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Assessment and Communication: Going Beyond the Testing Era

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Resumen: Esta presentación aborda la necesidad de pasar de una era de la medición a la era de la evaluación. Explora los beneficios de una evaluación continua a través de la observación para promover la adquisición de una lengua en la clase. También promueve el uso de herramientas de evaluación para comprometer a los aprendices con el proceso de adquisición mediante el uso de herramientas de auto-reflexión que les permitan buscar técnicas y estrategias de mejoría. El presentador utiliza este acercamiento para la adquisición de segundas lenguas en el aula apoyada con tecnologías emergentes llamado acercamiento P-E-E-R para la facilitación de la adquisición de segundas lenguas (Aguilar-Sánchez, en progreso). La evaluación se ve como una técnica de recolección de datos para la mejora de los procesos de adquisición.

Palabras clave: evaluación, medición, Acercamiento PEER, pedagogía, tecnologías emergentes.

Abstract: This presentation addresses the need to move beyond the testing era into an assessment one. It explores the benefits of a continuous assessment through observation to promote proper second language acquisition in the classroom. It also promotes the use of assessment tools to engage learners in their acquisition process by using self-reflection tools that allow them to seek improvement techniques and strategies. The presenter uses his approach to instructed-second-language acquisition aided by emergent technologies called the P-E-E-R Approach to Second Language Acquisition Facilitation (Aguilar-Sánchez, 2015, in progress; Aguilar-Sánchez &Donar, 2014). Assessment is viewed as a data gathering technique to the improvement of the acquisition processes.

Keywords: assessment, testing, PEER Approach, pedagogy, emergent technologies.

1. Introduction

In this practice-oriented presentation, each participant explores the pedagogical characteristics of the PEER Approach to Second Language Acquisition Facilitation and explores the ways in which s/he can adapt them to meet students’ needs. We will explore specifically the characteristics related to assessment and how it helps us modify our facilitation to make sure acquisition is taking place. We will discuss the two competing set of guidelines (ACTFL for foreign language classrooms and EFR for bilingual or second language acquisition settings) that have been adopted throughout to guide foreign/second language acquisition in the classroom and how we can contextualize and
improve our students’ experience in the language classroom through a sound pedagogical approach. We will also discuss government requirements related to assessment and testing and how to adapt our practice to make the learners’ experience an enjoyable and successful one.

2. Literature Review
Assessment and testing have seen a good share of change over the years. Assessment, evaluation, and testing of language ability are areas with which we, as language teachers, must be very familiar because they have very different meaning as to the information they provide to us as language practitioners.

A test is an instrument to prove people’s capabilities or to establish their credentials (McNamara, 2000). The work of SLA has prompted those in language assessment to take a broader view of what assessment means. They have included more variables when attempting to determine language proficiency and achievement (Cohen, 1994).

The purpose of assessment is to assess learning. It is helpful to have some notion of what the instrument is assessing and how it might be labeled (Cohen, 1994). There are different ways to classify a single assessment instrument. The classification depends on the purposes of the user.

According to Cohen (1994) and McNamara, (2000), the classification can be seen as:
A. For administrative purposes
   1. General assessment of a program,
   2. placement of students into levels/sections,
   3. exemption from taking a class,
   4. certification, or
   5. promotion.
   Examples of these uses include English placement tests, overall program assessment, and general education assessment, among others. These are usually called *assessment or evaluation* tools.

B. Instructional purposes
   1. Diagnosis,
   2. Evidence of progress,
   3. Feedback to the respondent, or
   4. Evaluation of teaching or curriculum.
   Examples of these uses include impromptu quizzes, final exams, homework assignments, unit exams, among others. These are usually called *tests*.

C. Research purposes
   1. Evaluation,
   2. experimentation,
   3. knowledge about language learning and language use
   Examples of these uses include grammaticality judgment tasks, surveys, Labovian interviews, identification tasks, oral proficiency interviews, among others. These are usually called *instruments*.

Assessment in general must be viewed as a way to improve our own teaching, not for showing how good we are at teaching (Aguilar-Sánchez, A. 2001 personal
communication); but to show we are helping students move forward in their acquisition process.

3. Context
Participants will create materials based on their needs and interests. The context proposed for this interactive presentation is the need for a holistic approach to assessment in the language classroom. We will discuss the terms relevance, acceptability/validity, comparability, and wash-back effect of assessment tools and how they can help us help learners in the acquisition process. Participants will discuss in small groups what they need to take into account when constructing assessment tools and why it is important to keep the acquisition process and our pedagogical approach in mind. Participants are encouraged to read selected chapters of McNamara (2000), Cohen (1994), Aguilar-Sánchez, Hernández, Cubillo, & Garbanzo, 2009), and Aguilar-Sánchez (2015) before the presentation. Copies will be made available electronically upon request.

4. Activities
Activity 1. Contextualization
In groups of 4, discuss the context in which you teach. Use the following activities to guide your discussion:

a. What is assessment? What is testing? Are they different? How?
b. What do we seek when we think about assessing progress?
c. What do we seek when we think about testing students?
d. What kind of technology do you use for testing? And for assessment?
e. What do you do with the data you gathered?

Activity 2. Assessing Progress
In different groups of 4, discuss what your pedagogical approach is and what the role of assessment and testing is within its context. Use the following questions to guide your discussion:

a. How do you define your philosophy of teaching?
b. How do you use the data from your assessments and tests?
c. What is the role of numbers in your practice and what do you do with them?
d. How much do you assess and why? How much do you test and why?

Activity 3. Assessment and the English class
We will focus on discussing the following types of issues related to assessment:

a. Relevance – what for?
b. Acceptability/Validity – is it measuring what we have taught?
c. Comparability – as a community of practitioners, are we measuring similar things?
d. Wash-back effect – negative and positive
e. Using assessment to promote learning and to avoid being punitive
5. Materials
Participants are encouraged to bring the Programas de Inglés provided by the MEP and the tests or assessment tools they currently use in their classes.

6. Conclusions
This is a highly interactive, hands-on presentation/discussion. Limitations are discussed as the presentation progresses and participants themselves will provide areas of future work.

