

# Florida Foreign Language Journal



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**Florida Foreign Language Journal Fall 2012**

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## Editors Acknowledgement

Dear reader, this is the ninth publication of FFLJ, and I thank FFLA, Inc., and the Editorial Review Board for their continuing support to make the journal possible. The mission statement of Florida Foreign Language Journal clearly states that the journal is the official academic organ of the Florida Foreign Language Association, and that its objective is to serve as a vehicle for expression by teachers, students and the greater general public who have an interest in furthering the instruction and knowledge of foreign languages. Therefore, I also thank the authors of the manuscripts in this issue of the Florida Foreign Language Journal. The readers will find an interesting study on student-instructor interaction by Gonzales, Youngblood and Giltner on a French class students' perception of the usefulness of feedback and the results of the study; an article by Rowe that offers interesting information on communicative language teaching and self-directed learning; Broome takes on the –Ra verbs in his article on as he states “the problematic verb” and how many Spanish writers use the -Ra verbs in their writing; White follows with his article on the online and hybrid classes trend that has become prevalent in today's educational system; the last article tackles the multicultural issues when developing a modern middle school, Potter infers in his writing that it takes a whole community to develop a solid and viable modern multicultural middle school by involving curriculum specialists, administrators, teachers, community, town hall meetings, debates etc., in designing the best possible middle school.

Enjoy the reading and share them with your peers. I encourage readers to submit manuscripts on research and review-oriented articles in the area of foreign language education and technology, program articulation, ESOL, culture, film, travel, FLES, national certification, multicultural instruction, multilevel teaching, diversity, foreign language advocacy, international programs and initiatives. Book reviews are also welcome. See the guidelines in this journal on submissions, or visit the website [www.ffla.us](http://www.ffla.us) for more information.

Sincerely,

*Betty Nielsen Green*

Editor



## President's Corner

Dear FFLJ contributors and readers, it's such an honor for me to recognize the hard work, dedication and passion that you demonstrate by contributing to the journal so that you can share the research you've done or the best practices that you carry out. Your work has an impact on our profession. I'd also like to thank the readers of the Florida Foreign Language Journal for working to keep current and to continuously improve your own professional practice.

You may not be aware of it, but Florida is the only state foreign language association to publish a professional journal. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to Dr. Betty Green for making this happen year after year. Dr. Green has been an FFLA board member for many years and has served in a number of capacities. In addition to her work as the editor of our FFLA Journal, she recently took on the role of Historian for our organization. Putting together the FFLJ is a huge job that Dr. Green has done for several years, spending many, many long hours meticulously checking and rechecking manuscripts, sending them out to appropriate peer reviewers, communicating with contributors and reviewers, editing, formatting and printing the Journal. She hasn't received the recognition and thanks that are due to her for her work and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Betty for representing our Association and us in such a dedicated and professional way.

I'm sure that those of you who attended our recent conference in St. Augustine were as energized as I was by Jon Valentine's message about becoming "Global Engagement Coordinators" in our districts and schools. I hope to carry the inspiration and hope that we got from his exciting message through the year and to encourage even more participation in our Association and specifically in the Journal. Please consider submitting a manuscript to the editor. The submission guidelines are on the website under "Publications" and help is available for first time contributors. I hope that we can strengthen and build our Journal and let everyone know what great things are going on in Florida.

This is a particularly important message now because of a wonderful opportunity that we'll have a year from this month. The American Council on Foreign Language Teaching will be having its' international conference at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando on International Drive. Start making plans now to attend this action-packed and dynamic conference. The Marzano institute is sending the Associate Director, Phil Warrick to address exactly how Marzano strategies look in World Languages Classes. As you may know, many of the new Teacher Evaluation Instruments in Florida were developed according to these very strategies. It's important for you to renew your FFLA membership before June 2013 (instead of in October as usual) because those who are already members

of FFLA when early bird registration opens can register for the ACTFL Conference at the ACTFL Member rate AND get the early bird discount—a total savings of \$130 for the \$30 FFLA membership fee. Find more information on our website.

*Pamela H. Benton*

Pam Benton, President

## **Mission Statement**

The Florida Foreign Language Journal is the official academic organ of the Florida Foreign Language Association. Its objective is to serve as a vehicle for expression by teachers, students and the greater general public who have an interest in furthering the instruction and knowledge of foreign languages. The journal seeks articles, reviews, notes and comments concerning any aspect of foreign language acquisition. The era where educational funding is often limited, where foreign, immigrant, and migrant students seek instructional equity, and where a greater number of students are desirous of learning a foreign language, it seems imperative to have such a journal. The journal reaches out especially to those already teaching a foreign language as well as those who are preparing for such a career. The demands on teachers are overwhelming today. There is a plethora of methodological approaches, technical apparatuses, and multi-faceted textbooks available, amidst a variety of instructions with diverse milieus and attitudes toward foreign language instruction. Such an environment creates a daunting challenge to practitioners of foreign language instruction.

The goal of FFLJ is a modest one; it is to serve as a sounding board and a reference point for those who teach and learn foreign languages. It is hoped that the journal will help foreign language enthusiasts and professionals form a community that shares its concerns, discoveries, and successes of issue in the foreign language domain. It is further hoped that our voices will become more numerous and ring more loudly as we proceed through what promises to be a century of challenge and opportunity for foreign languages. Our emphasis will be fostering better learning conditions and results for our students and teachers. FFLJ urges all readers and participants to become ardent advocates to further and safeguard foreign language practices.

## Manuscript Guidelines

The editor and editorial board welcome research and review-oriented articles in the area of: foreign language education and technology, program articulation, ESOL, culture, film, travel, FLES, national certification, multicultural instruction, multilevel teaching, diversity, foreign language advocacy, international programs and initiatives, availability of career positions etc.

We encourage you to submit previously unpublished articles for publication in the second issue that will feature pedagogical concerns, strategies, and successes in the language classroom, as well as methodologies, teacher preparation, ESOL, National Board Certification, and/or culture and diversity.

A double-blind review process will be followed, in which submitted manuscripts are distributed by the editor to 2-3 reviewers with expertise in the areas addressed in each manuscript. Written comments by reviewers and a recommendation on acceptance are returned to the editor, who then will communicate the comments and decision on acceptance to each author.

### Requirements - Manuscripts must:

1. Appeal to the instructional, administrative, or research interests of foreign/second language educators at K-16 levels of instruction.
2. Be substantive and present new ideas or new applications of information related to current trends and teaching in the language field.
3. Be well written, clearly organized, and carefully proofed.
4. Include a complete reference list at the end.
5. Be formatted according to guidelines in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 5th Ed. (2001). APA Style Resource.
6. Be no longer than 12-15 double-spaced pages in 12 pt. Times New Roman typeface, with 1½ inch margins, black text on white paper.
7. Be sent in triplicate (3 copies are necessary for review purposes).
8. Be submitted with no authors' names indicated (for review purposes).
9. Include a cover letter with the name, postal and e-mail addresses, and phone number of the first author (or other contact person) clearly noted.
10. Include an abstract of no more than 150 words.
11. Be sent with a biographical statement of 50 words or fewer for each author, including information on current job or title, institution, degrees held, professional experience, and any other relevant information.
12. Be sent in both hard copy and electronic formats. The electronic version must be saved as a Microsoft Word, .txt or .rtf document. Electronic versions may be submitted on a CD (PC compatible), or as an e-mail attachment.



13. Include any figures and tables in camera-ready format. Photographs, graphics, figures and tables must contribute to article content. Please be absolutely certain that all materials are complete with caption/credit information. Figures and Tables must be appropriately labeled in the article.
14. Not have been published previously and may not be under consideration for publication elsewhere.

Manuscripts submitted to FFLJ cannot be returned, so authors should keep a copy for themselves. Submissions will be acknowledged within one month of receipt.

The editor of FFLJ reserves the right to make editorial changes in any manuscript accepted for publication to enhance clarity or style. The author will be consulted only if the editing has been substantial, though the author will be able to review the article prior to publication.

Please follow the manuscript guidelines and send your submission to

Dr. Betty Nielsen Green, Editor  
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771 West River Oak Drive  
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### **Book Review Guidelines**

- Materials must have been published within the last three years.
- Review should be a maximum of three double-spaced pages.
- Each review must include complete bibliographic information, a description of the book/material, the audience for whom it is designed, and how well it accomplishes its purposes
- A cover letter should provide the author's name, postal and e-mail addresses, telephone number, and a brief (25-word) bibliographical statement.
- Reviews should be submitted as an email attachment in Microsoft Word.  
Send review to Marcela Van Olphen e-mail **Marcela.vanolphen@saintleo.edu**

Submissions of reviews for FFLJ 2013: Send to Dr. Betty Nielsen Green, Editor  
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Melanie C. Gonzalez, Alison M. Youngblood, Elizabeth Giltner

## **Student-Initiated Linguistic-Based Feedback versus Process-Oriented Feedback in Foreign Language Writing**

### **Abstract:**

A qualitative case study of three introductory French as foreign language classes at a university observed and analyzed the content of student-initiated interactions with the instructor to determine if students' requests centered more on linguistic or process-oriented issues in writing. Afterwards, we used semi-structured interviews to gain insight into student perceptions of the efficacy of the feedback they requested during the workshop. Results revealed a prevalence of student-initiated language-based questions during the class and an overall satisfaction with the oral corrective feedback they received.

*Keywords:* foreign language, French, composition, error correction, feedback, case study, qualitative

### **Introduction**

In second language (L2) research, the role of error correction in the development of writing has produced two theoretical camps. The first centers on explicit, corrective written feedback for linguistic errors such as syntax and lexical items in addition to content feedback (Ferris, 2010) to enable students to improve their productive language skills. A contrasting perspective shapes students' writing through the discovery and correction of linguistic as a part of the drafting and revision process where feedback is focused on content and organization (Ashwell, 2000; Zamel, 1992). Therefore, many studies have looked at the type and frequency of errors made by students and the relationship between the type of feedback offered and the reduction or elimination of errors in subsequent writing assignments (Ashwell, 2000; Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Chandler, 2003; Ferris & Roberts, 2001). However, to our knowledge, no studies have examined the kinds of questions students ask in a writing workshop to elicit feedback from the instruction and how students feel these questions help their writing development.

