

APPLIED LANGUAGE LEARNING



# *Applied Language Learning*



2006 VOLUME 16

NUMBER 1

VOLUME 16 · NUMBER 1

*Applied  
Language  
Learning*

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Volume 16

Number 1

# *Applied Language Learning*

*PB 65-06-01*

The mission of Professional Bulletin 65, *Applied Language Learning* (US ISSN 1041-679X and ISSN 1041-6791 for the online version), is to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and information on instructional methods and techniques, curriculum and materials development, assessment of needs within the profession, testing and evaluation, and implications and applications of research from related fields such as linguistics, education, communications, psychology, and the social sciences.

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Additionally, you may obtain the journal on microfilm from ERIC Clearinghouse on Language and Linguistics, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1118 22nd Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037.

Bulk-rate postage is paid at DLIFLC. The basis of official distribution is one copy per training instructor and one per five military linguists.

### **Postmaster**

Send change-of-address information to:

*Applied Language Learning*  
Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center  
Presidio of Monterey, CA 93944-5006

### **United Parcel Customers**

Location is:

*Applied Language Learning*  
Bldg. 518, Room 7 (Tin Barn)  
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## **Linguists: The Hidden Strength of U.S. Intelligence**

**Kathleen A. Dow**  
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*This article seeks to argue that linguists-not technology-have been the true power behind the successes of the U.S. intelligence community. However, this power has not come to them without difficulty. The author explores four issues in relation to this argument: (a) previous U.S. foreign language policy proposals; (b) the recruitment of linguists by U.S. government agencies; (c) examples of problems the government has had with utilizing linguists; and (d) the effects of American linguists on U.S. history from World War II to the present. The author suggests that: (i) the U.S. government must put into practice a sound foreign language policy that permits immigrants to utilize their native language skills; (ii) the government must employ its linguistic resources appropriately; and (iii) linguists' field reports must be taken seriously by their supervisors.*

A few years ago, a friend of mine travelled to Brazil on a short-term missionary trip. She told me an old joke that was related to her by one of the Portuguese interpreters:

What do you call a person who speaks three languages? --Trilingual.  
What do you call a person who speaks two languages? --Bilingual.  
What do you call a person who speaks one language? --American.

Now, one might laugh at this joke as I did, but it is not so amusing when one compares the foreign language capabilities of Americans to the foreign language capabilities of people from other countries. Although the United States has a fairly large number of immigrants, most Americans neither speak nor learn a foreign language. The major reason behind this problem is the lack of a consistent foreign language policy. Many policies have been considered by the federal government since the foundation of the country, but none of these policies has helped in producing a large quantity of people who are fluent in at least one language other than English. The lack of qualified linguists has affected the U.S.'s ability to protect itself and its national interests from attacks by foreign countries, or with regard to September 11, 2001, by terrorists. Linguists could have protected the U.S. from attacks by (a) giving leaders an advanced warning; and (b) obtaining inside information on a perceived enemy's physical or mental condition, location, supply lines, command structure, and other future plans. This information could have then been used to strike a decisive blow against the enemy first. This paper will present a review of four issues. First, it will present a review of several foreign language policies U.S. leaders have proposed for building a cadre of linguists for intelligence purposes since the nation's foundation over 200 years ago. Next, it will review how U.S. government agencies recruit their foreign language assets. Third, it will give examples of problems the U.S. government has had in the use, misuse, and non-use of its linguists. Finally, it will present several examples of how military and civilian linguists in the U.S. intelligence community have affected events in U.S. history from World War II to the present.