7. References

8. Biography
Dr. Jorge Aguilar-Sánchez is an Assistant Professor of Spanish at the University of Dayton, Ohio. He has a Ph.D. in TESOL and Applied Linguistics and a Ph.D. in Hispanic Linguistics. His current research focuses on student engagement for instructed language acquisition and the role emergent technologies play as aids in the process and in Best Practices for research design in (Socio) Linguistics. His works appear in journals, chapters of books, and other publication venues.
Communication and Emergent Technologies in the XXI Century Classroom

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Resumen: Este trabajo utiliza tres avances en la adopción de tecnologías emergentes, lineamientos para ella, y la necesidad de un acercamiento sistemático a la adopción de tecnologías emergentes para promover la comunicación en la enseñanza de lenguas. Se desprende de la definición de comunicación provista por Savignon (1997) que reza que la comunicación es la expresión, la interpretación, y la negociación del significado. Se trabaja la interrogante del tipo de tecnologías que se pueden adoptar para promover la comunicación y la adquisición de una segunda lengua. Se explora los acercamientos pedagógicos del siglo XX y las formas en las que se pueden adaptar para satisfacer las necesidades de los aprendices. Exploro las características generales del contexto en el que la toma lugar la adquisición y las limitaciones que la infraestructura de un país en desarrollo presenta a la adopción de actividades comunicativas con ayuda de tecnología. Abogo por que la adopción de toda tecnología esté ligada al acercamiento pedagógico al que nos adherimos y a los objetivos que han sido propuestos para la clase. Continúo promoviendo la contextualización de nuestra enseñanza siguiendo lineamientos (ACTFL para las clases de lengua extranjera y MCE para las clases en contextos altamente bilingües) para que nos permitan crear objetivos de aprendizaje efectivos.

Palabras clave: comunicación, contexto, ASL, pedagogía, tecnología.

Abstract: The present talk stems out three findings on emergent technologies, guidelines, and the need for a systematic approach to the adoption of emergent technologies to foster communication in the teaching of world languages. This talk addresses the question of what characteristics from a pedagogical standpoint are needed to achieve a truly communicative goal in the language classroom. It departs from Savignon’s(1997)definition of communication as the expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning. It addresses the question of the types of technologies that can be adopted to promote communication and second language acquisition. This work explores the pedagogical approaches of the XX Century and explores the ways in which we can adapt them to meet students’ needs. I explore general characteristics of the context in which acquisition takes place as well as the limitations that a developing country infrastructure can bring to the adoption of communicative activities with the aid of technology. I advocate that for the adoption of any technology to be used in the classroom it must be closely tied to the pedagogical approach that we adhere to and the student learning outcomes that have been set for the class. I continue to promote the contextualization of our teaching following a set of guidelines (ACTFL for foreign language classrooms and EFR for bilingual or second language acquisition settings) to allow us to create effective student learning outcomes.
Keywords: Communication, context, SLA, pedagogy, technology.

1. Introduction

In Aguilar-Sanchez (2015) and Aguilar-Sánchez and Donar (2014), I argue that one of the struggles we face in an era of technological innovation is the fact that younger generations of students are tech savvy and demand access to information in real time. Not only are we faced with such challenge, our countries’ infrastructure, at times, makes innovation in the classroom a little bit difficult. To face these challenges, teachers are forced to find innovative ways, both pedagogically and technologically, in which to help learners in the classroom acquire a foreign or second language. As we know, this is not an easy task.

The present paper presents characteristics present in emergent technologies that allow students to engage in communication. I address what type of technologies could be adopted to promote communication and second language acquisition. I explore the pedagogical approaches of the XX Century and in which ways we, as language teachers, can adapt them to meet our learners’ needs. Not only do I explore these pedagogical approaches, but also the general characteristics of the context of second language acquisition and the limitations that a developing country’s infrastructure can bring to the adoption of communicative activities with the aid of technology. I advocate the adoption of technology that meets our pedagogical goals and promotes the contextualization of our teaching following our professional organizations’ guidelines (e.g. ACTFL 1 for foreign language teaching and EFR 2 for bilingual and second language teaching) while keeping our student learning outcomes at the core of our lesson planning.

2. Communication as negotiation

Over the years, the term “communicative language teaching” has seen changes in its description and tenets. Because such conception has different meanings, which vary from teacher to teacher, I would like to offer the one tenet that guides my teaching and the research I conduct in the classroom. Savignon (1997) defines communication as the expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning. Lee and VanPatten (2003) expand on Savignon’s definition by stating that expression is the wish of a person to express an idea (e.g. opinion, wish, request, demand) to someone else and that s/he does so. They state that the other person (i.e. the interlocutor) must understand both the message and the intent of the message. For Lee & VanPatten (2003) sometimes the interpretation is partial, and some negotiation is needed.

Lee (2000) provides a definition of negotiation that takes into consideration an interactionist perspective on language acquisition, classroom research, and a social view of communication. He defines negotiation as:

Negotiation consists of interactions during which speakers come to terms, reach an agreement, make arrangements, resolve a problem, or settle an issue by conferring or discussing; the purpose of language use is to accomplish some task rather than to practice any particular language forms (p. 9).

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1 American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages
2 European Frame of Reference
As we can see from Lee’s definition of negotiation, language in the classroom changes from an item to be learned to a tool to be used by the learner (i.e. the speaker). Lee (2000) advocates to mimic the reasons for which we communicate in the real world in the classroom. He states that the two most common purposes of communication are psycho-social and informational-cognitive. He describes the psycho-social purpose as the one that involves using language to bond socially or psychologically with someone or some group or to engage in social behavior in some way. The informational-cognitive use of language, he describes, involves communication for the purpose of obtaining information, generally for some other task. Lee (2000) states that psycho-social and information-cognitive purposes can, and often do, co-occur.