### Literature Review

The provision of corrective feedback on writing assignments is a debated issue within the field of L2 acquisition. Researchers not only contest whether feedback should be given, but also what type of feedback is best. From the writing theorist perspective, errors will take care of themselves over time (Zamel, 1992); however, it is difficult to assume that this theory can be applied with confidence to the second language classroom because of the fundamental differences in linguistic knowledge between these two groups of learners (Ferris, 2009). In 1996, Truscott stated that all forms of grammar correction in second language writing are ineffectual and ultimately harmful to the acquisition of a second language. Truscott hypothesized that grammar correction negatively affects student attitudes, involves too much time and energy in writing classrooms, and is ineffective as a teaching tool (Truscott, 1996; Truscott & Hsu, 2008). However, Furneaux, Paran, and Fairfax (2007) analyzed the feedback given to students by 110 teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) from Cyprus, France, Korea, Spain, and Thailand. They found that teachers overwhelmingly responded to students' papers from a linguistic lens as opposed to a communicative lens. Despite Truscott's position, direct, corrective feedback is a very real part of the second language classroom.

The work of Ferris and her supporters consistently argue in favor of written corrective feedback (WCF) for student writing when the goal is to increase linguistic accuracy. Ferris and Roberts (2001) found that explicit correction is valuable in helping students write with more accuracy. The study compared the writing of 72 university students who did not speak English as their first language. Students received feedback on linguistic errors in one of three forms: Circled with a categorical code, underlined, or none at all. Ferris and Roberts found that the students who received feedback, regardless of the type, were better at self-editing their papers. Bitchener and Knoch (2010) looked at different kinds of corrective feedback in a longitudinal study of 52 adult English learners and found that students who received direct, corrective feedback reduced their errors over the course of five writing assignments compared to the control group who received no linguistic feedback.

Studies which have investigated the effectiveness of content feedback as opposed to linguistic feedback are less numerous and have shown conflicting results. Fathman and Whalley (1990) found that providing students with both linguistic and content feedback produced changes at both the linguistic and organizational levels, which led them to conclude that providing both types of feedback was as effective as providing one rather than the other. Ashwell (2000) found that students had no preference for receiving one type of feedback and that “improvement in content quality was much less affected by feedback” than was grammatical accuracy (Ashwell, 2000, p. 243). Kepner (1991) and Fazio (2001) also found that when students’ writing was evaluated for accuracy, neither type of feedback was effective.

In short, many studies have investigated the role teachers’ WCF has on L2 students’ writing. There are also studies that investigated the influence of verbal feedback from peers during writing groups (Blain, 2001; Blain & Painchaud, 1999). However, no recent studies have examined the impact of student-initiated requests for verbal feedback from the in the process of writing a composition. This study will contribute to the body of knowledge by providing data on the type of feedback most often sought by a group of students in a beginning-level French as a foreign language class.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The objective of this case study is to explore the experience of error correction in a foreign language classroom for multiple sections of adults learning French at a university by analyzing multiple data sources (Creswell, 2007). To do so, we looked at student-initiated interactions with the instructor. In addition, we gathered data on how students felt the type of feedback they requested helped them achieve their language learning goals for that particular session. The goal of this study is to help researchers and language teachers achieve a more complete understanding of feedback as it is described by those who process it, rather than those who prescribe it.

### **Research Question**

First, during workshop-style writing assignments, do student-initiated interactions with the instructor tend to focus on linguistic or content items? To answer this question, we observed, transcribed, and coded six class periods where students completed a graded writing assignment. Second, what are students' perceptions of the efficacy of the feedback they requested during the workshop to achieve their language learning goals for the class session? To answer this question, we used a semi-structured interview protocol to interview student volunteers from the observed sections.

### **Methods**

#### **Research Setting**

The current study was conducted at a large public university in the southeastern United States. We observed student interactions with their instructor during six regularly scheduled class periods in a beginning French class on campus. Observations occurred over the course of two semesters: four observations in fall of 2011 and two in the spring of 2012. It should be noted that these workshops were an existing part of the course, per the syllabus, and we did not alter the content or structure of the workshops. Students did not receive extra credit of any kind for participating in the study or volunteering for the follow-up interview.

#### **Sample**

**Sampling procedure.** We used purposive sampling as described by Patton (2002) because the sample, according to our demographic survey, does represent a typical introductory foreign language classroom at the post-secondary institution where the study took place (as cited by Glesne, 2011).

**Informant demographics.** Informants in this study (n=83) were university-level students enrolled in one of three sections of an introductory French language course. Based on the results of a demographic survey, the informants were monolingual English speakers between the ages of 18 and 20 years old. The average participant was in the third year of study at the university. Only one informant had prior experience studying

French. While we realize each section has its own distinct personality and patterns of interaction, the students in all sections have a similar background in regards to their prior exposure to French and demographic details. We are confident, therefore, that these three sections can be included in one case study and the data gathered during observations and interviews will be more similar than different between sections.

### **Data Collection**

Data was collected during a total of six class periods over the fall and spring semester. In the fall, we observed two 50-minute class periods for each section in the sample for a total of four observations. In the spring, we observed two more 50-minute class periods of one section. The observations occurred during in-class writing assignments using the same prompts. The first composition asked students to write a paragraph about their daily routine; the second had them write about their future career plans. Student compositions had to be at least 100 words in length and students were required to use grammar and vocabulary studied to date. During the workshop, students could consult the instructor, classmates, and any print source to assist them. They also brought the assignment home to for final revisions and turned it in the following class period.

**Observations.** We took several steps to triangulate the data to validate our conclusions (Glesne, 2011). First, the researcher/instructor carried a small digital tape recorder during the classes, which allowed her to record the interactions of the students from her vantage point. Second, a reflective matrix was created for this project to allow the researcher/instructor to keep a general tally of the various interactions she participated in to provide a frame of reference when reviewing the audiotape. Finally, the other two researchers positioned themselves in opposite corners of the classroom to take field notes. Field notes were both descriptive and analytic in order to facilitate an honest analysis at a later point (Glesne, 2011). Immediately following the observations, researchers typed their respective full field notes before debriefing.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

The full field notes from two researchers and the interpretive matrix of the researcher/instructor were compared with the transcribed audio-recordings for each observation session to create the compiled field notes. Each researcher then independently coded the compiled field notes based on eleven subcategories that distinguished linguistic and content feedback. Nine of these subcategories were created a priori based on our own experiences as language teachers. However, after reviewing the data, we revised our coding scheme to include two additional categories. In the event that we did not agree on how to code a student-question, we consulted an outside researcher with expertise in linguistics.

**Individual Interviews.** To further our observations and to follow the interpretive tradition presented by Glesne (2011), the researchers invited all participants to volunteer their thoughts in a short interview following the final day of observations. Two researchers stayed after each of the final sessions to interview students and also made themselves available throughout the following week. The researcher/instructor did not conduct any of the interviews in order to avoid any possible conflicts of interest. A semi-structured interview protocol was followed. The interview consisted of a short script to describe the purpose, a brief reminder of some of the questions the observers heard the participant ask, seven open-ended questions to elicit student perceptions, and four demographic questions to conclude. Seven informants volunteered to be interviewed.

### **Potential Threats to Validity and Reliability**

There are several potential threats to validity as identified by Campbell and Stanley (1963) that are relevant to this study. First, student absences are a normal threat to classroom research. Not all of the students present during the first observation were present during the second observation of their section. Second, there is the possibility that any changes in student-initiated questions occurred because of their ever-growing knowledge of French. Finally, we tried to be as unobtrusive as possible, but our mere presence in the classroom could have an effect on student behavior. However, the instructor expended a lot of energy on building a rapport and trust with her students.



Therefore, we were grateful to our fellow researcher/instructor for allowing us to build on the trust already established (Glesne, 2011).

For the purposes of this study, we chose to observe two bounded cases with a follow-up case; however, as in any case study design, the choice to study more than one case threatens to potentially “dilute” the qualitative analysis, as no two cases are identical (Creswell, 2007, p. 76). However, as mentioned in the sampling section, the student demographics and language background allow the researchers to feel confident that the three classes can be included in a collective case study design. Most importantly, all classes had the same researcher/instructor and prompts, which enabled fidelity in the writing workshop environment.

Lastly, interviews were conducted on a voluntary basis. As a result, only seven students chose to participate. This is a challenge of conducting research in a classroom environment when class schedules and time constraints limit access to student informants. While we recognize this as a limitation, each of the seven participants interacted considerably with the instructor to construct their compositions. Therefore, those informants who did take the time to speak with the research team were able to provide some insight into the student point of view.

## **Findings**

### **Overall Results**

**Primary phase.** Informants sought feedback from the instructor a total of 168 times across both sections studied in the fall of 2011. Four major classifications of interactions were discovered: linguistic, content, undirected, and directions. Student-initiated interaction on linguistic issues occurred 139 times in the data. This represented 83% of the interactions in the writing workshops. Process-oriented feedback was observed 15 times in total. This represented 9% of occurrences. Also, 20 events, or 12%, were undirected in nature, which placed the determination of the type of feedback given on the instructor. Finally, 8 events, or 5%, centered on logistical classroom issues such as clarifying task instructions or inquiring about the status of grades.

**Follow-up study.** In the spring of 2012 follow-up, informants initiated feedback 77 times. Of the total number of events, 65 questions, or 86%, were linguistic in nature. Seven focused on content, seven were undirected, and nine revolved around directions. See figure 1 for a breakdown and comparison of student-initiated feedback by semester and by category.

### **Linguistic-based Student-Interactions**

For the purposes of this study, linguistic based interactions were broken down into discussions regarding one of the following categories: grammar, morphology, vocabulary, syntax, spelling, and questions regarding a combination of vocabulary, grammar, and syntax that addressed translation of phrases or complete sentences. We analyzed the data to see if any linguistic skill stood out. We found that concerns regarding vocabulary and grammar comprised the majority of interactions. When single item vocabulary questions and translations of words or phrases are evaluated, they accounted for 42% of interactions in both semesters. Grammatical concerns were a close second covering 38% of the question events. Students were observed eliciting vocabulary and grammar feedback from their instructor in a variety of ways such as, “What’s the word for ‘indecisive’?” or “How do you say ‘in the morning’?” or “Is it ‘I’m tired’ or ‘I’m sleepy’?” Given the sample of students were novice learners of French, their focus on lexical and grammatical accuracy seems to align with research in vocabulary and language development in that beginning language learners need the linguistic knowledge first in order to communicate ideas (Folse, 2004). Content and organization of these ideas are secondary to accurate use of the language because without words, the other lexical categories cannot be expressed.

