasons that encourage them to utilize the computer technology in such a manner and to determine the factors that initiated and supported their use in such a way.
Note

1. The complete reference list is available in the full text of the dissertation.

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Ra'ed Qasem, Ph. D. (Northcentral University). Associate Professor, Field Support, Continuing Education, Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center. Specializations: curriculum and instruction. Email: raed.qasem@dliflc.edu
Integrating Technology into Curriculum to Enhance Target Language Skills in Second Language Learners

Dissertation Abstract

Kamal Saleh

The purpose of this study is to enhance the Iraqi dialect curriculum at the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC) by integrating devices such as MacBook, iPad, Blackboard (Sakai), and SMART Boards with the intention of improving student learning experiences. The data were collected on a voluntary basis from members of the Armed Forces who studied the Iraqi dialect of the Arabic language at DLIFLC. To achieve the purpose of the study, a qualitative research survey was administered to 40 students. A questionnaire, which took 5-10 minutes to complete, and an interview that lasted between 15 and 20 minutes, were instruments used to collect the data.

Technology is currently used in language learning at the DLIFLC albeit in limited ways. There is much room for increasing the use of technology for improving the quality of learning. Using technology in the classroom in a planned manner may potentially improve the learning processes, thereby making it easier to manage the workload and increase efficiency.

The research aimed at understanding how technology could be integrated into the curriculum and tailored to meet the unique needs of students who were learning the Iraqi dialect. The study focused on determining the best way to introduce information technology into foreign language study. Using interviews and questionnaires, the researcher investigated students’ use of computers, tablets, and other technological aids such as simple recordings to discover which of them had the greatest potential to enhance the learning of a second language in general, and the Iraqi dialect of the Arabic language in particular. Because the goal of teaching any language was to ensure that learners could use the language appropriately and comfortably, it was of utmost importance to ensure that students have a solid mastery of the second language. The study concentrated on the question of whether technology use contributed to students’ mastery of the language.

The findings of the research showed that eleven students believed that the main reason for using technology was that it “assists learning and strengthens
Students also reported that technology devices promoted and enhanced learning, helped them develop language skills, and improved their language-learning capabilities. Results also indicated that most students who took part in the study had most experience in using an iPod. An iPad ranked second among students, followed third by MacBook.

The following conclusions can be drawn from the research. First, technology such as iPad, iPod, and MacBook can improve student comprehension and language skills. Second, students are interested in the use of technologic devices during class because they enhance the learning experience. Third, SMART Board is the best program to accommodate language learning in the classroom, according to the students.

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Student Feedback on the Homework Assignments Used during the Third Semester of the Undergraduate Persian Farsi Basic Course at the Defense Language Institute

Dissertation Abstract

Jahangir G. Saravani

Introduction

The research began in February 2013 and was completed in July 2013. The focus of the study was homework assignments, which seem to be problematic in the Institute’s schools. The purpose of this study was to elicit students’ feelings and opinions about the types of homework assignments that they received during the third semester.

One hundred and eight third-semester students volunteered to participate. The study was conducted in the third semester because the students had not been issued textbooks for the third semester; as a result, they received homework assignments developed by their teaching teams.

Ten years of teaching experience, dealing with learning materials, particularly homework assignments, and hearing students’ concerns were the most important factors that motivated the author to closely examine the homework issue in the Persian Farsi School (UPF) and determine the cause(s) of students’ dissatisfaction. At the time of this study students in the UPF School complained that 1) homework took up most of their free time, depriving them of time to do independent study or prepare for the next day’s classes; and 2) homework assignments were not effective or relevant to the daily learning objectives. Most complaints in the UPF School were about homework in the third semester at the time when the author collected data for this study.

Background

Since 2004 the Department of Defense (DOD) has increased its expectation of language proficiency for DLIFLC graduates and has employed a new assessment instrument, the DLPT5, to assess students’ listening and reading proficiency skills. The existing UPF School’s curriculum did not adequately
meet the new and higher demands of the DOD. Consequently, the DLIFLC’s management, with the cooperation of the UPF School, established a curriculum center to revise the existing curriculum to respond to the new demand. When the current study was conducted, the curriculum developers assigned to this center had already provided textbooks for the first semester, and were working on the second semester’s textbooks, but had not yet produced any textbooks for the third semester. As a result, the teachers of each teaching team were responsible for providing their students with ad hoc homework assignments.