Often times, as language teachers, we forget that our students must use the language in order for acquisition to happen and rely heavily on measurement and the rote preparation for such measurement. Lee (2000) summarizes the changes in the perception of teaching in the language classroom as follows:

...communicative language teaching practices evolved from grammar-oriented ones. As language teachers began to acknowledge that part of their charge was to provide learners opportunities to use the language, they relied on practices and activities that embody questions and answers. In fact, communication was equated with instructors asking questions and learners answering them. This notion that communication = question & answer has been rejected … (p. 11)

Lee & VanPatten (2003) reject the notion that communication equals questions and answer as communicative drills because, communicative drills may have the resemblance of real communication, but they fall short of providing learners with opportunities that allow them to work at communicating. Although, I agree with Lee’s(2000) and Lee & VanPatten’s(2003) description of the language classroom, I disagree with their statement that although the instructor may use language for both psycho-social and informational-cognitive purposes, it is doubtful that the learner, especially in the beginning and intermediate stages, would use language for many psycho-social purposes. The classroom context typically does not promote the kind of interaction that requires language to be used psycho-socially. However, the classroom does lend itself exceptionally well to the use of communicative language for informational-cognitive purposes. The classroom is ideally suited to the development and implementation of activities in which learners exchange information for a common purpose (p. 54).

They describe a different language classroom from the one we can call traditional. However, when they claim that a language classroom does not promote situations to use language for psycho-social purposes; we, as facilitators, are to blame. I firmly believe and have tried through my years of experience to provide venues in which learners use language for psycho-social purposes as well as for informational-cognitive ones. I refer to this practice as promoting making language their own in our learners.
Now, let us situate ourselves in this timeline. Are we still in the grammar-oriented stage or have we moved to the question & answer stage? Have we move towards a more informational-cognitive style? Or have we reached the point in which our classrooms reflect real-life situations in which learners take control of their language acquisition?

3. Facilitating acquisition versus teaching languages

I take a Vygotskyan approach to learning. Vygotsky & Cole (1978) focus on social processes that contribute to cognitive development, so learning and cognitive development are interrelated. For them, cognition develops as a result of social interaction. What better way to socialize than through the use of language.

In Constructivism, a theory of knowledge by Piaget (1967), humans generate knowledge and meaning from an interaction between their experiences (i.e. context) and their ideas (i.e. how they view the world). Piaget’s theory of knowledge is not a pedagogical approach. On the contrary, it is a set maxim that have influenced many pedagogical approaches to learning. Piaget’s theory of learning has as central tenets the processes of accommodation and assimilation through which the learner constructs new knowledge from what they experience. Assimilation refers to the individual’s alignment of their experiences with their internal view of the world. Accommodation refers to the process in which the individual changes to accept the new knowledge as part of their view of the world.

Wertsch (1985), Glasersfeld (1991, 1995), and Holt & Willard-Holt (2000) describe the following assumptions in social constructivism:

1. it acknowledges the uniqueness and complexity of the learner (i.e. individual differences), but encourages, utilizes, and rewards it as an integral part of the learning process;
2. it encourages the learner to arrive at his or her version of the truth as influenced by his her background, culture or embedded view of the world (i.e. social interaction);
3. the responsibility of learning should reside increasingly with the learner through his/her active participation in the process;
4. the teacher’s role changes from that of the know-it-all who talks during the entire class time to that of a facilitator who assesses learners’ progress constantly;
5. motivation for learning is strongly dependent on the learner’s confidence in his her potential for learning. This assumption is similar to Vygotsky’s(1978) zone of proximal development or, in our cases, Krashen’s (1985, 1992) i+1 hypothesis;
6. learning is an active process and collaboration is required. Learners with different skills or levels of language ability, in our case, collaborate in tasks and discussions to arrive at a shared understanding of the truth; and
7. assessment and learning are seen as inextricably linked and not separate processes.

The assessor (i.e. facilitator) enters into dialogue with the learner to find out their current level of performance on any task and sharing with them the possible ways in which that performance might be improved.
4. The Flipped Learning Approach
Modern versions of Social Constructivism have made it to the XXI Century classroom and are becoming, if I may say, more popular than the original. A version of this type of pedagogical approach is the FLIP Learning Approach (EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative, 2012; Flipped Learning Network, 2014; Hamdan, McKnight, McKnight, & Arfstrom, 2013). The FLN (2014, p. 1) defines this approach as an approach in which direct instruction moves from the group learning space to the individual learning space, and the resulting group space is transformed into a dynamic, interactive learning environment where the educator guides students as they apply concepts and engage creatively in the subject matter.

The proponents of this approach distinguish, and I agree with them, that Flipped learning is not the same as a flipped classroom. The FLN (2014) state that these terms are not interchangeable and that flipping a class can, but does not necessarily, lead to Flipped Learning. They state that Flipped Learning teachers incorporate the following four pillars3:

1. A flexible environment in which the classroom is arranged to accommodate learning in different ways and educator are flexible in their expectations of student timelines for learning and in their assessments of student learning;
2. The Learning Culture is shifted, deliberately, to a learner-centered approach and in-class time is dedicated to exploring topics in greater depth and rich learning opportunities are created. Students are actively involved in knowledge construction as they participate in and evaluate their learning in a manner that is personally meaningful.
3. Educators work with Intentional Content. In other words, they constantly think about how they can use the model to help students develop conceptual understanding, as well as procedural fluency by determining what they need to teach and what materials students should explore on their own before coming to class to use the knowledge they acquire.
4. Educators become Professional Educators. Professional Educators continually observe their students, providing them with feedback relevant in the moment, and assessing their work while reflecting in their practice. Professional Educators connect with others, accept constructive criticism, and tolerate controlled chaos in their classroom and take less visibly prominent roles in their classrooms, but remain the essential ingredient that enables learning.

5. The P-E-E-R Approach to Second Language Acquisition Facilitation
The P-E-E-R approach is founded in Constructivism (Piaget, 1967), the Communicative Approach proposed by Sauvignon(1972, 1976, 1997); Processing Instruction (Lee & VanPatten, 2003); and a sound and deep knowledge of assessment and measurement. This approach, while not envisioned as a flipped learning environment, has all it four pillars and can be said to be a flipped learning approach to the acquisition of second languages. I also would like to state that, although related at the core, it was not based on Peer Instruction (Mazur, 1997). Similar to Mazur’s naming of his approach as a social

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3 All emphasis in words is mine to highlight Constructivist characteristics of the Flipped Learning Approach
constructivist approach, I came up with mine as a need to emphasize the social nature of the use of languages.