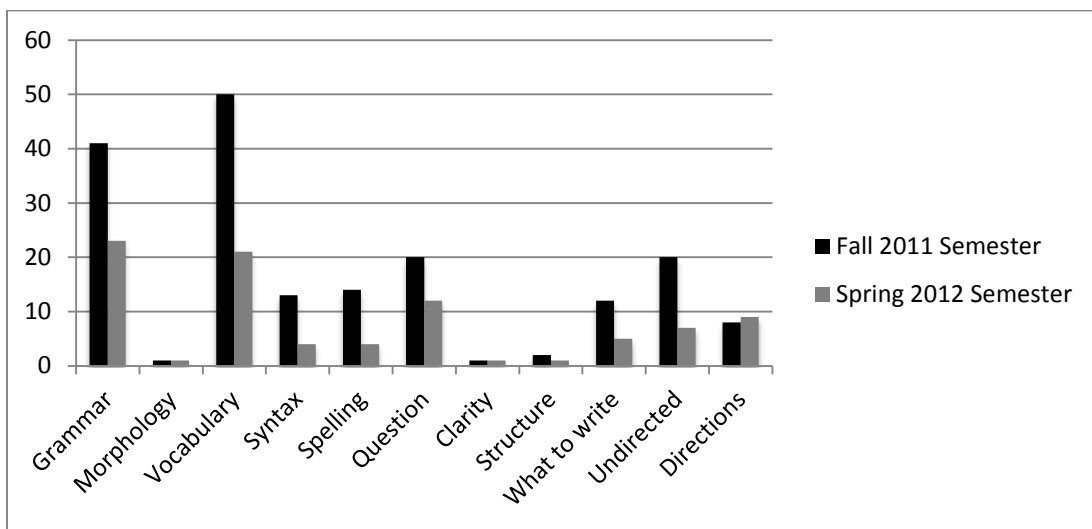


Figure 1. Bar graph of types of questions asked

### Content-based Student-Interactions

The content based interactions focused on clarification of writings, discourse structure, and requests for help on what to write. While content based interactions only represented a smaller percentage of the findings, we found it interesting that content or process-oriented questions seemed to revolve around concerns over their compositions sounding plain or simple. For example, we observed the following student-teacher interactions, “How monotonous do you want this?” or “How honest do we have to be?” We conjecture this reflects the writers’ struggle with becoming a novice communicator. The lack of linguistic knowledge does not permit a more stylized and sophisticated voice to which they are accustomed. Furthermore, the researchers believe that the focus of their content-based questions could help explain the dominance of vocabulary-based feedback requested.

### Undirected Student-Initiated Feedback

This category of questions was illustrated with questions such as “Do I just say this?” or “Is this sentence right?” or “Can you look at what I wrote?” This category was the third most popular question, accounting for 13% of the question events. We believe that these questions, even though undirected in their search for feedback, were closely

related to vocabulary. Upon careful analysis of the interactions immediately following these questions, they all included a discussion of a vocabulary word. However, since these questions transferred the power of information transfer to the instructor, we feel that this might more accurately represent the instructor's personal bias on the importance of vocabulary development for second language writing skills.

### **Interview Data**

In regards to the second research question of students' perceptions of the feedback they received, interviews revealed a majority positive view of the feedback students received from the instructor. The informants felt satisfied that the instructor's feedback was "exactly what [they] needed" and "helpful" in allowing them to achieve their goals for the composition. Results, however, were mixed on what type of feedback the students preferred. Informants stated they enjoyed the teacher's overall implicit approach to providing feedback despite the majority of her responses during the observation being explicit. Yet, the two instances where informants reported dissatisfaction with the instructor's responses, they cited implicit feedback as the main reason for their discontent. Nonetheless, the data is somewhat limited due to a small number of informants able to participate in the interviews.

### **Conclusion**

Foremost, this study sought to determine through observation if foreign language students solicited more linguistic or process-oriented feedback from their instructor in a writing workshop. Results revealed a heavy demand for linguistic feedback, with lexical and grammatical concerns taking top priority.

Given the linguistic nature of questions asked by the participants, there are two main implications for foreign language writing instruction based on the results of this study. First, since results suggest students concern themselves principally with the accuracy of vocabulary and grammar, instructor feedback can benefit from taking a similar approach to aiding students during the writing process. Second, instructors can

tailor writing instruction prior to the composition stage in anticipation for the number of linguistic-based concerns students will have once they begin writing. Based on these findings, we suggest future research to longitudinally study student-initiated feedback from one class with multiple interviews to capture students' treatment of corrective feedback over time.

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**Barry Rowe**

**Communicative language Teaching and Self-Directed Learning**

**Abstract**

Communicative language teaching allows for teachers to plan more authentic language learning activities. Students appreciate these real-life activities and appear to be more motivated in these learning pursuits. This paper will present the preliminary findings of an ongoing research project in Eastern Canada. Secondary school students' French proficiency levels were measured before and after a pedagogical intervention by the teacher. Global simulations were organized in classes for a period of several weeks. Additionally, participants' self-directed learning readiness was measured using the Guglielmino Learning Preference Assessment (LPA). Analysis and commentary regarding students learning success and comparisons between LPA scores and learning proficiency results will be presented.

**Introduction:**

The teaching of French-as-a-Second-Language (FSL) in Canada continues to receive increased attention. Pedagogy has evolved from more traditional approaches such as grammar-translation to more communicative and experiential approaches. Changes in pedagogical approaches to FSL teaching and learning can have different impacts on FSL learners. FSL programs in Canada and their efficacy have been the object of much discussion and debate. As a result, a number of studies have been undertaken to determine the problems and ways of ameliorating the situation (Rehorick, 1993).

While FSL programs in Canada have not been systematically evaluated on a wide scale, the studies of the program that have been undertaken (Shapson, Kaufman and Durward, 1978; Stern, 1982; Lapkin, Harley and Taylor, 1993; Calman and Daniel, 1998;

Turnbull, 1999) indicate that the results of Core French are far from satisfactory. Some provinces in Canada have begun to collect data on the effectiveness of their FSL programs at all grade levels.

FSL registration and participation rates continue to decline in Canadian secondary schools. In 2002, it was noted that approximately 16% of eligible students in Atlantic Canada were registered in FSL courses. It appears that a negative attitude toward the study of FSL exists in many areas (APEF, 2002). School, school district and Ministry personnel continually seek explanations as to why secondary students would rather not continue their studies of Canada's second official language. Efforts are ongoing to understand this phenomenon and to increase overall FSL registration and participation rates. Student attitudes and specific learner characteristics are being analyzed as concerted attempts to more fully understand the problem. It is believed that learner readiness for self-directed learning has an impact on student participation and success.

**Statement of the Problem:**

FSL programs present secondary school students with a unique environment wherein they pursue their literacy development in a language other than their maternal language. Recent studies have indicated a high level of student dissatisfaction and attrition. Additionally, FSL proficiency levels appear to be below targeted outcome levels (APEF, 2002). Global simulations, an approach to teaching FSL through role playing, have been identified as an effective second / foreign language teaching methodology (Charrière et Magnin, 1998; Levine, 2004; Yaiche, 1996). They allow teachers to



reproduce “reality” within the confines of a classroom and FSL acquisition is often enhanced.

Global simulations differ from more traditional language teaching methodologies in that they are teacher-led and teacher-guided and allow for students to decide learning activities within certain parameters. Students are guided to create various authentic situations and scenarios thereby bringing to life characters and events mirroring the real world. By assuming roles and responsibilities in their second language, the learning experience becomes real and experiential. Various strategies promote increased student participation and encourage student choice in learning activities. Students are often required to act out short skits, create fictional characters and dream of possible destinations and surroundings in the French language and culture. These types of activities are authentic and very motivational for secondary school students.

It appears that implicit language acquisition is also enhanced through participation in these global simulation themes. Global simulations are often seen by secondary school students as motivating and fun-filled activities in FSL classrooms. Debyser (1996) and Pauthod (1996) provide two published examples of the many pedagogical resources that exist. Debyser (1996) suggests organizing an apartment building and having students play roles of people who live in the complex. Students would role play the interactions in such a setting; neighbours cooperate, cohabitate and sometimes disagree. Students are provided ample opportunity to imitate and create “real” life. The Pauthod (1996) resource suggests the creation of a hotel in an authentic French setting where students would assume roles of either working and/or visiting the hotel. From the personnel required to

effectively operate a hotel to those possible guest (couples, sports teams, business men, etc.) students must create authentic communicative dialogues in this setting. Both cited resources provide a wealth of ideas and suggestions for FSL teachers.

The determination as to whether this pedagogical approach can positively influence secondary students FSL participation rates would allow for more detailed program planning by school and school district personnel. Issues surrounding FSL participation rates continue to present conundrums to schools and school districts. This research project adds to our knowledge base in this area and attempts to clarify whether specific pedagogical interventions can positively impact FSL participation rates.

### **The Study:**

An action research project was undertaken in one Eastern Canadian school interested in improving their FSL program offering, registration and participation rates, and overall language proficiency. Action research is a systematic inquiry which “allows teachers to study their own classrooms - for example, their *own* instructional methods, their *own* students, their *own* assessments – in order to better understand them and be able to improve their quality or effectiveness” (Mertler, 2006, p.2). Additionally, Stringer (2006) posits that action research allows for us “to examine the ordinary, everyday, taken-for-granted ways in which we organize and carry out our private, social, and professional activities” (p. 156). Within the context of FSL teaching, action research appears to be an effective means to analyse new pedagogical approaches. Teachers personalize and adapt the approach to fit their local context or milieu; action research allows for this “personal touch”.

The teacher at this school was introduced to the idea of global simulations during a Ministry sponsored professional development session for secondary teachers. After this session, a group of teachers modified their FSL teaching approaches and incorporated global simulation activities into their daily FSL teaching for several weeks. The teacher in this research project was among that group. Students were observed and their progress documented during this field test.

Global simulations were introduced to two classes of students in January 2010. There were 30 students in Grade 11 and 12 students in Grade 12. For a six to eight week period, student learning activities were organized through global simulations and students were active participants in their own learning.

Prior to the beginning of this pedagogical intervention, students' levels of self-directed readiness for self-directed learning were measured by the Guglielmino Learning Preference Assessment (LPA). Additionally, students were interviewed orally (using the province's oral interview procedure and guide) in January 2010 and also after the global simulation unit in May – June 2010.