## Proposed Foreign Language Policies

The first major foreign language policy the U.S. considered was the foundation of a national language academy. This academy was proposed at the end of the War for Independence in 1781. According to Heath (1976), there was a strong debate between the founding fathers on whether or not to establish an institution where people could learn a foreign language while promoting the use of English at the same time. French and German were the predominant foreign languages in America due to the large contingent of immigrants and military officers who were educated in science and diplomacy. Two of the founding fathers, Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Rush, felt that learning French and German was important for diplomatic, political, and scientific communications. Another founding father, John Adams, felt that such an academy would not only legitimize the United States as a country, but also “help elevate it [English] to a world language” (p. 18) by adapting the use of English for science and communication. He also felt that the use of English could be bolstered and included within the country’s political ideology. Yet, in spite of the founding fathers’ support for a national language academy, the proposal was never presented for a vote in the Continental Congress. Eventually, the “American Academy of Language and Belles Lettres” (p. 27) was established in 1820, but it never gained any national support due to a debate on utilizing British English vs. American English. As a result, the academy disappeared within a short period of time. Hence, by not taking a firm position on a national foreign language policy, the United States lost its chance to produce a cadre of linguists that could have helped the country become a world power at least 100 years before the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Another foreign language policy that was considered by the U.S. Government was the National Defense Language Act (NDEA) of 1958. Congress implemented this policy in order to fortify our national defense capabilities by encouraging students to study foreign languages or the physical sciences (Sonntag 1990). Sonntag states that the NDEA was implemented as a reaction to the former Soviet Union’s historical launch of Sputnik the previous year. She writes:

The ability of ‘the enemy’, the USSR, to gain a technological advantage triggered an evaluation of American educational deficiencies. A crisis was perceived in the American educational process, undermining the United States’ ability to maintain a strong national defence. Not only were there problems with the dissemination of technological and scientific knowledge, but also with the parochialism of the American education system. The correction ...was to provide loans to undergraduate students and scholarships to graduate students studying science and technology.., or foreign languages.. The United States was in need of cadres of scientists, technicians, and foreign language experts if it was to win the Cold War. (p. 153)

While the NDEA was the first national policy that attempted to address the small supply of linguists in the U.S. Government, it was never successful in its goal of obtaining a large supply of linguists because the government never created a demand for them. To be sure, knowledge of foreign languages was considered to be an asset, but it was not perceived to be necessary for job performance in neither government nor the private sector. For example, President Carter’s 1979 Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies discovered that the U.S. State Department had “an unduly low estimate of the positions designated as requiring foreign language competence—only 26 for Chinese, for example ...a language significant to U.S. economic interests ... throughout Southeast Asia” (Perkins 1980, p.23). So, the U.S. lost another opportunity to build a strong cadre of linguists who could communicate in a foreign language and obtain first-hand knowledge of a perceived enemy’s strengths and weaknesses, culture, and business practices.

On the other hand, the NDEA was successful in meeting the demand for scientists since the knowledge of science and technology was necessary for beating the Soviets in the two races that would come to define the Cold War: the arms race and the space race. The U.S. did not enter the space race until the 1960s, when President Kennedy outlined his goal for the U.S. to be the first country to put a man on the Moon by the end of the decade. During the early 1980s, President Reagan made many speeches based on a perceived threat that the Soviets had superior military capability and were willing to use it in order to spread its "evil empire". He used the speeches in order to gain support from Congress and the American public to build up the U.S.'s arsenal of nuclear weapons and conventional military forces (Halmari 1993). By 1989, the U.S. had won both races, and as a result, Communism died in Eastern Europe. Two years later, the Cold War finally came to an end when the Soviet Union also became a democratic republic.

The last major foreign language policy that was considered by the U.S. Government was based on a proposal from President Carter's 1979 Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies. James Perkins, the Chairman of the Commission who wrote the report, felt that the U.S. sorely lacked qualified foreign language experts "at a time when an increasingly hazardous international military, political and economic environment is making unprecedented demands on America's resources, intellectual capacity, and public sensitivity" (p. 11).