In Aguilar-Sánchez (2015) and Aguilar-Sánchez & Donar (2014) I present this approach as an alternative for traditional approaches to the teaching of world languages. The word P-E-E-R stands for Preparation, Exposure, Enforcement, and Review. Thus,

1. Learners are encouraged to be prepared and must be prepared for specific class-content at home.

What this means is that they must browse, look for familiar words, familiar structures, find new items, among other activities that will allow them to actively participate in the class.

2. Learners must be exposed to the content as much as possible during the class period and outside of it.

Facilitators must ensure that contact time includes enough exposure to the language and that time is managed to avoid gratuitous group work (Lee & VanPatten, 2003). Facilitators must ensure that the target language is used at all times.

At this point, I want to point out that it is not the facilitator’s use of the language that this piece of advice refers to, but the learner’s use of the language. The more the learners use it, the faster the acquisition happens. We move away from the Atlas Complex (Lee & VanPatten, 2003) to a facilitator’s role in the classroom. This role also encourages collaboration and communication in the classroom rather than a passive/receptive role on the part of the learner.

3. As facilitators, we must enforce both language use, as personal communication, and content review at all times.

We must create meaningful activities and not mechanical drills. Homework assignment must be linked to the objectives of the class (i.e., meaning-bearing activities) at all times. The classroom must be transformed from a teacher-centered/podium-centered classroom to a collaborative environment where language acquisition takes place. Activities must require the use of the target language outside of the classroom as well. Language must become a tool that learners use as their own for communication purposes.

Finally,

4. Learners must review and use old content during and after their first exposure (i.e. recycling).

Recycling does not mean repeating content or explanations. It means the presence of old structures in new content carefully designed by the facilitator to promote the use of old structures and allow re-accommodation with the new one in the learner’s language. Homework assignments must always have items that make use of previous content to
provide an indirect review. In other words, there must be a sequence or path that will lead the learner to a clear goal, language proficiency.

The P-E-E-R approach relies heavily in three readings of content. These are not readings in the literal sense, but rather review and exposure to the content. The first reading happens during the preparation stage, the second during class time, and the third one happens during homework assignments. All three readings create a learning environment that facilitates second language acquisition (See Figure 1).

It also relies heavily on the role of the facilitator as, what FLN (2014) refers to as, a Professional Educator. Language facilitators live in a community of practice. This community of practices is called a Professional Learning Community (DuFour, 2004) by proponents of new standards for teaching in the United States. Facilitators share their successful lesson plans and materials; they view the classroom as a community where all stakeholders share equal responsibility for learning. Teaching switches from a private enterprise to a public one where all participants share the same responsibility and desire for improvement. Facilitators have a sound foundation in Second Language Acquisition research and pedagogical approaches that have lead us to where we are today. As in the flipped learning approach, facilitators consistently use assessment data to improve the learning environment.

Learners are referred to as builders of knowledge and are encouraged to make hypotheses as to how languages work. They are guided to acquire the skills needed to take full responsibility for their own acquisition process and little by little are immersed in more challenging situations where they are forced to use the language they are acquiring in real-life situations. They are guided in the discussion of learning strategies that work and do not work and how to use them to complete the acquisition process.

Measurement and testing are replaced by assessment tools that allow both learners and facilitators to talk about processes and stages in the language acquisition process. Because learners assume their responsibility in the learning process, all assessment procedures have face validity and learners understand what their performance means in terms of what they need to do to improve and move forward in their learning/acquisition process. Not only is face validity a reality, reliability is achieved by the sharing of assessment tools and data among facilitators.
In sum, our role as language acquisition facilitators is to create the environments in which communication as negotiation of meaning occurs.

6. Student Learning Outcomes and the communicative-oriented classroom

Aguilar-Sánchez (2015) put together a set of guidelines for the creation of sound Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for the communicative-oriented classroom in the PEER Approach to Second Language Acquisition Facilitation. I proposed to always work with the goals we set for learner’s performance at the end of each course. In other words, our student learning outcomes.

I advocate for making sure that SLOs contain the When, the What, the How, and the Where of a learning lesson. As facilitators, it is imperative we know where we want our students to go in their learning/acquisition journey. SLOs must be observable and measurable. Some researchers recommend the use of Bloom’s Taxonomy (Bloom, 1956) to find the different domains of higher-level thinking. My suggestion is to think of how observable the behavior is and ask yourself how you are going to gather the data to determine whether the outcomes are being performed. If it is difficult to observe, it is difficult to measure.

Student Learning Outcomes must be designed with the acquisition process in mind. We have moved from a Behaviorist approach to learning to a Constructivist approach to acquisition. Therefore, memorization of terms should not be one of our goals. Performance and proficiency-based goals should be the norm in our classrooms. The American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages provides a set of guidelines of performance/proficiency-based description by levels. The European Common Frame of Reference also provides a set of performance/proficiency guidelines. Whichever you choose to follow, use them as your guide to the language acquisition stages and, when possible, as your basis for establishing good SLOs.

Due to space constraints, I will give a summary of Aguilar-Sánchez’ (2015) guidelines for the creation of sound student learning outcomes for the communicative-oriented class. I put forward the elements that we need to keep in mind when writing SLO’s as:

The When: SLOs can be set for a particular lesson, for a unit, or for a semester. The higher the level, the more generic they become. Ideally, we would have General Outcomes per level and a more specific one for each course or lesson. Therefore, the time framework is very important because it tells us when we want to assess learning. The When is particularly important when creating Proficiency-based curricula because it provides the proficiency-levels, and it is not content-based. It also helps with the articulation of courses in a particular curriculum. In Content-based curriculum design, it helps to have the language SLOs clearly stated to articulate how the content of each course helps the language acquisition process. In other words, it helps with the sequencing and offering of content courses.