Focus groups with teachers and students were organized near the end of the study in order to analyse whether there were linkages between the Guglielmino LPA results and student success and/or teacher perceived student success.

### **Brief Summary of the Results:**

The Guglielmino LPA has been administered worldwide, and in many languages. The instrument has been administered to more than 300,000 adults and 10,000 children. It

was designed to measure the complex of attitudes, abilities and characteristics which comprise readiness to engage in self-directed learning. The mean score of past administrations for adults is 214.00 (Guglielmino, 1978). Table 1 presents the mean scores obtained by the Grade 11 and Grade 12 students who were participants in this research project.

**Table 1**  
**Guglielmino SDLRS Mean Scores**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Mean SDLRS</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>205.50</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>233.00</b>
<b>11 &amp; 12 Combined</b>	<b>213.33</b>

Teachers normally conduct oral interviews with their students at the end of the school year, and often during the examination periods. For this project, students were interviewed orally in January 2010, prior to the beginning of the global simulation experiences. They were subsequently re-interviewed in June 2010 – after the organized global simulation experiences. Table 2 presents the mean score results of these oral interviews, for both time frames.

**Table 2**  
**Oral Interview Scores**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>January 2010</b>	<b>June 2010</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>66.07</b>	<b>77.20</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>88.67</b>	<b>84.34</b>
<b>11 &amp; 12 Combined</b>	<b>73.00</b>	<b>80.00</b>

A brief analysis of the entire sample provides some interesting insights. 10 of the 30 Grade 11 students scored above the mean score of 214.00 in the Guglielmino LPA. 9 of these 10 students also had improved scores between the January and June oral interview procedures. It appears as though more readiness to learn and also more openness to the global simulation approach may result in an increase in language proficiency. The situation, however, is not as clear with the Grade 12 group. Of the 12 students, 9 scored above the mean score of 214.00. Only 3 of these 9 students showed an improvement in language proficiency between January and June. Further discussion, analysis and discussion are necessary to better understand these findings.

The oral interview results in general are also interesting. Grade 11 students seemed to have improved more “globally” than did their Grade 12 counterparts.

### **Discussion**

The results of this research project provide some very interesting discussion. First of all, with regards to the administration of the Guiglielmino LPA, the teacher's assumptions regarding specific student scores were sometimes incorrect. An educator's assumption as to whether his or her learners are self-directed is often influenced by other, ongoing learning activities.

The discussion of LPA results and the relationships between language learning successes is very intriguing. A discussion with the teacher presented several interesting conundrums. The teacher appeared to want to equate high levels "self-direction" (i.e., high LPA scores) with average or above average academic accomplishments and high grades. The teacher posited that highly self-directed language learners were more successful in their FSL learning experiences than others. Conversely, they envisioned those "lower" self-directed learners (i.e., low LPA scores) to encompass those students who struggle with school academics in general, and FLS learning specifically.

The LPA results from this study indicate that the mean score for Grade 11 students scored was below the published mean score by Guglielmino. Conversely, the Grade 12 students scored higher than this mean score. It was expected that the Grade 12 students would therefore perform better through the organized simulation activities. Such was not the case, as the Grade 11 student scores improved from January to June, and the Grade 12 student scores did not improve.

### **Concluding Commentary**

It appears that students' self-directed learning readiness impacted their participation in and success with the (global simulations) pedagogical intervention. These students chose to enrol in FSL courses. Their inherent self-direction regarding their academic choices appears to transfer to their FSL acquisition endeavours. Their measured LPA levels, however, cause some debate and concern. On the one hand, it appears that these scores are indicative of success. On the other hand, there is some debate amongst the teachers that these scores truly present the realities of FSL classrooms.

Furthermore, learner attitudes regarding FSL learning appeared to have changed somewhat when students were given some choice and control of their learning activities. The global simulation experience allows for much student choice and autonomy. This "within learner" choice and flexibility, and their "invisible" traits of self-directed learning appear to combine for success. It seems as though they appreciated the flexibility of the pedagogical approach and were therefore more inclined to more openly participate, and to concentrate their efforts to acquire a new language.

These findings would be of interest to FSL (and other second / foreign language) teachers. Additionally, personnel responsible for the development and elaboration of school, district and province/state language programs would benefit from an awareness of the results of this research project. FSL learners appear to be more engaged and more interested in their learning as a result of these pedagogical modifications. Global simulations appear to peak the interest of FSL learners and they enjoy the learning activities. They enjoy deciding, influencing and participating directly in the learning

planning phases, and hence take ownership of the process. Furthermore, it seems that promoting learner choice, learner self-direction and pedagogical flexibility and authenticity all have a positive impact on FSL learning attitudes.

Further research in this area will involve the (re)administration of the Guglielmino LPA to groups of FSL learners, and more detailed follow-up with these research participants. It is certain that research into variables such as learning preferences and learner attitudes can assist FSL teachers and learners. It appears that self-directed learning readiness is a useful attribute deserving of more attention and research.

Semi-structured interviews with FSL learners after LPA results have been calculated and analyses would allow for the possible identification of factors and characteristics which could further assist FSL personnel. These interviews could be organized by LPA score results. Additionally, focus group sessions with participants having a variety of LPA scores could highlight other important information and learner attributes. A more expanded knowledge of participant readiness levels for self-directed learning in FSL learning settings would be beneficial for FSL teachers as they make future curriculum and instruction plans.

\*\* Earlier similar version of this paper was presented at the International Self-Directed Learning Symposium in Cocoa Beach, Florida in February 2012 and also at the Annual Conference of the Canadian Association of applied Linguistics in Fredericton, New Brunswick in June 2011. \*\*

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Darron Broome

### ***-Ra* Form of Spanish Verbs**

The goal of this paper is to shed light on this problematic verb form in Spanish and how and why contemporary Latin American novelists such as Isabel Allende use it in their literature. First, this study will present how this verb form is derived from Latin and how it continues to survive through modern Spanish. Second, the paper will take a look at what some of the leading grammarians of the Spanish language say about the *-ra* verb form, and what are some of the possible meanings. Third, I will introduce possible reasons why writers and speakers of Spanish continue to utilize it. Finally, the paper will end with the *-ra* usage taken from Isabel Allende and some general conclusions.

As a Spanish professor and a non-native speaker of Spanish, I continue to struggle when teaching the differences in mood selection in Spanish – that is, distinguishing between the indicative and subjunctive mood. Spanish textbooks ranging from beginning to advanced levels reserve considerable space for mood selection in Spanish for the present tense but provide minimal explanation of mood selection in the past tense. Teaching mood selection in the present tense is not as problematic as in the past tense due to the fact that the verb endings will generally indicate the mood. However, this is not the case with the past tense. In modern Spanish, there are three verb forms that are formed from the preterite stem: *-se*, *-ra* for the imperfect subjunctive, and *-re* for the future subjunctive. Demonstrated with the verb *comer*, the three verb forms are: *comiese*, *comiera* and *comiere*. *-Ra* endings are most recognized as the forms for the imperfect subjunctive. Nevertheless, *-ra* verb endings do not always denote the subjunctive mood but also can denote the indicative mood. During my years teaching the Spanish language

I have found very few Spanish grammar books that give any explanation of *-ra* verb endings denoting the indicative mood. Leavitt Wright (1931) supports this claim, "...the indicative function of the *-ra* verb form is seldom mentioned in modern grammars; or, if it is usually dismissed with a mere statement or an incidental footnote, with hardly an example of its commonest usage" (p.109). For this reason, a great number of advanced language students of Spanish will assume upon reading or hearing *-ra* verb endings that the verb form is of the subjunctive mood. Due to this, students of Spanish may encounter difficulty with the *-ra* verb endings in particular in written Spanish. It is essential that students of Spanish have a deep understanding of the subjunctive in order to communicate effectively. Learners of Spanish frequently are overwhelmed by all the intricacies of verbs in Spanish such as the vast number of irregular verbs, the array of tenses, and mood selection. These intricacies of Spanish verbs will not be the focus of this paper. Instead, my aim in this paper is to shed light on this problematic verb form in Spanish and show how and why contemporary Latin American novelists, specifically Chilean novelist Isabel Allende, use it in their literature. First, this study will present how this verb form is derived from Latin and how it continues to survive through modern Spanish. Second, the paper will take a look at what some of the leading grammarians of the Spanish language say about the *-ra* verb form, and what are some of the possible meanings. Third, I will introduce possible reasons why writers and speakers of Spanish continue to utilize it. Finally, the paper will end with the *-ra* usage taken from Isabel Allende and some general conclusions.

The *-ra* form of Spanish verbs descends from the Latin indicative pluperfect. In the English language the pluperfect is a compound tense and is synonymous to the past perfect. The pluperfect is composed from the simple past of the auxiliary verb “to have” followed by a past participle. For example, Spanish verb *ser* in its *-ra* form is conjugated in first-person singular as *fuera*—this form derives from Latin verb *sum*, which has a similar conjugation in the Latin pluperfect: *fuera*m. A number of the leading advanced grammar books do not even mention this verb form whereas the ones that do give brief explanations. A highly recognized grammar, *Modern Spanish Syntax: A Study in Contrast* by Yolanda Solé and Carlos Solé (1977), makes no reference to the *-ra* indicative. According to Butt and Benjamin (1992) in *A New Reference Grammar of Modern Spanish*, the *-ra* form carries both subjunctive and indicative meanings. Furthermore, they write that the *-ra* form in the indicative has only a “pluperfect use” (p. 227). Another grammar book for advanced students of Spanish is *El español en síntesis*, which was a textbook I used as an undergraduate student. The authors of *El español en síntesis* state: “There is an archaic form of the pluperfect indicative ending in *-ra* which is occasionally used instead of the regular pluperfect indicative, or preterite particularly in journalistic Spanish” (1981, Neale-Silva and Lipski, p. 344). Surprisingly enough while doing research and digging up some old textbooks, I noted that this section had been scratched out in my textbook. Evidently, the instructor of this course did not place a great deal of importance on this verb form, considering he had asked the students to disregard this section. Unfortunately, I was not introduced to this verb until I was enrolled in a graduate course entitled *Modern Latin American Novel*. In the course the instructor pointed out its usage in the novel, *Doña Bárbara* by Rómulo Gallego. Without

a doubt, Butt's and Benjamin's (1982) *A New Reference Grammar of Modern Spanish* is an excellent resource for students of Spanish at all levels; consequently, the idea that the *-ra* form of Spanish verbs in the indicative mood denoting only the pluperfect is inaccurate. Spanish linguist Leavitt O. Wright (1926) rejects the notion that the *-ra* verb form is only used as a pluperfect in the indicative mood:

It will probably surprise many teachers of Spanish to learn that the use of the *-ar, -iera* form of the verb as an indicative is today common in Spanish-American newspapers, and that it is not only used as a pluperfect indicative but as often as a preterite or imperfect indicative. (p. 288)

Coincidentally, Benito Mozas (2002) states the *-ra* indicative can be used interchangeably with the conditional: “Es frecuente, también, la alternancia de las formas en *-ra* con las formas del condicional simple” (156). Later, he declares that substituting the imperfect with the *-ra* indicative would be considered to be a blatant error: “Mayor error supone utilizar estas formas con valor de pretérito imperfecto de indicativo: se ha confirmado la noticia que este periódico *diera*, por se ha confirmado la noticia que este periódico *daba*” (156). Furthermore, Amado Alonso and Pedro Henríquez claim that the *-ra* indicative should not replace the preterite, “...todavía es mayor error emplear estas formas del subjuntivo con valor de simple pretérito de indicativo” (156). Historically, the *-ra* indicative form was very common in Old Spanish but “after the fourteenth century, the *-ra* indicative form was rapidly replaced by the compound form (e.g., *había amado*) as well as by the indicative past tense forms upon whose functions it has encroached: the preterite, perfect, and imperfect” (Wright, 1931, p. 108). For three centuries after the

fourteenth century the *-ra* indicative was rarely used until the nineteenth century, since then it has continued in usage (Wright, p. 108). In addition, Butt and Benjamin (1982) write that the *-ra* form of the verb in the indicative is found in the subordinate clause; once again, this is not the case. Charles E. Kaney (1951) in his *American-Spanish Syntax* states that the *-ra* form in the indicative is “found most frequently in relative clauses, not rarely in adverbial clauses, and occasionally in main clauses” (174).

Some linguistics such as Charles Kany consider this verb form to be stylistic: “The use of the *-ra* form is common not only in Spanish-American newspapers but also in their best stylists...” (1951, p. 172) Also, Kany (1951) adds that “most Spanish-American writers” use this form in their writings (p. 171). Butt and Benjamin also support this stylistic feature of *-ra* indicative forms as it is “found in literature and journalism as a supposedly elegant alternative for the ordinary pluperfect using *había*” (p. 227). This stylistic feature is also supported by Angeles Sastre Ruano: “Su uso está en la actualidad bastante extendido, a pesar de ser poco recomendado, en la lengua de los medios de comunicación (prensa, radio y television)” (p. 29).

Another feature of the *-ra* indicative is that it is not as prevalent in peninsular Spanish as in Latin American Spanish. According to Kany, the *-ra* indicative is used by most Spanish-American writers and found most frequently in Northern speakers and writers (1967, 171-172). While introducing the *-ra* verb form most Spanish teachers present it with three functions: One, that it is the most common form of the past subjunctive. Second, it is found often in certain types of noun, adjective, and subordinate clauses. The other is an alternative to the conditional form. Undoubtedly, there exists

considerable debate on this verb form. Some critics consider it an error while others regard it as a style feature---affectation. However, some Spanish grammarians reject the idea of the *-ra* verb form such is the case with Spanish grammarian **Jerónimo Mallo**. In his article “El empleo de las formas del subjuntivo terminadas en “ra” con significación de tiempos del indicativo” Mallo (1947) concedes that teachers of Spanish are under obligation to say that the *-ra* verb form as an indicative is a solecism which breaks down the principles of the conjugation of verbs and is a serious threat against the bases of a Hispanic tongue (p.187). Mallo states, “Yo espero que el genio de la lengua, presente siempre en el espíritu de los nativos de habla española, terminará por rechazar y eliminar esta moda absurda” (p. 185) and “...los hispánicos, en su inmensa mayoría, no emplean la forma en “ra” indebidamente ni en la conversación ni en la correspondencia particular” (p.186). Along the same lines of Mallo, another critic, Andrés Bello calls it “un arcaísmo que debe evitarse porque tiende a producir confusión” (1921, p.487). Bello continues criticizing this verb form, “Lo peor es el abuso que se ha hecho de esta forma, empleándola no sólo en el sentido de *había amado*, sino en el de *amé, amaba y he amado*” (1921, p.487). Undoubtedly, this verb form does create confusion. In teaching conversational Spanish, teachers would have to agree with these critics because of its seldom use in spoken Spanish. However, if one wants to enjoy the great works of Hispanic writers, a learner of the Spanish language must be able to distinguish between the *-ra* indicative and *-ra* subjunctive in the written language. If teachers of Spanish do not address this issue, students will become even more unclear of the subjunctive in particular in the past tense.



To get a better understanding of the *-ra* verb form in contemporary literature, I selected three novels written by Isabel Allende: *Eva luna*, *Retrato en Sepia* and *Hija de la fortuna*. I chose the works by this writer because they are recent, which hopefully will provide a more accurate illustration of verb usage by a contemporary writer, and also, because they are written by a Latin American writer. As mentioned before, most peninsular writers seldom employ the *-ra* indicative save the few from northern Spain. Considering Allende is a best-selling novelist, one would have to agree that she writes for a wide audience. Her writing style would be suitable for all ranges of ages and education levels. I would not consider her too difficult for students of Spanish who are at the beginning stages reading literature.

The first novel for analysis is the oldest of the three, *Eva luna* written in 1988. In this novel, I found three cases of what I would consider as *-ra* indicative. The examples are in bold in the quotations.

Por último llegó a la region que en otros tiempos **fuera** próspera y por cuyos ríos bajaban canoas cargadas de olorosos granos de cacao, pero que el petróleo llevó a la ruina y ahora estaba devorada por la selva y la desidia de los hombres.(p.194) At last he came to a region that **had been** prosperous in bygone years; dugouts laden with aromatic cacao beans had floated down its river, but now it was a place ruined by oil fever, left to be devoured by the jungle and man's indolence.

Por todas partes iba la gente hablando, libres por fin del miedo que les *cerrra* la boca durante tantos años. (p. 166) Everywhere people were talking openly, liberated finally from the fear that *had sealed* their lips for so many years.

Tenía solo una observación, tal como le *manifestara* al Director de la Televisora Nacional en una entrevista reciente, habría que modificar esa payasada de las armas de masa y evitar cualquier mención del prostíbulo de Agua Santa, que no solo ponía en ridículo a los guardias y funcionarios del presidio, sino que resultaba totalmente inverosímil. (p. 280) He had only one observation, as he *had told* the Director of National Television in a recent conference: the nonsense about the weapons made with a kind of play dough would have to be modified and any mention of the brothel in Agua Santa would have to be deleted. It not only made the prison guards and the officers look ridiculous, it was totally unrealistic.

The three examples of *-ra* verb had pluperfect values: *fuera* [= había sido], *cerrara* [= había cerrado] and *manifestara* [= había manifestado], and all within relative clauses. The three examples do support Butt's and Benjamin's claim that the *-ra* verb form can have a pluperfect value.

*Hijo de la fortuna* written in 1999 and *Retrato en Sepaia* in 2000 are two more novels written by Allende. In *Hija de la fortuna*, I encountered three examples of the *-ar* verb form. The examples are:

En los años transcurridos desde que *fuera* secuestrado a bordo del *Liberty*, había escrito varias cartas al médico inglés, pero como andaba navegando, no obtuvo respuesta por mucho tiempo, hasta que al fin en Valparaíso, en febrero de 1849, el capitán John Summers recibió una carta suya y se la entregó. (p. 344) In the years that gone by since he *was* shanghaied onto the *Liberty* he had written several letters to the English physician but during the years at sea it had taken a long time to get an answer, until finally in Valparaíso, in February of 1849, Captain John Sommers had received a letter for him and delivered to him.

No sabía si era de día o de noche, si era martes o viernes, si habían pasado unas horas o varios años desde que *conociera* a ese joven. (p. 144) She didn't know whether it was day or night, Tuesday or Friday, whether it *had been* a few hours or several years since she had met that young man.

Ah Toy, la astuta mujer que *inventara* el espectáculo de los agujeros en la pared para ser atisbada, se había convertido en la mayor importancia de carne joven de la ciudad. (p. 375) Ah Toy, the clever woman who *had invented* the spectacle of the voyeuristic holes in the wall, had become the city's major importer of young flesh.

In the first example, *fuera* [=fue/había sido] most likely would have a preterite or possibly a pluperfect use. Certainly, in the last example, *inventara* has a pluperfect meaning [= había inventado]. In the first and second example we see two uses of the *-ra* form of the verb after the conjunction *desde que*. Nearly always, the verb form after the conjunction *desde que* is the subjunctive in the present tense for unfulfilled events. After

this conjunction in the past, it is only possible to use a verb form in the indicative mood. In these two examples, unquestionably the mood is indicative but in the *-ra* verb form, *fuera* [= *fue*]. Angeles Sastre Ruano comments on the usage of the *-ra* verb form after this subjunctive in how the verb can carry "...valor de pluscuamperfecto de indicativo o de simple (pretérito perfecto simple o pretérito indefinido)" (168). Butt and Benjamin also comment on the uses of *-ra* forms after *desde que*: "...written and formal spoken language, especially in Spain, and for no obvious reason, frequently uses the *-ra* form even for fulfilled events in the past" (228). Evidently, writer Isabel Allende is following a style used by peninsular writers.

The last novel to be analyzed for the use of the *-ra* verb form is *Retratro en Sepia*. The examples are the following:

Los abrazos que antes los **hicieran** tan felices se trocaron en combates que culminaban en treguas a largo plazo y venganzas memorables, como la cama florentina, pero ningún agravio destruyó su relación y hasta el final, cuando él cayó herido de muerte por una apoplejía, estuvieron unidos por una envidable complicidad de truhanes. (p. 23) The embraces that once **had made** them so happy turned into battles that culminated in long periods of truce and such memorable revenge as the Florentine bed, but nothing ever destroyed their relationship, and until the end, when Feliciano was fatally failed by a stroke, they were joined by the envidable complicity of true scoundrels.