The Commission made several recommendations. First, it recommended that all schools—from elementary school through college—make foreign language learning a requirement. Next, it recommended that colleges and universities increase their offerings of international studies in post secondary institutions. The third recommendation was to encourage advanced research and language exchanges between American and foreign post secondary institutions. Fourth, the Commission suggested that individual citizens learn more about international affairs through (a) the media; (b) local, state, and federal agencies; and (c) independent or volunteer organizations. Finally, it suggested that government agencies, private businesses and labor make foreign language fluency a requirement for employment in order to meet their international interests.

Unfortunately, implementing these recommendations is easier said than done. With regard to the first recommendation made by the Commission, foreign language programs are seen as a luxury by many public school systems in America. They are not perceived to be as important as learning the three R's (reading, writing, and arithmetic). So, when school officials are forced to trim their budgets, foreign language programs are often considered at the top of the list for cuts.

There are two concerns I have regarding the second, third, and final recommendations made by the Commission. First, there is a great deal of pressure on Americans to live the American dream. Many Americans believe that the way to fulfill the dream is to get into a profession that pays a high salary such as medicine, business, law, information technology, and engineering. In many cases, these professions do not require study or travel outside the U.S. because there are a plethora of specialists in those professions who are already here. Some of these specialists may have come from foreign countries. Hence, their students can benefit from gaining their perspectives and expertise without going overseas. Second, there are some who are neither interested in learning another language nor find it useful for their daily lives. The other requirement to live the American dream is speaking English. Even if they manage to acquire a foreign language, would they be able to retain it? (Or for immigrants, retain their native language?) If they do not often travel or live where the language is spoken and use it, the chances are strong that they will lose much of their fluency.

Finally, with regard to citizens getting information about international affairs from the media and government sources, citizens would run the risk of obtaining a biased viewpoint of a situation. In spite of efforts made by the American media and government sources to project objective viewpoints of an event, the projections fail due to the subjective views presented by those who have observed the event first-hand or even worse, by media executives and government officials who have the funding and ultimately, the power to say whatever they wish. However, I agree that Americans must

take an active interest in international affairs and learn at least one foreign language if the U.S. is to retain its status as a world power. By learning the affairs and language(s) of other nations, Americans can learn much more about other cultures and be able to talk about international affairs that may have an impact on their lives.

After the release of the Commission's report in November 1979, many language policy experts were encouraged by the report's support for revitalizing foreign language education. Hayden (1979) reports that German, French, and Russian enrollment at American universities had dropped by just over one-third each between 1974 and 1977. The number of universities that had offered these languages and other area studies had also dropped significantly. In addition, only 6.8% out of 10 million students studied the less commonly taught languages like Arabic and Chinese. Yet, the majority of students who studied a foreign language during this time period still failed to achieve fluency. Funding for foreign language education programs under the NDEA's Title VI program had dwindled to zero by 1978. In her final remarks, Hayden characterizes her support for the Commission's report:

While a full-fledged national language policy is not likely to result from these endeavors, a pattern of effective foreign language training for interested Americans of all ages might improve international communications on the one hand, and domestic intercultural understanding on the other. (p. 101)

Keller and Roel (1979) also lent their support for the Commission's recommendations. They did it from a cultural perspective, arguing that:

The United States may be forced to reshape its system of communications as an integral, rather than dominant, component of a world language and information system. With these changes will come *the potential* for a new public awareness of foreign languages and cultures and a change in the state of foreign language knowledge. (p. 110)

In order for the U.S. to communicate with other countries, it must have an increased cadre of experts who can speak foreign languages and know about the cultures behind those languages. These experts can be used to gather intelligence on a foreign country's political and military infrastructures as well as its business, trade, economic, domestic, and social policies. That intelligence is then utilized by the President and Congress to set foreign policy and make agreements or treaties which affect the U.S.'s economic and national security. If foreign intelligence reports are judged as favorable to U.S. interests, then the U.S. government will strongly consider opening a steady dialogue to conduct business with the target country's government. If the reports are judged as unfavorable for U.S. interests, then the U.S. will attempt to place considerable pressure on the target country's government to change the critical situations outlined in the reports until the situation becomes more beneficial for U.S. interests.