The What: determined by the proficiency level we want to achieve. It can be content-based (e.g. grammar, reading, writing, etc.), or it can be performance level (e.g. critical thinking, discourse strategies, sociolinguistic competence, etc.). This is the point at which Bloom’s Taxonomy (Bloom, 1956) comes in handy. The What is determined by the verb we choose. Verbs represent the observable and measurable behaviors we want from our
learners. So, we have to choose them accordingly. If we choose a verb like “understand”, we will face the challenge of determining how a learner shows understanding (i.e., the observable behavior). But, if we choose a verb such as “pick”; we can easily picture and measure the behavior.

The How: is often times neglected because of the belief that content trumps process. In the P-E-E-R approach, as can be seen in the description, content does not trump process. On the contrary, the process through which we reach our goals is as important as the content we use. The reason why the How is as important as the What stems from the necessity to collect data to determine progress in the acquisition process. When data are collected systematically, facilitators are able to make informed decisions with regards to the class, the sequence of events, and the curriculum as a whole. Data-driven decision-making is key to the implementation of this approach. Therefore, a good understanding of measurement and assessment is necessary to complete the cycle of learning.

The Where: Context is very important for the implementation of the How because as it can provide great opportunities, it can also pose great limitations, especially when we talk about the adoption of technology. As facilitators, we often brainstorm as to what tools will help us facilitate learning and how we go about measuring progress. Testing, sometimes disguised as assessment, has been the only tool language teachers use to measure achievement in the past. Unfortunately, the focus has been solely on achievement and not on the process of acquisition. This is a key tenet to adopt to be able to move from a Behaviorist approach to learning to a Constructivist approach to second language acquisition. As we all know, we over-rely on testing and tend to forget that assessment is the use of the data collected to help learners achieve goals by modifying our practice to meet their acquisition needs. Although societal beliefs lean heavily on scales and numbers, our job is not just assigning a grade and moving on without regard to the learning process. On the contrary, all learners’ progress must be the focus of our planning.

7. Emergent Technologies and their roles in the communication-oriented classroom

In the field of the use of technology for learning, researchers have found that

1. emergent technologies such as iPads increase student engagement and collaboration within the classroom by acting as a facilitator rather than a clunky barrier like some of the current technology that is used in classrooms (Rice, 2011);

2. technology can be used to engage students in reflection regarding their study habits and innovations such as online games have served to reveal to students the inadequacy of their study habits or the incompleteness of their content knowledge and that these games have helped them reevaluate their study methods to better prepare themselves for exams (Paul, Messina, & Hollis, 2006); and

3. computers will not replace instructors any time soon; they are not better than instructors at delivering grammar instruction when using processing instruction, and that some grammar instruction could be removed from the classroom and placed on the computer (Aguilar-Sánchez, McNulty, & Lee, 2007).
Emergent technologies play a key role at this stage because by trying new technologies in the classroom, teachers tend to change the way they teach (Aguilar-Sánchez & Donar, 2014), which results in a new approach to collaboration in the classroom, where the teacher or the technology becomes a facilitator. This new role, of a facilitator, allows teachers to become aware of their learners’ needs by stepping aside and seeing the process of learning take shape in front of them or by being participants in a new learning experience with their students as peers.

As I advocate in Aguilar-Sánchez (2015), as we think about adopting a tool to help us facilitate second language acquisition in the classroom; we must ask the following questions:

a. Will the tool allow us to include all learners?
b. Will the tool encourage engagement?
c. Will the tool be learner and learning-centered?
d. Will the tool function well in the classroom? What do we need to make it so?
e. Will the tool engage students outside the classroom?
f. Is the tool able to cater to all learning styles?
g. Can data be collected on the use of the tool?
h. Can the tool help us measure learning (i.e. assess)?
i. Do we have enough working understanding of the technology itself? If not, how or where can we get trained?

Researchers have been working on the discovery of the characteristics of emergent technologies for facilitating learning. Here are a few examples of their findings and how they can contribute to create a language acquisition friendly environment in different contexts.

7.1 iPads/Tablets
In the past four years or so, iPads have become very popular in classrooms around the United States. Rice (2011) makes a summary of what some colleges have learned through their experimentation with iPads. She mentions that some studies show that iPads increase student engagement and collaboration within the classroom, saying that they acted as facilitators rather than clunky barriers like some laptops in a group setting. She noted that observers to the classes that use iPads reported that students with iPads seemed to be more engaged in classroom activities. Others, she reports, see the value in the ability to transport the iPads as tools onto field trips and in other group settings.

Work (2014) works with the selection of iPad apps that work for a proficiency based lesson. She cautions us that it is crucial to understand that technology in general, and iPads and apps more specifically, should not merely be used for technology’s sake, but that they need to support the course or lesson objectives. She continues by stating three points to take in to account. The first one is that any work done with the iPad should be carefully integrated into existing lessons and curricula. The second one is that it should fulfill a clear pedagogical objective. She continues by stating that teachers need to test and evaluate apps for appropriateness in terms of content and student age and be familiar with how to use the app and its features in order to be able to explain it to their students. She concludes that one of the most important goals in foreign language education is to encourage our students to learn to use language for real-life
communication and that utilizing apps and iPads in and outside of the classroom can serve a variety of objectives. These include to use language for a real purpose; to practice a variety of skills, get learners ready for the 21st century, to foster creativity and individuality, and to encourage higher-level problem-solving and critical thinking skills.

Enriquez (2010) studied how tablet PCs and wireless technology can be used during classroom instruction to create an Interactive Learning Network (ILN) that is designed to enhance the instructor’s ability to receive active participation from all students during lectures, to conduct immediate and meaningful assessment of student learning, and to provide needed real-time feedback and assistance to maximize student learning. There were two different case studies in higher education campuses in the western United States. The author used a diagnostic test at the beginning of the experiment to see if there was a difference in prior student knowledge between the universities but there were none found. To study the impact of the ILN instruction model, there were two studies done. Study 1 compared two circuit courses at a university one in the spring of 2006, which used the ILN model; and the spring of 2005, which was a traditional instructor centered classroom. The second study compared two circuit courses from the two institutions in the spring 2006 semester, a class that used the ILN model, and a class that used the traditional model. For each case study data were collected and compared through scores of students on 15 homework sets, four quizzes, four tests, and a final examination. A two-part attitudinal survey about the use of tablet PCs was administered at the end of class from the two experimental groups. Results from the survey showed that students viewed the tablet PCs as helpful in improving student performance and the instructor’s teaching efficiency, as well as creating a better learning environment. The author also mentions that students responded to the open-ended questions with comments indicating that there was increased attentiveness and focus during lectures, real-time assessment of their knowledge through polling, immediate feedback on their work, increased one-on-one time with the instructor, ease of communication with instructor, and quick assistance when needed.