Desde que *muriera* sus esposa en Hong Kong, Tao Chi'en se había consolado de vez en cuando con abrazos precipitados de mujeres pagadas. (p. 60) Since his wife *died* in Hong Kong, Tao Chi'en had occasionally consoled himself in the hasty embraces of paid women

La pasión que la *trastornara* a los dieciséis años, por la cual atravesó medio mundo y arriesgó varias veces la vida, había sido un espejismo que ahora le parecía absurdo entonces se había enamorado del amor, conformándose con las migajas que le daba un hombre más interesado en irse que en quedarse con ella. (p. 60) The passion that *has swept* over her at sixteen, a passion for which she had traveled halfway across the world and more than once risked her life, had been a mirage that seemed absurd by comparison. Then she had been in love with love, making the crumbs given her by a name more interested in leaving than in staying with her

Lo buscó durante cuatro años, convencida de que el joven idealista que *conociera* en Chile se había transformado en California en un bandido fantástico de nombre Joaquín Murieta. (p. 61) She had searched for him four years, convinced that the young idealist she HAD KNOWN in Chile had in California been transformed into the fabled bandit Joaquín Murieta

Se había vestido a la Americana por muchos años, pero desde que *obtuviera* la ciudadanía procuraba hacerlo con esmerada elegancia, como signo de respeto hacia su

patria adoptiva. (p. 335) Tao had followed American style for many years, but since he *obtained* his citizenship he tried to dress with meticulous elegance as a sign of respect for his adopted country.

Again, we see Allende's bias in using the *-ra* form after the conjunction *desde que* in the second and third example: *obtuviera* [= *obtuvo/había obtenido*] and *muriera* [= *murió*]. In the first example and third example are cases of the *-ra* form used as a pluperfect within an adjective clause: *hicieran* [= *habían hecho*], *trastornara* [= *había trastornado*].

In the three novels of Allende I only found thirteen cases of the *-ar* verb form. We can conclude that this verb form does not flourish in the writings of Isabel Allende. Nevertheless, like other Latin American writers Allende most likely will continue to use the *-ra* indicative. Certainly, the *-ra* indicative has not lost its appeal in the works of Allende. As mentioned earlier in my paper there are linguists who reject the idea of the *-ra* indicative. They have valid points on rejecting the verb form assuming the learner just wants to learn to speak the Spanish and not delight in the great works of Latin American writers such as Isabel Allende. However, Jerónimo Mallo, whom I quoted previously in my paper, elaborates more on the *-ra* verb form: “De mis lecturas y de mis años de residencia en Hispanomérica deduzco las siguientes conclusiones: a) no la emplean las grandes escritores; ... c)usan frecuentemente esta forma los escritores, periodistas y gacetilleros de baja calidad...” (p. 485). Moreno de Alba also supports the Mallo's claim that writers, journalists and gossip columnists make use of the *-ra* indicative in Latin America, in particular in Mexico, and adds that radio and television announcers employ

the verb form in their speech, as seen the following example: El equipo de fútbol América, que *derrotara* el pasado Domingo al Guadalajara, se enfrentará mañana al León” (83-84). Perhaps, Mallo would consider Isabel Allende to be a writer of “baja calidad.” If she is a low quality writer, then why is she a best-selling novelist and a leading literary figure in a number of university literature departments? It is my opinion that the *-ra* form as a past indicative is still fairly common form and will continue to be in Latin America amongst literary artists and journalists alike. As a teacher of Spanish, it is my obligation for my students to understand the *-ra* form in both the indicative and subjunctive moods, so they can enjoy and appreciate Spanish in both the spoken and written forms.

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**Input-based activities for implementation into hybrid language programs**

**ABSTRACT**

Given the trend for language programs to include online components in their curriculum, there is a need to consider the research on the effectiveness of activity types when designing these language programs. Structured Input (SI) activities have endured rigorous testing including comparisons with Traditional Instruction (VanPatten & Cadierno, 1993; VanPatten & Oikkenon, 1996), the role of explicit information along with SI activities (Benati, 2004; Farley, 2004; Sanz & Morgan-Short, 2004), and output-based instruction (Morgan-Short & Bowden, 2006). Studies have consistently produced findings suggesting that SI activities are as good as, if not more effective than, other types of instruction. Studies in other areas of input-based instructional types, such as Input Flood (IF) and Textual Enhancement (TE) have produced mixed findings. The focus of the present study is to return to the research on the effectiveness of these input-based instructional interventions and derive implications for choice of effective online activity delivery.

Within recent years, there has been a rise in language programs shifting from traditional face-to-face classes to either hybrid language classes (part online, part face-to-face), or fully online. In the case of the hybrid language program, one design that has been widely used is one that incorporates input-based activities online due prior to students' arrival to class, then followed up with in class interactive activities. In Florida alone, at least two large universities have made such a shift with their Spanish Basic Language Programs: Florida State University in 2005 and Florida Atlantic University in 2012. Both programs use the McGraw-Hill textbook titled *Sol y viento* (VanPatten, Leaser, and Keating, 2011). In these cases, as well as in most other cases, explicit

grammar information via animated tutorials, written grammatical information, and output-based activities are also available for students via the publisher's online platform as well as teacher created materials. One aspect to consider when designing hybrid language program curriculum is the research on the effectiveness of activity types to be integrated in the curriculum. The purpose of the present study is to focus on a few input-based instructional types that are suitable for online delivery along with the research comparing their effectiveness. The goal is to bridge the gap between research and practice by fueling the curriculum's design with what empirically has demonstrated its effectiveness through SLA research. In the current manuscript, I will only address a few select types of input-based instructional types and the relative research. That is not to say that there are not other useful types of input-based activities, nor that output is not important, they are simply beyond the scope of the present manuscript and therefore merit their own discussions.

First, a definition of terms is necessary. What is input? Input is defined as 'the language learners hear that is meant to convey a message' (VanPatten, 2004; p. 16). Input is not explicit grammar information about a target form or explicit error correction when a learner produces the incorrect target structure, but rather, input is the language data to which learners are exposed, which conveys a message based on meaning. During input activities, learners do not produce the target grammatical structure, they are simply held accountable for the content of the input in one way or another; an aspect that will be visited in the present discussion.

Why do input activities lend themselves well to online delivery? Considering that

all major theoretical frameworks in SLA posit a fundamental role for input (e.g., N. Ellis, 2007; Gass & Mackey, 2007; VanPatten, 2007; White, 2007), areas of instructed SLA research investigates ways in which instruction can enhance how L2 learners process input. In fact, Doughty (2003) has argued that, “the goal of L2 instruction should be to organize the processing space to enable adults to notice the cues *located in the input*, as they did when they were children. A guiding principle in this regard is to engage perceptual processes during implicit learning, rather than processes that promote metalinguistic awareness” (p. 298, emphasis original). In effect, learners’ exposure to input is crucial for their language development and successful language acquisition can not happen without input. VanPatten and Leiser (2006) posit “But is comprehensible input enough? It might be in the long run – but the business of language teaching is to help acquisition in any way it can. Given this aim, we might ask the following question: in what way can instruction help so that comprehensible input is indeed accessible and learners can maximize what they will do with it?” (9). That said, based on the research in SLA, certain types of input may better facilitate learners’ input processing than others and some other types of input may need to be paired with other types of activities or explicit information in order to facilitate acquisition.

### **Processing Instruction**

Among the various options of input-based instructional interventions, Processing Instruction (PI) has been the most widely researched. PI is an input-based pedagogical intervention stemming from one model of input processing (VanPatten, 2004, 2007), which targets the non-optimal default processing strategies learners employ while

processing input in order to make the appropriate form-meaning connections. An example of a non-optimal default processing strategy is the tendency for learners to assign the role of subject to the first noun or noun phrase in a sentence, which is known as the First Noun Principle (VanPatten, 2007). Learners tend to tag the first noun in an NP-V-NP sequence as the subject in the sentence when it actually may not be the subject. In Spanish, for example: *La ve Paco*. ‘Paco sees her’ (Her-CL-ACC 3RD FEM SG sees-VERB Paco – SUBJECT) may be misinterpreted as ‘She sees Paco.’. This is especially problematic because the object may be assigned the role of subject, which ultimately leads to an incorrect interpretation of the input. Ervin-Tripp (1974) observed this processing strategy with English speaking children attending a French-speaking school who tended to misinterpret the passive sentences in French as active sentences. VanPatten (1984) found that L2 learners of Spanish tended to misinterpret the accusative clitics in OVS sentences as the subject. Lee (1987) also found similar results with L2 learners of Spanish in that they also used an SVO strategy to interpret the sentences to which they were exposed. The issue at hand goes beyond the learner just getting the word order wrong; rather, the consequence for this type of misinterpretation for language learners is that acquisition of some structures, such as passives, OVS structures, case marking, etc., may be delayed. From the language teaching perspective, one of the goals is for learners to have as much success in as little time as possible to acquire language target forms. Therefore, part of the challenge is to find ways to facilitate the acquisition of target forms and speed up delayed processing.

PI, therefore, attempts to push learners away from non-optimal processing strategies and towards making the appropriate form-meaning connections. PI's effectiveness has been investigated with L2 learners of Spanish (e.g., Cadierno 1995; Cheng, 1995; Farley, 2001; Fernández, 2008; Morgan-Short & Bowden, 2006; VanPatten & Cadierno, 1993; VanPatten & Fernández, 2004; VanPatten & Oikkenon, 1996; VanPatten & Sanz, 1995), French (Benati & Lee, 2008; VanPatten & Wong, 2004), English (Benati & Lee, 2008), Italian (Benati, 2001, 2004), and Japanese (Lee & Benati, 2007). Benati and Lee (2008) and Lee and Benati (2007) present detailed discussions of these studies and their results. Learners' processing strategies targeted have included the First Noun Principle (learners tend to process the first noun or pronoun in a sentence as the subject), Sentence Location Principle (learners tend to process the first part of the sentence, then the last part of the sentence, and finally the middle), and the Lexical Preference Principle (learners tend to rely on the lexicon to interpret meaning when the same information is encoded elsewhere, such as in the tense of the verb), among others (see VanPatten 2007 for details on IP).

PI consists of three essential components: Explicit Information (EI), which includes form related explicit grammar information and processing strategy information, and Structured Input (SI). PI, in its entirety, has been investigated in some studies and in other studies its components have been isolated with the goal of determining the effectiveness of individual components (SI or EI) of PI (e.g., VanPatten and Cadierno, 1993; VanPatten and Oikkenon, 1996; Benati, 2004; Farley, 2004; Sanz and Morgan-Short, 2004; Wong,

2004; Benati and Lee, 2008; Fernández, 2008; Henry, Culman & VanPatten, 2009; Leeser and DeMil (in press), among others). Structured Input alone has consistently proven its effectiveness on interpretation and production of various target forms pertaining to various processing strategies.