Nevertheless, there were others who disagreed with the Commission's recommendations. One of its members, Representative Millicent Fenwick, thought that the Commission exceeded its mandate without mentioning any specifics on foreign language learning requirements. She asserts that the Commission recommendations "omit any mention of 'foreign language'" (p. 57). Granted, there is no mention of a *specific* foreign language required for study in the report, but what Representative Fenwick fails to understand is that there are *so many* foreign languages spoken around the world. It would be virtually impossible to pinpoint which foreign language(s) should be required for study. Focusing U.S. foreign policy on one area of the world does not give the whole picture on what is happening in other parts of the world. The U.S. needs to encourage foreign language study for *every* area of the world if it is to be successful in gathering intelligence and maintaining its security.

Fenwick's biggest complaint, however, is the amount of federal funding required for grants. She states that the recommendations "include travel and study grants for graduate students and for teachers who may have nothing to do with either of the Executive Order's objectives" and that "the report ...opens the door to heavy Federal expenditures" (p. 57). She supports this by stating that "exchanges include teachers in *all* subjects [not just foreign languages]" (p. 57). While I agree that federal funding for any program should be carefully scrutinized, the fact remains that funding for foreign language programs has been consistently low while other programs such as the current war on terrorism have been given lots of funding. Although the war on terrorism is a high priority, the first line of defense against terrorism is to infiltrate the cells that plan terrorist activities. How can the U.S. do that if it doesn't have experts who have studied the language(s) and lived in areas where the terrorists have lived? It is expensive to travel and study overseas for a long period of time. Without grants, students would not be able to afford to go overseas to learn about other cultures and become fluent in the language(s) of those countries.

### **Recruitment of Linguists by the U.S. Government**

The U.S. Government recruits linguists for more than 70 of its departments and agencies (United States GAO-02-375, 2002). These linguists usually have a foreign language background, either as a native speaker or through previous extensive studies in high school, the military, or college. The most common departments and agencies that recruit linguists are (a) the Department of Defense (e.g. the National Security Agency; the U.S. Armed Forces); (b) the Department of Justice (e.g. the FBI); (c) the Department of State (e.g. Foreign Service Office); and (d) the Central Intelligence Agency (U.S. GAO-02-375, 2002). The most common jobs held by people within these agencies are those of interpreters, translators, interrogators, diplomats, surveillance monitors, cryptographers, and espionage artists.

The requirements for being a linguist in the U.S. Government are stringent. Some of the requirements may vary between agencies, but here are the general ones based on my personal experience as a former government linguist:

- a. you must be a U.S. citizen (native-born or naturalized);
- b. you must take a language exam to show a strong proficiency and/or aptitude for learning a foreign language; and
- c. you must submit to a background investigation and/or a polygraph in order to obtain a security clearance.

Some agencies, like the FBI, CIA, and the U.S. Army, also have age limits, which are usually set in the mid-30s. The Defense Language Proficiency Tests (DLPT) vary, but they generally involve translating materials from the target language to English (and/or vice versa), a listening proficiency section, a reading comprehension section, and for the U.S. Armed Forces and the FBI, an oral demonstration section. The DLPT's are graded on a scale of 0-5 (0 = no proficiency; 5 = functionally native) with a plus rating for those who exceed the standards for one level, but do not meet all the standards necessary for the next level (United States GAO-02-375, 2002). Depending on the job, one has to score at least a 1 or a 2 on the preliminary language exam. There may also be an additional language aptitude test, which consists of analyzing an artificial language and translating it into English. For example, when I applied for a linguist position in the U.S. Army, I had to take the Defense Language Aptitude Battery (DLAB). The test consisted of an artificial language with a small key and pictures to guide me in answering the questions, all of which were multiple-choice. I scored high enough to be admitted to the Defense Language Institute (DLI) in Monterey, CA as a Persian-Farsi student.