Enriquez summarizes that the interactive learning environment resulted in improvements in the student performance compared with the traditional instructor-centered learning environment. This can be attributed to the enhanced two-way student to instructor interaction, individualized and real-time assessment and feedback on student performance, increased student engagement, and enhanced and more efficient delivery of content. Enriquez (2010) is a very important study for the present investigation. Without looking for key pedagogical factors that influence the use of technology and by inadvertently changing his pedagogical approach with the aid of technology, he discovered that his students were able to perform better in traditional tests.

7.2. Learning Management Systems

Nelson, Arthur, Jensen & Van Horn (2011) investigated ways to make students become more engaged with subject topics, how information could be presented in multiple ways, and how to collect information from students in various forms. They started with the idea that no textbook series met all of their criteria, so they decided to use digital resources instead. In order to achieve their goal, they created a virtual environment. The first stage was a storage and sharing platform where teachers could place their lesson plans, study guides, rubrics, PowerPoint presentations and any other necessary class information.
and/or materials called Curriculum Loft. The creation and use of such a virtual environment, they state, makes it clear to students and parents what is expected of students and explains how students are able to gain information and express their knowledge throughout the course.

The second stage was to find a reliable source for digital information. They opted for NetTrekker from Thinkronize, Inc. NetTrekker is a database of peer-reviewed digital resources that teachers can use. Teachers are able to search by age group and subject. The program also organized the information so they could see who evaluated each resource, the readability of the resource, the rating of the resource, teacher-recommended resources, student-recommended resources, or titles. They linked NetTrekker to the Curriculum Loft. Nelson et al. (2011) collected data through surveys given to students in middle and high school as well as teachers. Teachers reported that students were more likely to read or skim the articles while students reported higher interest in their subjects that used this method. Students’ responses indicated that they thought their courses were more relevant because they were applying more 21st century skills, such as problem solving and working collaboratively with others. Their answers also included their perception that because information was presented in a variety of ways, it allowed them to demonstrate their knowledge in a variety of ways.

Nelson et al. (2011) concluded that because students live in a digital world, they access information for personal use and move through a tremendous amount of data to find what they are looking for. The digital platform and database show how students can successfully use technology and provide flexibility for the teachers when it comes to planning and delivering information to the students. Currently, these types of platforms are called Learning Managing Systems or LMS. Among these platforms, we find Moodle, D2L, Blackboard, Oncourse, and others.

### 7.3. Emergent Technologies and Student Engagement

Aguilar-Sánchez and Donar (2014) searched for characteristics, from a pedagogical point of view, present in emergent technologies that allow students to be engaged in their studies inside and outside of the classroom, and students’ preferences in regard to emergent technologies to be engaged in outside of the classroom. They studied data from students who completed an advanced Spanish grammar course (n= 63) at a Midwestern University in the United States. Data were collected over the course of six semesters. The authors stated that demographics were not collected due to the nature of their study.

They used the PEER approach to the facilitation of second language acquisition (Aguilar-Sánchez, in progress). Four technological advances (iPads, SmartBoard, SmartPen, and Concept Maps through Prezi) were selected to create materials to engage students inside and outside of the classroom. Activities were created according to the characteristics of each of the emergent technologies that were selected. In their study, iPads were used as means to search information and sometimes to create materials in groups (e.g. picture story-telling, response to questions via Socrative, among other apps). They report that students were encouraged to use the iPads to study or to summarize the material for future reference. They also report that SmartBoard activities were created to present content in class and that these activities allowed students to interact with the content that was presented to them in the classroom, but not outside of it. Such presentations, they explain, included vocabulary games and jigsaw puzzles, among
others. SmartPens, which are pens that allow for the recording of audio and the visual recording of your handwriting, were used as lecture-capture devices. A third technology included the capturing of lectures. They explain that lectures were captured with a SmartPen and were converted into what are called PenCasts. PenCasts are PDF documents with audio and interactive visuals of the user’s handwriting. Aguilar-Sanchez and Donar (2014) later uploaded recorded lectures into the Learning Management System called Desire 2 Learn (D2L) for students to use them for review or preparation for class. The last technology they used was Prezi, a presentation web-based program; and it was used to engage students in deep reading. Students were required to use Prezi to prepare presentations in groups of selected readings every week as they describe in their paper.

Data were collected via a preference survey in which the researchers asked students for the frequency in which they used, during the course, the technologies at hand and the usefulness, to the student, of such technologies. Their results show that students prefer technologies that allow for interactivity and immediate feedback for classroom work, and for engagement outside of the classroom they split between time spent on an activity and the availability of non-interactive activities. They present the following advantages and disadvantages of each emergent technology.

For PenCasts, they note that not only do they capture the explanation of the professor; they also capture the writing that is undertaken to explain it. They explain that this tool proves to be very powerful to help students revisit the lectures while also allowing them to revisit explanations. In addition, they state that PenCasts also serve as a source of audio to develop listening skills. All PenCasts were done in the target language. SmartBoard activities, as they point out, were interactive inside of the classroom, but non-interactive outside of it. However, they explain that students were able to view the material that was presented to them with all the annotations that were made in class and argue that students prefer this type of material because it triggers recall of the explanation or activity done in class. For Prezies, they describe that because they were done in groups; the negotiation of what went on in each Prezi and the value of the explanation from reading gained seems to be one of the reasons why students regarded them as useful. iPads, they discovered, were the least useful technologies due to the limitations they present. They argue that Instructors are tied to applications that sometimes cost money, and iPads seem to be regarded as personal items and not learning tools. They suggest that future research should focus on the comparison of particular Apps and their pedagogical usefulness rather than the use of the iPad itself.