### Structured Input

Structured Input activities consist of two general types: referential and affective. Referential activities require a right or wrong answer and they must rely on the target form to extract meaning from the input. Affective activities require learners to express a belief or opinion about the real world all the while without producing the target form. The present discussion will focus on referential activities due to their suitability for online delivery. Referential activities fit nicely into the hybrid language class paradigm because there is a right and a wrong answer. Figure 1 includes an example of a type referential SI item that learners can perform prior to arriving to class in a hybrid-format (translation not included in original material).

. [Student reads: “La abuela lo escucha”] (“The grandmother listens to him”)



Figure 1. Referential Structured Input Activity

In this activity, as it has been operationalized and demonstrated as effective in instructed SLA research, learners would be given feedback in the form of ‘correct’ or ‘incorrect’ and then move on to the next item. In the online environment, learners could progress through a series of these items. What is important to keep in mind when addressing PI and SI is how they are distinguished from other types of instruction. PI and SI are directed at altering learners’ non-optimal (*default*) processing strategies as identified by the principles of Input Processing. These instructional interventions serve as training for learners to alter their non-optimal (*default*) processing strategies and adopt more optimal processing strategies. The foundation of PI/SI is in input processing whereas other input-based instructional types such as those related to Input Enhancement, (i.e., Input Flood and Text Enhancement), are predicated on learners’ noticing of the target forms based on the Noticing Hypothesis. Research and activity types in the area of input enhancement will be examined in turn.

### **Input Enhancement**

Research has investigated the effects of manipulating learners’ exposure to input through Input Enhancement. Sharwood Smith (1993) used the term Input Enhancement to refer to any attempt to draw learners’ attention to a grammatical form while at the same time directing them to process for meaning. Input Enhancement is based on the Noticing Hypothesis (Schmidt, 1990, 1995, 2001), which claims that, “intake is that part of the input that the learner notices” (1990, p. 139). Schmidt argued that noticing requires attention and awareness on the part of the learner. Two widely used methods of input enhancement used to increase learners’ noticing of the target forms, include Input Flood

(IF) and Text Enhancement (TE).

IF consists of providing learners with lots of instances of a particular target form in oral or written form, thereby, “flooding” the input with the target form, so to say. IF is intended for learners to focus on the meaning of the flooded input and to increase the chances that they will notice the target forms by their exposure to a heightened number of target items. However, it is important to point out that noticing the target feature does not necessarily indicate that it will be processed and become intake. During an IF task, learners are held responsible for the content of a text, which can be done by their completion of questions related to the content. Learners are not asked any questions dealing specifically with the target forms flooded in the text.

A second type of input enhancement technique also predicated on learners’ target form noticing is Text Enhancement (TE). TE involves typographical modifications made to target forms in the input (i.e., bold, italics, underlining, font size/style, color, etc.). The goal of TE is that learners will notice the target forms because they will stand out from the rest of the text. Wong (2005) states that “this is essentially the idea behind textual enhancement: to render more salient particular features of written input that learners normally may not notice and make form-meaning connections for” (p. 49). Therefore, the typographical modifications are made to the target forms so that learners will be more likely to notice the forms in the input.

Research in the area of Input Flood is not as consistent as the research in Processing Instruction and therefore, drawing conclusions based on the studies investigating the effectiveness of IF is no easy task. Some studies suggest that the positive evidence in



Input Flood is sufficient to facilitate acquisition however, it may not be enough for learners to acquire what is not possible in a language (Trahey & White, 1993; Spada & Lightbown, 1999). Therefore, these studies suggest that learners may need more information such as explicit grammar information or negative evidence in order for learners to know that is not possible in a language. However, the results of Williams and Evans (1998) suggest that the results in this area of research may be form specific and that Input Flood facilitates acquisition of some forms but not others.

Research in Text Enhancement has also produced mixed results. Shook (1994) exposed learners to either textually enhanced (via bolding and capitalizing of six exemplars of the target forms in passages of 100 words) or unenhanced input of the Spanish present perfect and relative *que/quien* distinction. He found positive effects for Text Enhancement when comparing the results of the enhanced group to those of the unenhanced group. Using passages of a similar length, only this time in Finnish, Alenan (1995) also found positive effects of Text Enhancement on inflectional changes in Finnish. Jourdenais Ota, Stauffer, Boyson, & Doughty (1995) found that learners exposed to TE produced more exemplars (using a think aloud protocol) of the target form (Spanish preterite and imperfect tenses) than those not exposed to TE. They drew similar conclusions as Shook (1994) and Alenan (1995) in that Text Enhancement is effective at drawing learners' attention to the target forms in the input. Based on the findings of these studies, Text Enhancement seems to be aiding in learners' noticing of the target forms and in some cases (Shook, 1994) also facilitating the input to intake conversion.

On the other hand, also using a think aloud protocol, Leow et al (2003) found

differing results based on target form; one form (Spanish present perfect) was reported as noticed more than the other (Spanish subjunctive), however; enhancing (or unenhancing) the target forms did not result in more target form noticing, nor were there differences in performance on the comprehension task. However, Izumi (2002) exposed learners to either enhanced or unenhanced input paired with output of the English relative clause formation and revealed the following findings: all groups improved after treatment and also reported noticing. Therefore, in these cases, Text Enhancement did not have the effects on noticing as it did in Shook (1994), Alenan (1995), and Jourdenais et al. (1995).

J. White (1998) combined IF and TE together targeting the 3<sup>rd</sup> person past tense (-ed) in English over the course of either ten or fifty hours of instruction with fifth and sixth grade native French speaking students. They concluded that the enhanced text draws learners' attention to the target forms; however, they still need some other type of instruction to increase accuracy. Regarding attention, the results of Overstreet (1998) suggest that the enhanced text in their study drew learners' attention to the target forms to the degree that learners' text comprehension actually decreased with the presence of the enhanced text. In this case, the enhanced text actually drew learners' attention away from the meaning of the text, and to the forms themselves. This is not surprising considering the amount of research that suggests that learners focus either on meaning or form during processing, and find it difficult to process for both at the same time (VanPatten, 2004).

The findings for Input Flood and Text Enhancement are not as consistent as PI/SI, however; both Input Flood and Text Enhancement lend themselves well to the online delivery of these input-based instructional types. As the research suggests, learners may

need ‘something else’ along with Input Flood (with or without text enhancement) in order to increase its effectiveness and that it might be most effective if paired with other types of instruction. Nonetheless, because of their input-based design, both IF and TE are suitable measures for online delivery. One reason being is because during a typical Input Flood (or Input Flood combined with Text Enhancement), learners can read passages online and then answer content comprehension questions. Again, as operationalized in instructed SLA research, learners typically are required to respond to the content of the input in some way, often via comprehension questions about the content of the passage itself, not the target grammatical structure. Figure 2 contains an example of an input flood combined with text enhancement and the follow-up content-based questions.

**“El Restaurante**

Dos mujeres con mucho dinero caminan por la calle. Un ladrón **las** ve y piensa, “ajá, voy a robar todo su dinero”. El ladrón **las** sigue a un restaurante. Las mujeres entran al restaurante. El mesero **las** saluda y van a una mesa frente a la ventana. El ladrón **las** escucha cuando están en la mesa. Las mujeres hacen su plan de ataque y deciden que van a robar el restaurante. El ladrón está sorprendido. De repente, las mujeres empiezan a gritar, “¡Vamos a robar todo su dinero!”. El gerente abre la caja fuerte y ellas toman todo el dinero. El ladrón **las** mira. La gente grita y una persona llama a la policía. Llega la policía muy rápidamente y **las** llevan a la cárcel.”

**“The Restaurant**

Two women with a lot of money are walking down the street. A thief sees **them** and thinks, “Aha, I am going to steal all of their money”. The thief follows **them** to a restaurant. The women enter the restaurant. The waiter greets **them** and they go to a table in front of the window. The thief listens to **them** when they are at their table. The women make their plan of attack and decide they are going to rob the restaurant. The thief is surprised. All of a sudden, the women begin to scream, “We are going to steal all of your money!”. The manager opens up the lock box and they take all the money. The thief watches **them**. The people scream and one person calls the police. The police arrive very quickly and they take **them** to jail.”

1. Where do the women go?
  - A. To their house
  - B. To eat dinner
  - C. To the bathroom
  
2. Who does the money come from?
  - A. The women
  - B. The waiter
  - C. The manager
  
3. Who robs the restaurant?
  - A. The bus boy
  - B. The original thief
  - C. The women

*Figure 1.* Input Flood with Text Enhancement Activity

The example in figure 1 includes six target form tokens (the Spanish third person accusative clitics [direct object pronouns] that are visually enhanced via bolding and increased font size. Again, per the protocol for research based input flood, the post-passage questions are directed at the content of the passage and not the target form itself. Feedback could be provided to learners in an online delivery platform in a variety of ways (correct answer, incorrect answer, etc.).

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of the present manuscript is to consider the research on the effectiveness of two different input-based instructional types and their suitability for online delivery of activities in a hybrid language class format: Processing Instruction (and Structured Input) and Input Enhancement (namely Input Flood and Text Enhancement). These input-based types were chosen because both PI/SI are predicated on a model of Input Processing (VanPatten, 2007) and the Input Enhancement techniques, Input Flood and Text Enhancement, are predicated on the Noticing Hypothesis (Schmidt, 1990, 1995, 2001) and learners' noticing of the target forms due to visual saliency (either through token frequency in the case of Input Flood or visually standing out from the rest of the text as in Text Enhancement).

Some pedagogical implications can be taken from considering the effectiveness of SI and the delivery via online platforms. First, as suggested consistently by instructed SLA research, SI is an effective input type at pushing learners to make connections between form and meaning. SI is plausible for online delivery and this type of activity can be comprised of both aural and written forms of input. One of the reasons why SI is well suited for online delivery, which is unique amongst the other input-based treatments, is due to the element of 'forced choice' inherent in this type of activity which hinges on learners' target form processing. In the case of the activity type in Figure 1, learners must choose between two pictures of which one corresponds with a sentence, and they then receive feedback based on their response.