Due to the diversity of teams in the UPF, there was a lack of uniformity in homework in the third semester. As an illustration, one team gave its students a homework book containing 40 assignments and asked the students to work on one assignment a day. Although this strategy was convenient for the teachers because they did not have to worry about delivering homework assignments each day, such assignments had little relevance to daily learning objectives.

In some teaching teams, instructors took turns assigning homework on a weekly basis. Although this method gave teachers enough time to produce an effective homework assignment, there was no control over the content of the homework assignment or its relevance to daily instructional objectives.

Regardless of the strategy that each teaching team used, the main problem was that both team leaders and instructors ended up with a collection of homework assignments that they used repeatedly for several years. As a result, students received outdated, irrelevant, and ineffective assignments that did not help them master the language.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to elicit students’ opinions about the types of homework assignments that they received during the third semester.

Hypothesis

Students believed the third semester’s homework assignments, as used at the time of the study, were not effective in advancing language proficiency and not helpful to them.

Research Questions

1. What types of homework assignments do students believe are most effective in helping them learn Persian Farsi?
2. What other kinds of homework assignments would students recommend as beneficial in the third semester?
Methodology

The research methodology employed in this study was qualitative; specifically, the phenomenology research strategy which required that the researcher seek the opinions and feelings of participants in the study about the effectiveness and helpfulness of the type of homework assignments that they received from their teaching team during the third semester.

The author designed and administered a questionnaire with 10 open-ended questions to collect the data to answer the research questions. Open-ended questions made it possible to gather in-depth information from the participants.

Students were fully informed about the nature and purpose of the study and were invited to sign a consent form prior to completing the survey. Participation was voluntary; the researcher ensured that students understood that they would suffer no consequences if they declined to participate in the study, or if they started to fill out the questionnaire and then decided not to complete it. The survey questionnaire was anonymous. Participants took the survey during the seventh hour (the last hour of the class day), and it took them about 15-20 minutes to complete it.

Limitations

In this study there were limitations beyond the control of the researcher, among which were the following:

- The participants in the study (67% of the third-semester students in the Persian Farsi School) might not have been representative because they were not randomly selected.
- The Persian Farsi School had six departments, but the data were collected from only four departments because the other two departments did not have any students in the third semester at the time of data collection. Therefore, the results of this study should not be generalized to the entire UPF School.
- Students were only allowed to participate in this study at the end of the class day (seventh hour). At this time of day many students were tired or in a rush to meet the demands of military duties and/or personal needs.
- The findings of this study should not be generalized or compared to those from various institutional settings such as public schools or colleges and institutions of higher education.
Delimitations

- The participants in this study were male and female military personnel who were studying Persian Farsi in the UPF School.
- The participants were limited to those students who, at the time of data collection, were in the third semester.
- The study was limited to the third-semester homework assignments.

Significance

This study has provided useful information about students’ opinions of the effects of different types of homework assignments on their learning. Learning about the most effective types of homework assignments will allow instructors to better design task-based homework assignments. Students’ feelings and opinions about the effectiveness of different types of homework assignments provide valuable information for UPF instructors in developing more effective homework tasks. The author hopes that the findings of this study will help teaching teams 1) share ideas and homework materials; and 2) attain uniformity in providing effective homework assignments.

Findings and Conclusion

The ultimate goal of this research was to learn about the source of students’ complaints about homework in order to be able to recommend possible solutions to UPF’s administrators. The results of this study indicate that students found only some types of homework assignments effective and beneficial for the third semester. For example, 61.12% of the participants either found homework with fill-in-the-blank assignments ineffective or extremely ineffective (38.9% believed they were ineffective, and 22.22% found them to be extremely ineffective) for the third semester.

The findings show that students had mixed feelings and opinions about the effectiveness and helpfulness of transcription, research on cultural topics for writing and reading, and a combination of two or three types of homework assignments. Participants’ opinions about the remaining types of homework assignments (multiple choice, constructed response, translation, and research on cultural topics for speaking) were relatively positive. This study elicited important evidence about homework issues such as the amount of homework, level of difficulty, quality of homework assignments, and quality of feedback on those assignments.
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Teacher Evaluation: Foreign-Language Teachers’ and Administrators’ Perspectives on Effective Evaluation Strategies and Processes

Dissertation Abstract

Deanna Tovar

Purpose

The purpose of this survey study was to examine foreign-language teachers’ and supervisors’ views regarding teacher-evaluation strategies and processes that contribute to teachers’ professional development for the ultimate purpose of improving classroom performance. The study asked foreign-language teachers and supervisors about various evaluation strategies such as classroom observation and student evaluation of teaching, and how these various strategies contribute to teachers’ professional development. The study explored teachers’ and supervisors’ views regarding the evaluation strategies and the role supervisors play in the conduct of the evaluations.