Aguilar-Sanchez and Donar (2014) conclude that while some students prefer interactive activities, others prefer the static material due to a preconception of the worth of time spent in the class, and that because each of the activities and the technology to deliver them were selected following a sound pedagogical approach, tied to a student-learning outcome, and to how it was going to benefit language acquisition; the pedagogical approach is still at the forefront of any decision-making regarding teaching. They explain that these technologies seem to have been selected because they were the ones, from a teacher perspective, that best matched the needs of the students. They suggest that to select any emergent technology, teachers must have a clear understanding of how such technology will aid the learner in the acquisition process, and not just as the means of instruction. Their suggestion is the basis for what follows in this paper.
7.4 Summary

All of these studies and technologies share characteristics of importance for us to achieve our goal of a communicative language classroom where acquisition is at the core. They call for the use of technology as an aid to fulfill our learning goals in the proficiency oriented classroom. They all shed light on the importance of transferring the responsibility for learning to the learner while promoting a change in the mentality of teachers. A mentality that moves from the Atlas Complex (Lee & VanPatten, 2003) to that of a facilitator of learning (Aguilar-Sánchez, 2015, in progress; Aguilar-Sánchez & Donar, 2014; DuFour, 2004; Flipped Learning Network, 2014; Lee & VanPatten, 2003; Mazur, 1997; Piaget, 1967). They also use technology with a purpose and not just for technology’s sake or fashion. It is clear that each researcher had carefully selected how each technology was going to help the learner achieve his/her goal.

8. Conclusion

Contextualizing and adopting emergent technologies should not be a foreign part of our lesson planning; on the contrary, it should be at the core as long as our goal remains the learner’s success and language acquisition. However, in order to be successful in adopting such innovative tools, we must reflect upon our current practices and views regarding teaching, second language acquisition, and the learner.

It is imperative that we reflect on the type of teachers we are and to what pedagogical approach we attach. We need to ask ourselves whether we are in the grammar-oriented or the question & answer stage, or whether we use an informational-cognitive style, or even, whether our classroom reflect real-life situations in which learners take control of their language acquisition. After answer these questions, we must reflect on our pedagogical practices and how they benefit or do not benefit our language learners. Finally, we have to reflect on our practices as a community and whether we can collaborate to create a stronger community of practitioners.

If our goal is communication as the expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning (Savignon, 1997) and we want to promote a learner-centered classroom; then, we must choose technologies that have the characteristics to achieve such goals. Not only should we choose technologies that provide the venues for language use, we must select the technologies that promote collaboration and reflection regarding the production of new knowledge. These technologies must also provide us with the necessary data to help learners identify areas of improvement and areas of success.

Technology must be viewed as a tool to help us carry out each activity and each activity must be tied to a student-learning outcome that has language acquisition at its core. As I concluded in Aguilar-Sánchez (2015), the pedagogical approach is, and will remain, at the forefront of any decision-making regarding the facilitation of language acquisition. Technologies must be selected because they are the ones, from a facilitator perspective, that best enhance the acquisition process and not the delivery of content. Our classrooms must reflect our conviction that language acquisition is possible even when resources are limited by focusing on the acquisition process and the learner as the most important stakeholder. By sharing our strengths with other professional educators, we multiply our efforts and strategies while all other limitations become obstacles that we can easily overcome as a professional learning community.
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9. References


**10. Biography**

Dr. Jorge Aguilar-Sánchez is an Assistant Professor of Spanish at the University of Dayton, Ohio. He has a Ph.D. in TESOL and Applied Linguistics and a Ph.D. in Hispanic Linguistics. His current research focuses on student engagement for instructed language acquisition and the role emergent technologies play as aids in the process and in Best Practices for research design in (Socio) Linguistics. His works appear in journals, chapters of books, and other publication venues.
Processing Instruction for Grammar Instruction: A focus on Acquisition

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Abstract: In this interactive presentation, participants will be introduced to a grammar-oriented approach to the acquisition of foreign languages. Processing Instruction (PI) is a type of grammar instruction intended to affect the ways in which learners attend to input data. It is input-based, as opposed to output-based, and is consonant with both general second language acquisition theory and communicative language teaching (VanPatten, 1996). It is form-focused instruction that is predicated on a model of input processing (Wong, 2004). Processing Instruction is a psycho-linguistically motivated approach to focus on form, whose main aim is to teach grammar without sacrificing either communication or learning-centered activities. It includes grammatical explanation and grammatical practice, but a specific type of grammatical practice called structured input. (Lee & Benati, 2007). Participants will be creating grammar activities to facilitate English grammar acquisition while promoting communication in the target language. Processing Instruction has proved to be an effective tool for the Costa Rican context (Aguilar-Sánchez, Hernández, Cubillo, & Garbanzo, 2009).

Keywords: Processing instruction, grammar, second language acquisition, pedagogy.

1. Introduction
In this workshop, explore the pedagogical characteristics of Processing Instruction, and the ways in which they can be adapted to meet students’ needs. We will analyze general characteristics of the context in which acquisition takes place, as well as the limitations that we face as teachers of English in the developing world. We will discuss the
importance of contextualizing the acquisition process to the setting characteristics. We will discuss the two competing sets of guidelines (ACTFL for foreign language classrooms and EFR for bilingual or second language acquisition settings) that have been adopted throughout to guide foreign/second language acquisition in the classroom, and how we can contextualize and improve our students’ experience in the language classroom.

2. Context
Participants will create materials based on their needs and interests. The context proposed for this interactive presentation is the pedagogical approach and its characteristics. Participants will discuss in small groups as to what they need to take into account when adopting this pedagogical approach and why. Participants are encouraged to read Aguilar-Sánchez, Hernández, Cubillo, & Garbanzo, 2009) and Aguilar-Sánchez (2015) before the presentation. Copies will be made available electronically upon request.