Before graduating from DLIFLC (Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center), I was required to take the DLPT. For my particular position (interrogation), I had to score at least a 1 on each section (listening, reading, and speaking). The signal

analysts had to score at least a 2, which is rated as “limited working proficiency” (United States GAO02-375, 2002, p. 5). Once we were assigned to our permanent duty stations, we had to retake the DLPT annually. If we scored high enough on the exam, we were given a Foreign Language Proficiency Pay (FLPP) bonus each month in addition to our base pay. We also had to go to the language lab at least twice a week to maintain our language skills with the help of an instructor who was a native speaker in our assigned language(s).

### **Problems Encountered in the Use, Misuse, or Non-Use of Linguists**

Several problems have arisen regarding people with foreign language skills. Valdes (1997) mentions one court case where the FBI misused (or perhaps overused) their Hispanic agents, *Perez vs. FBI*, 707 F. supp. 891 (W.D. Tex. 1988). The Court found in favor of Perez that the FBI had given a disproportionately high number of Spanish language wire taps to Hispanic Special Agents who had bilingual skills in English and Spanish. It also found that Hispanic Special Agents who did not join the FBI as linguists (e.g. accounting, law) were automatically presumed to have Spanish language abilities and were compelled to take Spanish language examinations. The Court ultimately found that these two factors made it difficult for Hispanic Special Agents to get promoted in their chosen field because wiretapping and translation duties often precluded them from being given assignments that would help them climb into supervisory and management positions. To add insult to injury, these agents had not been paid any bonuses for their Spanish language abilities while performing the aforementioned duties.

Another problem is the strategies with which U.S. government agencies attempt to address their foreign language shortfalls. According to United States GAO-02-372 (2002), the Army was the only agency to actively recruit native speakers on a full-time basis. The other agencies that were examined in the report (the Department of State, the Foreign Commercial Service, and the FBI) were discovered to have recruited foreign language speakers on a limited contractual basis or used the small number of employees who were already deemed to have foreign language abilities. These two strategies tend to exclude those who have the ability to serve as linguists on a full-time basis, or as stated in the previous paragraph, cause those who speak other languages to be taken away from their primary duties without being compensated for their foreign language abilities while performing duties that were not initially required of them.

A third problem is the non-use of linguists. I ran into this problem during my time in the Army. The Army had spent thousands of dollars and one and a half years to train me in a language and job occupation that I never had the chance to do. Since there was no war against Iran, there were no Iranians to interrogate. Also, unlike many of my colleagues, who had Spanish, Eastern European, or Arabic language skills, my Persian-Farsi colleagues and I did not have the luxury of going to Iran or to other temporary duty assignments where we could maintain our job and language skills. So, to keep us busy, our commanders assigned us duties that had nothing to do with our job. This is the kind of practice that truly hurts the Army in the end because when the time comes for soldiers to consider renewing their enlistments, most of them decide not to do so. They opt to leave the Army in order to go to college or get a higher paying job in the private sector that has a need for their skills. Therefore, it seems that better planning and foresight of linguistic resources is needed. Most importantly, commanders need to give *all* of their linguists as many opportunities as possible to maintain the skills they had learned at DLI and their initial job training by assigning them to temporary duty with another unit that performs the same job on a regular basis. Temporary duty would give the linguists more chances to pick up additional skills from colleagues who have more experience.

## **Effects of Linguists on Events in U.S. History: WW II**

At the beginning of World War II, there was a massive shortage in the U.S. government of qualified linguists who were fluent in a second language. This problem was compounded when the Japanese were winning the early battles of the war in the Pacific front because they had many radio interceptors and officers who spoke English. Many of them had been educated in American universities. Therefore, they could easily decipher and understand the radio messages being transmitted by American forces. When the American forces arrived at their positions, the Japanese attacked them. As a result, many Americans lost their lives.