Theoretical Framework

Transformational leadership, developed by Bass (1985), served as the theoretical rationale for this study. Educational administrators who conduct teacher evaluations play a vital role as transformational leaders who guide teachers toward professional development and improved performance. Transformational leadership is recognized as a leadership model that motivates followers and positively impacts their work performance. Additionally, transformational leaders guide their followers toward performance beyond expectations (Bass, 1990; Krishnan, 2001; Seltzer & Bass, 1990) and focus on the developmental needs of their followers. Bass’s original model of transformational leadership consisted of four behaviors that contribute to transformational leadership: (a) charisma (idealized influence); (b) inspiration (inspirational motivation); (c) intellectual stimulation; and (d) individual consideration.
Methodology

The methodology of this mixed-methods study consisted of a self-administered, cross-sectional survey. A self-administered survey was determined to be the best method to collect the data for this study because this type of survey allows participants sufficient time for thoughtful responses. Moreover, when administered in group settings, self-administered surveys have a high response rate (Fowler, 2009).

A survey approach to data collection was viewed as appropriate for research on teacher evaluation because the goal of this research was to learn about teachers’ and supervisors’ perspectives on the effectiveness of teacher evaluation for the ultimate purpose of improving both the teacher-evaluation process and student achievement. Finally, a survey offered a practical and timely means of obtaining responses from the population.

The survey included both closed- and open-ended questions. A concurrent triangulation strategy was employed as the data were collected on one occasion and equal priority was given in the interpretation phase (Creswell, 2003). The researcher included quantitative data to show the frequency and magnitude of trends and to collect information from the survey instrument that would yield statistical data (Creswell, 2003, 2008). The qualitative data consisted of written responses to open-ended questions. These data were sought to clarify, elaborate, and validate the quantitative findings. Participants’ responses, in turn, gave the researcher a richer understanding of the teacher-evaluation phenomenon (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Data Sources

The following steps were taken in the data-collection process: A list of all participants, the foreign-language teachers and their supervisors, was obtained. The list accurately reflected the names of all teachers \(n = 147\) who had received an annual performance evaluation during the year prior to the study being conducted as well as the names of the supervisors \(n = 9\) who had evaluated their faculty members the prior year. Only foreign-language teachers and their supervisors who were currently employed were surveyed. The researcher asked the 147 teachers and the nine supervisors who evaluated them to fill out the questionnaire.

The survey was administered to participants in a group setting. The survey for teachers and supervisors was administered in separate meetings. The researcher included the administration of the teacher survey as an item on the agenda of various faculty meetings that were held throughout the school. At each faculty meeting, the researcher explained the purpose of the survey and informed the participants that their participation would be voluntary and thanked those willing
to fill out the survey. Participants were told that their help was important (Fowler, 2009) and that they would be informed of the potential benefits that could come from the research.

A separate meeting was held for the supervisors in which they were asked to participate in the survey. A process similar to the one used in the administration of the survey for teachers was followed. The researcher emphasized to the participants the voluntary nature of their participation in the study. The potential benefits of the survey were also explained to supervisors. Once the surveys were collected, the data were entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and analyzed. Data for both surveys were anonymous and confidential.

Results/Conclusions

This research showed the similarities and differences in perspectives held by teachers and their supervisors regarding teacher-evaluation strategies they use or experience. Findings also included teachers’ and supervisors’ perspectives regarding the effectiveness of these strategies and various evaluation processes. Additionally, the role of the supervisors as transformational leaders who help their followers grow and develop was explored. Many of the features of the teacher-evaluation program studied are positive and consistent with the guidelines and recommendations found in the literature. For example, teacher-evaluation strategies such as post-observation conferences and performance reviews seem to be implemented in a manner that promotes teachers’ professional development; however, there are areas that must be reviewed and adjusted to improve the evaluation system. Examples of teacher-evaluation strategies that should be examined for more effective implementation are pre-observation conferences and student evaluation of teaching. Aspects of the evaluation process that merit further review are the teacher performance standards, the teachers’ perspective that the supervisor is a fair assessor, and supervisors’ willingness to listen to changes the teacher might suggest for the evaluation process.