The effectiveness of SI activities is consistent with recent proposals that acquisition is indeed an “error” or “failure-driven process” (e.g., Carroll, 2007). That is, a change in parsing procedures can only occur when the procedures or strategies in place to parse the input stream fail (Carroll, 2001, 2007; VanPatten, 2007). SI activities may in fact provide such an opportunity for learners to ‘fail’ in their comprehension during the activities. It could be precisely this failure that is aiding learners in readjusting their processing strategy to a more optimal one and pushing them to interpret the input correctly. Moreover, there are also many options for feedback with SI activities when delivered online such as written and aural feedback in the form of ‘correct’ or ‘incorrect’ as well as links to grammar tutorials or further items and activities of Structured Input. Due to these reasons, the incorporation of SI activities into activity components of a hybrid curriculum is both plausible and beneficial to students.

Input Flood, either with or without Text Enhancement, is also well suited for online delivery for students’ completion; however, as the research in this area suggests, the results are not as consistent as those in Processing Instruction. Nonetheless, in the online environment, students can read the passages and complete follow-up questions (i.e., multiple choice, matching, etc.). One of the challenges with Input Flood is that learners are not held accountable for attending to the target forms or for making the necessary form-meaning connections for acquisition to take place. In other words, learners are pushed to attend to the input for meaning however, it can’t be certain, just based on the flooded input, whether the connections between the target form and its meaning are made. Pedagogically, learners may benefit from other aspects of reading

passages such as vocabulary exposure, reading comprehension practice, pronunciation; however, for acquiring a particular target form, there may be better options, such as SI. However, one advantage to Input Floods is that they are easy for instructors to create and adapt existing texts to fit this paradigm.

That said, one of the benefits of Text Enhancement is its versatility in that it can be combined with any type of input-based instructional type, not just Input Flood. In fact, TE can even be paired with SI, and it has been. Benati (2007) performed four experiments investigating the effects of SI and textually/aurally enhanced SI on the acquisition of Italian adjective agreement/gender, Italian subjunctive of doubt, Italian future tense, and Japanese past tense. They found positive effects for both the enhanced and the unenhanced SI. Therefore, what these findings suggest (with these particular target forms along with these particular activity types) is that, although the enhanced text was not any more effective, it also was not any less effective.

The findings for the pedagogical intervention of Processing Instruction and its component Structured Input, have been the most consistent in the research. That is not to say that other input-based instructional types such as Input Flood, do not have their place, however, the research findings are not as consistent. While we wait for future research to iron out some of the details for input floods and textual enhancements, it can be determined that the best choice for input-based instructional types used in a hybrid language program to facilitate acquisition are those that push learners to process for both form and meaning and facilitate the necessary connections between the two.

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Les Potter

## **Developing a Modern Multicultural Middle School**

### Introduction

This article presents an alternative middle school paradigm for working with the diverse student population and social pressures in the public schools. The school proposed would be a new school, starting with a clean slate, where one school has been closed and a new staff has been hired. This is not a real but rather an “ideal type” proposal, one that could be designed and implemented if there were no restrictions. As a new school it is possible to discuss conceptual thinking, group patterns, staff development, social arrangements, learning, curriculum, instruction, and mission at the same time. This article reflects what should be done to make middle schools better for the growing multicultural population of students. Closing and reopening schools as described is not a pipe dream but something that is currently occurring nationally and not only with public but with charter schools as well. I was a former principal of a totally redesigned school and a director in a school district that did in fact close and reopen eleven redesigned schools within a seven year span. The conceptual thinking, the articulation for the vision, the curriculum, the pedagogy, physical setting, materials, and teacher preparation had to be introduced and “sold” to persons in the existing educational system as well as the public. This was done through several years of town meetings, city council meetings, school board meetings, individual school meetings, debates in the media, teacher association meetings, and workshops. The challenges of this proposal are to design a school using the developmental realities of early adolescence as a resource for instruction and organizational patterns for design of the school. The ideas and concepts that will be addressed in this article are theoretical in nature but have practical implication for the educational change agent.

Major aspects for the proposed middle school have based upon early adolescent characteristics and temperaments in multiethnic situations. Often adolescents are caught in the middle of conflicting values from home, community and school. Accordingly, important aspects of school planning include interpersonal equality of students and teachers, dialogue between students and teachers, as well as input by cultural group constituency perspectives and leaders. This model would include diversity of race, religion, and language. The model also proposes a functional curriculum which is the basis of school governance; the interpersonal social curriculum prepares students and teachers to participate in a cross-cultural system restructured so that governance and function are related to student learning, communications in pluralistic social

environments, and to a curriculum plan that is focused on interpersonal and multicultural relationships.

#### Interpersonal Development in Early Adolescence

Uncertainty and turmoil are a part of student life in middle schools. In addition, increasing social pressure, bullying, disintegration of families, and depersonalized work relationships have resulted in increased social pressure on schools. Social environments are increasingly diverse because numerous cultural groups send their children to public schools. Problems that have not been addressed successfully in the community and/or society provide the basis for conflict in the schools. Cultural miscommunication, different cultural expectations for behavior produce social discord in our public middle schools. Cultural pressures have caused instructional incongruity, conflicting values, and differing expectations for school behavior and success. Current difficulties in social behavior may be dealt with by using these problems as raw material (resources) for an interpersonal school. The structure of the proposed middle school may address the needs of cultural groups by incorporating them into the governance structure of the school, as it would be in many kinds of restricted schools.

#### Rationale

Middle schools are complex social environments with social issues which must be addressed in the curriculum and in the organization of the school. Educators, community members, parents, and others interested folks must establish the school mission, the curriculum, the pedagogy and the socialization so that the concept will work. Nothing can be set in stone; rather, it must be flexible so that change can take place when it needs to. Ideas and concepts must be manipulated for the good of the children. Educators need to attend to the social order of schools as institutions in the service of the diversity of the children and communities. Early adolescents in such a school need to learn interpersonal skills which will permit them to relate successfully to their peers and adults. Schools do reflect the problems of the immediate community and the larger society. Altercations on the school yard are as much a part of what students learn as they may in the classroom. Problems experienced in neighborhoods and families are reenacted at school. Students from different cultural groups bring cultural behaviors and from outside of the educational institution. The school administration has an obligation to hire the very best staff. The staff must be as diverse as possible to encourage connections with students. In the staff selection, what should be done is to “close” the school, allowing all positions to be open and encouraging all staff (from inside and outside the school district) to apply to the new school. In advertising at town meetings and in all other ways, the mission of the

school must be made clear to all who apply and are selected. The staff must buy into the vision of the school. This is a critical point because there will be continuous staff development and additional work to make the school a success. The applications, interviews and hiring must be done no later than six months prior to the opening of school. After the staff selections are finalized, the staff development begins. All staff members must participate-including all employees. The summer is a key time for the in-service, but as school starts the staff must continue thier training. Staff development before and after the opening of the new school must be consistent and meaningful, the in-service will be largely generated by the school leaders, working with the faculty, in the spirit of collaboration, this is a school with a unique purpose that will rely on the expertise of a growing, motivated and creative staff. The chief administrator must act as the leader but also emphasize consensus with the ideas of others as team members and co-workers. The staff must foster teams where shared-decision, transformational leadership, site-based management, and consensus building is the norm and not an anomaly. Teamwork and cooperation planning will be keys to the success of these schools. Students and parents must also know the mission and vision of the school. However, if this theory is to be legitimized, then it should be tried as a zoned school concept and not as a magnet school concept. This does not mean that out of zone students cannot attend if the class space is available. Magnet and charter schools can choose their own students and thus create an artificial environment for students.

### Professional Study Groups and a Learning Community

Most teachers should be aware of the teaming approach to guide self-governance, but many staff members have never participated in a program where they make up many of the rules. Study groups developed plans for the new school and facilitate a new culture of learning; they participate as individual professional and as a professional organization, since everyone's work is focused on the development and implementation of effective teaching and learning. The purpose of professional study groups is to promote collegial interchange and communication, facilitate action, mutual exploration, and cooperation on joint concerns. The committees conduct research on teaching and learning and school improvement.

### Restructured Multicultural Relationships

Open organizational relationships emphasize flexibility among both students and employees. Dialogue includes discussion about school problems, regardless of position of the person in the organizational structure; equality among all people is a very important goal of this middle school. This includes eliminating boundaries between grades, social



groups, teaching teams, and among staff and students. Cultural differences are not to be viewed as boundaries among people. All people are to be respected and treated with dignity. Multicultural content is intertwined throughout the explicit, implicit, and null curriculum of the school. The teaching goes on formally as well as informally in the classroom.

#### Decision Making

Developed from the school mission, rules are replaced by guidelines and agreed-upon principles. Teachers should use the school mission to think through the reasons for their decisions. Everyone will do their best to cooperate because they have a part to play in the overall process. The decision making process must be fluid. Those who are actually involved in a problem make the decisions rather than a detached administrator. The process of making decisions in the multicultural middle school brings people together.

#### Evaluation and Standards

Equity is difficult to achieve because people from differing background and experiences approach learning tasks with differing values, perceptions, behavior, and cognitive patterns. Standards of performance need to accommodate differences in learning styles. Standards of performance are openly discussed, emphasizing peer review and multiple perspectives on performance.

#### A Social Curriculum for Early Adolescence

The social curriculum involves instructional strategies of debate, role playing, and group simulation activities. Considering literature from human relations, assertiveness training, cross-cultural communication, and organizational behavior, the social curriculum can include communication strategies for cooperative life and learning in multicultural environments.

The pleasure and the difficulty of human relationships are the basis of an active social studies curriculum. Students are motivated by overcoming human problems, personal needs, and cultural boundaries with peers. Potential for cultural conflict is an underlying aspect of schools with socially complex populations. Human and cultural differences dividing students may be converted into interpersonal skills for curriculum content. There can be no successful school program without accounting for the cultural cadence that beats in the mind of the middle school learner.

### Conclusion

In the socially planned middle school, the social problems of the community become a resource for learning and social growth. To better obtain cooperation of more adults in the schools, the problems of our society may be reorganized as opportunities and resources for instructional development and learning. School must address and prepare students for the requirements of business and employers who look to employees who are able to fulfill standardized majority-oriented roles. Educators can better prepare students for the complexities of life if students are taught to relate successfully to peers of many cultures.

Les Potter is a former middle and high school principal in Florida. Most recently he was principal of Silver Sands Middle School in Port Orange, Volusia County, Florida for 10 years and he is finishing his 41<sup>st</sup> year in public education. He has published over 80 books, chapters and articles concerning issues in education. Les is currently the Chair of the College of Education for Daytona State College.

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