To alleviate U.S. casualties, the military decided that an unbreakable code had to be created. It examined their past methods of communication, and discovered that their highest success rates came from using Native Americans to transmit their messages. This practice began in World War I. Company D of the 141<sup>st</sup> Infantry had several Choctaws. They were used to transmit orders over field telephones in their native language because there were many Germans who could understand English. When other U.S. military commanders learned of the Choctaws' success, another unit performed a similar tactic with the Comanche soldiers who were in their unit. So, when the U.S. Army began its campaign against the Germans in North Africa in 1943, it decided to employ Native Americans as radio operators to confuse the enemy (Paul 1973).

On the other hand, the U.S. forces fighting in the Pacific had very few Native Americans in their units. U.S. forces there mainly consisted of the Navy and Marines since they were considered to be the best forces to use for the "island hopping" campaign to retake the islands that were being held by the Japanese. Philip Johnston, a U.S. Marine Corps engineer since World War I, introduced the idea of an unbreakable code based on the Navajo language to several signal officers. He explained that the language was very complex, and even demonstrated a few phrases for them. (He was fluent in Navajo due to his childhood experiences on the Navajo Nation with his father, who had been stationed there as a missionary.) After a second, more elaborate demonstration of the code with Navajo civilians, the signal officers decided to approve the project. Most of the code was based on Navajo words for nature, family ties, and hierarchical structures, not on direct translations since the Navajos did not have names for many military weapons in their own language (see Paul 1973, pp. 14-45). The recent film *Windtalkers* (2002) depicts the story of two Navajo U.S. Marine radio operators who fought at the Battle of Saipan in 1944. The main theme that is conveyed in both the film and Paul's account is that the code was an invaluable contribution to the American forces fighting in the Pacific. The code was *never* broken by the Japanese, and it helped save many American lives. Yet, in spite of their contribution to the war effort, the Navajo radio operators were never officially recognized by the U.S. government until 1969, when the code became declassified from Top Secret status (McGroarty, Beck, and Butler, 1995).

The code breakers were another group of linguists that affected the outcome of World War II. The Japanese diplomatic code, MAGIC, was broken in 1940. Four days before Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, Frank Rowlett, one of the senior cryptanalysts in the Signal Intelligence Corps, discovered that the Japanese embassy had been ordered to destroy its codebooks and cipher machines. As he spoke with his boss, Colonel Otis Sadler, they felt that this order could only mean one thing—the Japanese were planning to attack the country. However, they could not pinpoint where or when the attack would take place. The only way they could do that was to break the Japanese naval codes, but very few people had been assigned to this task. Thus, messages were not deciphered in a timely manner and as a result, 2,403 Americans lost their lives at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. This failure in intelligence became especially shocking when several code breakers took the opportunity to review those unread messages shortly after the war had ended. The messages revealed that the Japanese were ordered to be prepared for war against the U.S. by November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1941—nearly two weeks before the attack on Pearl Harbor (Budiansky 2000).

Meanwhile, a month before the war began, the War Department (later renamed the Department of Defense) had secretly established a language school, the Military Intelligence Service Language School (MISLS), at the Presidio of San Francisco to address the military's shortfall of Japanese linguists. The initial class contained 60 students, most of whom were second-generation Japanese-Americans from the West Coast. Yet, little did they know how much their loyalty to the United States would be tested. Because of the immense hatred felt toward the Japanese following the attack at Pearl Harbor, many Japanese-American families who lived on the West Coast were ordered to go to internment camps. Within six months, 35 of the 60 students at MISLS were sent to fight in the Pacific theatre. The Japanese-American linguists were able to prove their loyalty to the U.S. After this initial class, the school was moved to Minnesota. By the end of the war, the school had graduated over 2,000 Japanese linguists, all of whom would go on to fight in every battle in the Pacific theatre (McNaughton 1994).