The data below serve as an example of this study’s findings. Table 1 includes the frequency and percentage of use or experience regarding the 11 teacher-evaluation strategies included in the survey. The data shown in the table include both supervisor and teacher totals. The evaluation strategies are listed in the table in the order of most used to least used or experienced.
Table 1
Supervisors’ and Teachers’ Perspectives on the Use of Teacher Evaluation Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Evaluation Strategy</th>
<th>Supervisors and Teachers (n = 143)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom observation</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student evaluations (I/ESQs)*</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-observation conference</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance reviews</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student feedback from sensing session</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written observation report</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ performance on standardized tests</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-observation conference</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-evaluation</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolios</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action research</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* I/ESQs = Interim/End of course Student Questionnaires.

The findings of this study have implications for teachers, supervisors, and educational and administrative personnel involved in teacher evaluation. The foreign-language teachers and supervisors who participated in the study shared their perspectives regarding the teacher-evaluation strategies and processes they used or experienced. Teachers and supervisors agreed that the four most used or experienced evaluation strategies are classroom observation, student evaluation of teaching, post-observation conferences, and performance reviews. Therefore, it will be important for both teachers and supervisors to fully understand the benefits and drawbacks of each evaluation strategy.

**Scholarly Significance**

There are abundant research studies pursuant to the topic of teacher evaluation in the K–12 and higher education settings. These studies address various aspects of teacher evaluation such as problems found in teacher evaluation and the various evaluation strategies used in teacher-evaluation programs (Beerens, 2000; Cardno, 1999; Stronge, Richard, & Catano, 2008). Researchers in the K–12 and higher education environments claimed that teacher evaluation should lead to improved teacher performance as well as professional growth and development (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Marincovich, 1998, 1999; Smith, 2008). There is not, however, a body of research into teacher evaluation in the context of educational institutions in the federal government. Furthermore, there are few studies that specifically examine the perspectives of both teachers and supervisors regarding teacher-evaluation strategies that they believe promote professional development.
Note

1. A complete list of references is in the dissertation.

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The Essential Role of Spirituality
In Living with an Acquired Physical Disability

Dissertation Abstract

Dongdong Zhang

Introduction and Current Literature

Three main aspects of my dissertation research are included in this abstract: Introduction and current literature; Methodology; and Discussion and Implications.

Exploration of spirituality has been a major aspiration and force in all cultures throughout history (Miller & Thoresen, 1999). Although spirituality has long been associated with people with disabilities, scientific inquiry into the impact of spirituality of living with disabilities has evolved over the past decade (Selway & Ashman, 1998). For people who acquired a physical disability later in life, research suggests that spirituality is a common way of coping. However, the emerging literature on spirituality and its impact on living with disabilities has been mostly fragmented and neglectful of individual differences (Do Rozario, 1997).

A major limitation across the existing studies is a lack of depth of insights into experiences of living with disabilities and the way in which spirituality impacts these experiences. Findings of qualitative studies regarding participants’ experiences are often presented with themes and/or categories, illustrated with short quotes. This procedure perpetuates stereotypical language, such as “I can cope with my disability because I have faith,” “Prayers help me,” or “God gives me courage to overcome difficulties.” In reality, these phrases reveal only a general idea of what the person is experiencing. They hide rather than uncover the true role of spirituality in the person’s life.
Methodology

Essentialist Portraiture

Adopting a unique qualitative method — essentialist portraiture (Witz, 2006; Witz, Goodwin, Hart, & Thomas, 2001), the purpose of this study was to discover the rich nature and essence of spirituality in the lives of people who acquired a physical disability. Essentialist portraiture is based on the work of Klaus G. Witz and his students over many years. It is designed to explore deeper aspects in human beings’ experiences and insights such as sources of inspiration and higher aspirations (Witz, 2006). It emphasizes sympathetic and empathetic understandings of participants’ feelings, experiences, and insights, examining the essence of phenomena, first at the individual level, and then examining a gamut cases. The essence and understandings are then presented in carefully structured portraits (Witz et al., 2001; Witz, 2006).