3. Activities
Activity 1. Contextualization 15 minutes
Instructions:
In groups of four, discuss the context in which you teach. Use the following activities to guide your discussion:
   a. What is the layout of your classroom?
   b. What kind of technology do your students use for personal use?
   c. What kind of technology does your institution offer to complement your teaching?
   d. What kind of technology do you use for personal use?
   e. What kind of technology do your students have at home for personal use?

Activity 2. Pedagogical Objectives 15 minutes
In different groups of four, discuss what your pedagogical approach is and what the role of grammar is within its context. Use the following questions to guide your discussion:
   a. How do you define your philosophy of teaching?
   b. To what theory of learning do you attach (Constructivism, Behaviorism, and an eclectic one)? Why? What pedagogical approach do you follow?
   c. What is the role of grammar in your pedagogical approach?
   d. What is the role of assessment and measurement in your pedagogical approach? How much do you do and why?

Activity 3. Creating Processing Instruction Activities 60 minutes
We will focus on creating the following types of activities:
   a. Explicit Grammar Explanation
   b. Affective Activities for Structured Input
   c. Referential Activities for Structured Input
   d. Mini-lessons to show participants’ production
4. Materials
Participants are encouraged to bring the Programas de Inglés provided by MEP and the textbooks, if any, that they use in the classroom.

5. Conclusions
This is a highly interactive, hands-on presentation/workshop. Limitations are discussed as the presentation progresses, and participants themselves will provide areas of future work.

6. References

7. Biography
Dr. Jorge Aguilar-Sánchez is an Assistant Professor of Spanish at the University of Dayton, Ohio. He has a Ph.D. in TESOL and Applied Linguistics and a Ph.D. in Hispanic Linguistics. His current research focuses on student engagement for instructed language acquisition and the role emergent technologies as aids in the process and in Best Practices for research design in (Socio) Linguistics. His works appear in journals, chapters of books, and other publication venues.
Task-based Activities and Communication in the Foreign Language Classroom

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Resumen: En esta presentación interactiva, los participantes aprenden a crear actividades basadas en la tarea para facilitar la adquisición de una segunda lengua. Las actividades se crean como parte del Acercamiento P-E-E-R para la facilitación de la adquisición de segundas lenguas (Aguilar-Sánchez, en progreso) y está contextualizado al sistema educativo de Costa Rica. A los participantes se les alienta a crear sitios colaborativos con Google Docs, Facebook, y otros repositorios que estén al alcance. Estas actividades se crearán utilizando las tecnologías emergentes que estén disponibles para los profesores y los aprendices en cada contexto.

Palabras clave: Acercamiento PEER, pedagogía, actividades basadas en la tarea, tecnologías emergentes, colaboración.

Abstract: In this interactive presentation, participants will learn to create task-based activities to facilitate second language acquisition. Activities will be created as part of the P-E-E-R Approach for Second Language Acquisition Facilitation (Aguilar-Sánchez, in progress) and will be contextualized to the Costa Rican foreign language education system. Participants will also be encouraged to create collaboration sites through Google Docs, Facebook, and other repository venues easily accessible to them. These activities will be created using emergent technologies available to the teacher and learner in each context.

Keywords: PEER Approach, pedagogy, task-based activities, emergent technologies, collaboration.

1. Introduction
In this workshop, each participant explores the pedagogical characteristics of the PEER Approach to Second Language Acquisition Facilitation and explores the ways in which s/he can adapt them to meet students’ needs. We will explore general characteristics of the context in which acquisition takes place as well as the limitations that we face as teachers of English in the developing world. We will discuss the importance of contextualizing the acquisition process to the characteristics of setting. We will discuss the two competing set of guidelines (ACTFL for foreign language classrooms and EFR for bilingual or second language acquisition settings) that have been adopted throughout to guide foreign/second language acquisition in the classroom and how we can contextualize and improve our students’ experience in the language classroom through a sound pedagogical approach.

2. Context
Participants will create materials based on their needs and interests. The context proposed for this interactive presentation is the pedagogical approach and its characteristics. Participants will discuss in small groups as to what they need to take into account when
adopting this pedagogical approach and why. Participants are encouraged to read Aguilar-Sánchez (2015), Aguilar-Sánchez & Donar (2014), and selected chapters of Lee (2000) before the presentation. Copies will be made available electronically upon request.

3. Activities

Activity 1. Contextualization 15 minutes
In groups of four, discuss the context in which you teach. Use the following activities to guide your discussion:

a. What is the layout of your classroom?

b. What kind of technology do your students use for personal use?

c. What kind of technology does your institution offer to compliment your teaching?

d. What kind of technology do you use for personal use?

e. What kind of technology do your students have at home for personal use?

Activity 2. Pedagogical Objectives 15 minutes
In different groups of four, discuss what your pedagogical approach is and what the role of grammar is within its context. Use the following questions to guide your discussion:

a. How do you define your philosophy of teaching?

b. To what theory of learning do you attach (Constructivism, Behaviorism, and an eclectic one)? Why? What pedagogical approach do you follow?

c. What is the role of grammar in your pedagogical approach?

d. What is the role of assessment and measurement in your pedagogical approach? How much do you do and why?

Activity 3. Creating PEER Activities for the English class 60 minutes
We will focus on creating the following types of activities:

a. Facilitating acquisition through well-structured classes

b. PI for grammar instruction

c. 3 Readings in each activity

d. Activities that encourage collaboration and engagement

e. Mini-lessons to show participants’ production

4. Materials
Participants are encouraged to bring the Programs de Inglés provided by MEP and the textbooks, if any, that they use in the classroom.

5. Conclusions
This is a highly interactive, hands-on presentation/workshop. Limitations are discussed as the presentation progresses and participants themselves will provide areas of future work.
6. References

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Dr. Jorge Aguilar-Sánchez is an Assistant Professor of Spanish at the University of Dayton, Ohio. He has a Ph.D. in TESOL and Applied Linguistics and a Ph.D. in Hispanic Linguistics. His current research focuses on student engagement for instructed language acquisition and the role emergent technologies play as aids in the process and in Best Practices for research design in (Socio) Linguistics. His works appear in journals, chapters of books, and other publication venues.