Participants

After a carefully designed recruitment process, four individuals with an acquired physical disability were chosen for this study. Michele was a resident of Illinois, a 27-year-old doctoral student who had been diagnosed with an incurable neuromuscular disease and walked with the help of a cane. Rosy was a 47-year-old woman who lived in Florida. She had a spinal cord injury and became a quadriplegic due to a car accident 22 years prior. Tim also resided in Florida and had had a below-knee amputation following a car accident 12 years before, at the age of 26. Jim lived in North Carolina. He was 48 years old and suffered a brain disorder when he was 28. Michele and Rosy were pseudonyms. Tim and Jim preferred using their real names.

Data Collection

In this study, data was collected via in-depth interviews. I conducted four to seven interviews with each participant. Each interview lasted 40-90 minutes. Based on the essentialist portraiture methodology, the philosophy of the interviewing was as follows: (1) considering participants as collaborators and co-explorers; and (2) interviewing for feelings and insights.

Data Analysis

The purpose of data analysis was to understand the essence of the phenomenon. It required the involvement of the researcher’s deeper self in conjunction with constant contemplation during the process. Besides applying this philosophical approach in the data analysis, two techniques were used in the data-analysis process. One was the creation of a timeline, and the other technique was to find important, suggestive, and expressive passages in the interviewing transcripts.
Writing Portraits

In general, I followed a chronological presentation and an excerpt-commentary format. My goal during the process of developing each portrait was to give the readers an organizational and conceptual structure, which would enable them to understand the essence (K. Witz, personal communication, June 9, 2005).

Cross-case Analysis

While reviewing the four portraits, I focused my attention on larger perspectives regarding participants’ spirituality and its role in their adjustment to disabilities that had not been brought out or emphasized in each individual portrait. I also attempted to identify the aspects held in common by the participants.

Discussion and Implications

Cross-case Discussion

Although each participant’s spirituality, that is, the spiritual relation to his or her disability, is a highly individualized phenomenon, a general finding and a insightful perception emerged across the four cases. Spirituality was well pronounced in the participants before they acquired any disability. It was the experience of a disability that brought them to a deeper sense of spirituality. Consequently, they were able to transcend the common notions and negativity associated with disability. Instead of viewing their disabilities as a punishment, tragedy, or loss, they embraced the experience as a singular opportunity to elevate thoughts and facilitate spiritual growth. In this regard, spirituality played an essential role in adjusting them to physical disabilities acquired.

Strengths and Significance of the Study

Three major strengths were revealed in this study. First, the study went beyond the use of public and stereotypical languages in the current literature. Second, the four portraits offered concrete examples of understanding individual ways of transcending a disability. Expert validation was the third strength of this study. Few studies had made such an attempt in social science by exploring spirituality as a deep subjective experience. Each portrait of the study enriched our understanding of transcendence as an inner human achievement. This study also supported essentialist portraiture as a powerful methodology to explore deep subjective experiences like spirituality.
Limitation of the Study

The researcher’s capacity of feeling and seeing the essence of the participant as well as articulating this essence in the portrait was critical. Therefore, all the elements of myself, including what kind of person I am, my understanding of spirituality, my state of mind, my life experiences, my ability to articulate deeper feelings and thoughts, and so on, could limit the depth of this research.

Implications

The essential role of spirituality in living with an acquired physical disability revealed in this study strongly supports the argument of incorporating spirituality into the current research and practice in the field of special education. I advocate for collaborative efforts from researchers, spiritual and religious communities, disability organizations, as well as practitioners. We should explore spirituality as a powerful resource within each individual. This has a great potential to improve the well-being and quality of life of people with disabilities. Future research can explore more cases of transcending disabilities. We can also explore experiences and insights from practitioners who have consciously or unconsciously incorporated spirituality into their professional work with people with disabilities. Additionally, we can explore possible ways of incorporating spirituality into the teacher education curriculum.

Note

1. A complete list of references is in the full text of the dissertation.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

2015

JULY

July 8-11 American Association of Teachers of French (AATF), Saguenay, Quebec, Canada. Information: www.frenchteachers.org.

NOVEMBER


2016

JANUARY


January 7-10 Modern Language Association (MLA) Convention, Austin, TX. Information: www.mla.org/convention.
January 7-10 American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages (AATSEEL), Austin, TX. Information: www.aatseel.org.

**FEBRUARY**

February 15-16 18th International Conference on Linguistics, Language Teaching and Learning, Barcelona, Spain. Information: www.waset.org/conference/2016/02/barcelona/ICLLTL


**MARCH**

March 10-12 Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (CSCTFL), Columbus, OH. Information: www.csctfl.org.

**APRIL**

April 5-8 Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) International Convention, Baltimore, MD. Information: www.tesol.org.


**MAY**


May 29 – June 3 NAFSA: Association of International Educators Annual Conference and Expo, Denver, CO. Information: www.nafsa.org.


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Li, Cong. (2013). Using YouTube to Enhance Students’ Cultural Knowledge and Vocabulary Retention. 23(1&2), p. 83.
Ma, Ruiqi. (2013). Using Role-Play in the Classroom to Improve Oral Proficiency. 23(1&2), p. 82.
McCaw, Tatiana. (2010). Seven Wonders of Russia: Student-Centered Project on Culture and Geography. 21(1&2), p. 27.


Slutsky, Leonid. (2010). Seven Wonders of Russia: Student-Centered Project on Culture and Geography. 21(1&2), p. 27.


INFORMATION FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Submission Information

Aims and Scope

The publication of this internal academic journal is to increase and share professional knowledge and information among Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC) faculty and staff, as well as to promote professional communication within the Defense Language Program.

*Dialog on Language Instruction* is a refereed journal devoted to applied research into all aspects of innovation in language learning and teaching. It publishes research articles, review articles, and book/materials reviews. The community-oriented columns – Faculty Forum, News and Views, Quick Tips, and Resources – provide a platform for faculty and staff to exchange professional information, ideas, and views. *Dialog on Language Instruction* prefers its contributors to provide articles that have a sound theoretical base with a visible practical application which can be generalized.

Specifications for Manuscripts

Prepare the manuscripts in accordance with the following requirements:

- Follow APA style (the 6th Edition) – the style set by the American Psychological Association;
- Do not exceed 6,000 words for research articles (not including reference, appendix, etc.);
- Use double spacing, with margins of one inch on four sides;
- Use Times New Roman font, size 12;
- Number pages consecutively;
- In black and white only, including tables and graphics;
- Create graphics and tables in a Microsoft Office application (Word, PowerPoint, Excel);
- Provide graphics and tables no more than 4.5” in width;
- Do not use the footnotes and endnotes function in MS Word. Insert a number formatted in superscript following a punctuation mark. Type notes on a separate page. Center the word “Notes” at the top of the page. Indent five spaces on the first line of each sequentially-numbered note; and
- Keep the layout of the text as simple as possible.
Submission Requirement

*Dialog on Language Instruction* publishes only original works that have not been previously published elsewhere and that are not under consideration by other publications. Reprints may be considered, under special circumstances, with the consent of the author(s) and/or publisher.

Send all submissions electronically to the Editor: jiaying.howard@dliflc.edu.

Review Process

Manuscripts will be acknowledged by the editor upon receipt and subsequently screened and sent out for peer review. Authors will be informed about the status of the article once the peer reviews have been received and processed. Reviewer comments will be shared with the authors.

Accepted Manuscripts: Once an article has been accepted for publication, the author will receive further instructions regarding the submission of the final copy.

Rejected Manuscripts: Manuscripts may be rejected for the following reasons:

- Inappropriate/unsuitable topic for DLIFLC;
- Lack of purpose or significance;
- Lack of originality and novelty;
- Flaws in study/research design/methods;
- Irrelevance to contemporary research/dialogs in the foreign language education profession;
- Poor organization of material;
- Deficiencies in writing; and
- Inadequate manuscript preparation.

Once the editor notifies the author that the manuscript is unacceptable, that ends the review process.

In some cases, an author whose manuscript has been rejected may decide to revise it and resubmit. However, as the quality of the revision is unpredictable, no promise may be made by this publication pursuant to reconsideration.

Correspondence

Send all inquiries and editorial correspondence by email to the Editor: jiaying.howard@dliflc.edu.
Guidelines for Manuscript Preparation

First, decide for which column you would like to write: Research Articles, Review Articles, Reviews, Faculty Forum, News and Views, Quick Tips, or Resources. Refer to the following pages for the specific requirement of each type of article.

Research Articles

Divide your manuscript into the following sections, and in this order:

1. Title and Author Information
2. Abstract
3. Body of the text, including:
   - Acknowledgements (optional)
   - Notes (optional)
   - References
   - Tables and figures (optional)
   - Appendixes (optional)

Ensure that your article has the following structure:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cover Page</th>
<th>Type the title of the article and the author’s name, position, school/department/office, contact information on a separate page to ensure anonymity in the review process. See the example below:</th>
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| Abstract            | Briefly state the purpose of the study, the principal results, and major conclusions in a concise and factual abstract of no more than 300 words.                                                |

| Introduction        | State the objectives, hypothesis, and research design. Provide adequate background information, but avoid a detailed literature survey or a summary of the results. |

| Literature Review   | Discuss the work that has had a direct impact on your study. Cite only research pertinent to a specific issue and avoid references with only tangential or general significance. Emphasize pertinent findings and relevant methodological issues. Provide the logical continuity between previous and present work. |
### Method
State the hypothesis of your study. Describe how you conducted the study. Give a brief synopsis of the methodology. Provide sufficient detail to allow the work to be replicated. You may develop the subsections pertaining to the participants, the materials, and the procedure.

**Participants.** Identify the number and type of participants. Indicate how they were selected. Provide major demographic characteristics.

**Materials.** Briefly describe the materials used and their function in the experiment.

**Procedure.** Describe each step in conducting the research, including the instructions to the participants, the formation of the groups, and the specific experimental manipulations.

### Results
State the results and describe them to justify the findings. Mention all relevant results, including those that run counter to the hypothesis.

### Discussion
Explore the significance of the results of the work, but do not repeat them. A combined Results and Discussion section is often appropriate. Avoid extensive citations and discussion of published literature.

### Conclusion
Describe the contribution of the study to the field. Identify conclusions and theoretical implications that can be drawn from your study. Do not simply repeat earlier sections.

### Acknowledgements
Identify those colleagues who may have contributed to the study and assisted you in preparing the manuscript.

### Notes
Use sparingly. Number them consecutively throughout the article. They should be listed on a separate page, which is to be entitled *Notes*.

### References
Submit on a separate page with the heading: References. References should be arranged first alphabetically, and then sorted chronologically if necessary. More than one reference from the same author(s) in the same year must be identified by the letter ‘a’, ‘b’, ‘c’, etc., placed after the year of publication. See examples below:


Appendix
Place detailed information (such as a sample of a questionnaire, a table, or a list) that would be distracting to read in the main body of the article.

Review Articles

It should describe, discuss, and evaluate several publications that fall into a topical category in foreign language education. The relative significance of the publications in the context of teaching realms should be pointed out. A review article should not exceed 6,000 words.

Reviews

Reviews of books, textbooks, scholarly works, dictionaries, tests, computer software, audio-visual materials, and other print or non-print materials on foreign language education will be considered for publication. Give a clear but brief statement of the work’s content and a critical assessment of its contribution to the profession. State both positive and negative aspects of the work(s). Keep quotations short. Do not send reviews that are merely descriptive. Reviews should not exceed 2,000 words.

Faculty Forum

This section provides an opportunity for faculty, through brief articles, to share ideas and exchange views on innovative foreign language education practices, or to comment on articles in previous issues or on matters of general academic interest. Forum articles should not exceed 2,000 words.

News and Reports

Reports on conferences, official trips, official visitors, special events, new instructional techniques, training opportunities, news items, etc. Reports should not exceed 1,000 words.
Quick Tips

Previously unpublished, original or innovative, easy to follow ideas for use in the language classroom or in any aspect of foreign language learning and teaching, such as technology tips, useful classroom activities, learner training tips, etc. (Examples include: Five strategies for a positive learning environment; Using iPad to develop instructional video; Four effective strategies for improving listening – tips that your colleagues can easily adapt to their classrooms). Tips should not exceed 800 words.

Resources

Brief write-ups on resources related to the foreign language education field, such as books, audio/video materials, tests, research reports, websites, computer and mobile apps, etc. Write-ups should not exceed 800 words.
CALL FOR PAPERS

*Dialog on Language Instruction* is an occasional, internal publication of the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC) and part of its professional development program. It provides a forum for faculty and staff at DLIFLC to exchange professional information. *Dialog* encourages submission of articles, reviews, forum articles, brief news items, quick tips, or resources.

**Deadline:** Submissions are welcome at any point. Manuscripts received by 31 January will be considered for the spring issue and by 31 July for the fall issue.

For guidelines in the preparation of your manuscript, please refer to the previous section (pp. 87-92): *Information for Contributors.*
**ERRATA**

The following list contains corrections to the *Dialog on Language Instruction* Volume 25(1):

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<td>Jing Zhou, <em>Asian School I, Undergraduate Education</em></td>
<td>Jing Zhou, <em>Residence Education, Continuing Education</em></td>
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