One of the biggest accomplishments that the Japanese linguists helped to achieve was the assassination of Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, the Harvard-educated naval officer who had plotted the attack on Pearl Harbor. Japanese Naval Code 25 (JN-25) had been broken by the time the first class of linguists had graduated from MISLS. The Japanese Navy never suspected that it had been broken. So, any changes that they made to the code were minor, but were still easy to decipher by the linguists. On April 14, 1943, the following message pertaining to Yamamoto's travel plans was deciphered:

ON APRIL 18 CINC COMBINED FLEET WILL VISIT RXZ, R-, AND  
RXP IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE FOLLOWING SCHEDULE: 1.  
DEPART RR AT 0600 IN A MEDIUM ATTACK PLANE ESCORTED  
BY 6 FIGHTERS. ARRIVE RXZ AT 0800. (Budiansky, 2000, p.  
319)

When Admiral Nimitz received the news, he asked his chief intelligence officer, Edward Layton, if it would be possible for the Japanese to replace Yamamoto. Layton, who had met Yamamoto while a language student in Japan, said no. Nimitz then ordered Yamamoto's assassination, and on April 18, 1943, sent 16 P-38s to intercept and kill his opponent over the Solomon Islands. The assassination was successful (Budiansky 2000). Eleven months later, Yamamoto's successor, Admiral Fukudome, was assassinated while flying over the Philippines. This assassination later proved to be very fortuitous because he was carrying the battle plans of the Japanese fleet. They were subsequently translated by two Japanese-American graduates of MISLS, Technical Specialist 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Yamada and Staff Sergeant Yamashiro. Their work led to the Japanese naval aviation defeat at the Battle of the Philippine Sea (Harrington, 1979). Eventually, the Japanese linguists were also able to break the Japanese Army codes JEM, JEN, and JEK (Budiansky 2000).

Other Japanese-American linguists were employed as translators on the front lines. They had the toughest task of convincing the enemy to come out of the caves in which they were hiding and surrender. During the aforementioned Battle of Saipan, one such translator, Bob Kubo, was able to use his language skills and knowledge of Japanese culture to convince over 100 Japanese civilians and enemy soldiers to surrender to U.S. forces. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his efforts (McNaughton, 1994).

In sum, the Native American radio operators fighting with the U.S. Army in Africa, the Navajo Marine radio operators, and the Japanese-American linguists all have one thing in common. They were able to use the knowledge of their respective languages to help defeat the Germans and the Japanese in World War II. They became the hidden strength behind U.S. forces that provided much needed intelligence support for combat.

## **Effects of Linguists on Events in U.S. History: the Cold War**

At the end of World War II, there were only two nations that were prepared to take the mantle of leadership: the United States and the Soviet Union. Europe and Asia were devastated by the war. Germany and Japan were not the only countries that lost territories, however. England and France were slowly losing their colonies as well due to the massive economic burdens following the war. Germany and Japan were being occupied by Allied forces, but another war was about to take place. It was not a physical war, but a war between two political ideologies-Democracy and Totalitarianism. This Cold War between the United States, the Soviet Union, and their respective allies would divide the world for the next 45 years and bring the world to the brink of nuclear annihilation in 1962.

The first major conflict between Democracy and Totalitarianism in which the U.S. became involved was the Korean War (1950-53). The war began when North Korean forces crossed the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel on the morning of June 25, 1950. They were led by 150 Soviet T-54 tanks. Like Pearl Harbor, the invasion came as a complete surprise to the United States due to a huge intelligence failure. According to an analysis done by the National Security Agency (NSA) after the attack, "AFSA [Armed Forces Security Agency] had no Korean linguists, no Korean dictionaries, no traffic analytic aids, and no Korean typewriters" (Bamford, 2001, p. 25). Granted, Korea was not seen as a high priority target for intelligence activities, but at the same time, there should have been more linguistic resources dedicated to the task of monitoring signals intelligence from there since it shared a border with Communist China and Russia. Bamford states that AFSA only had two people assigned to intercept signals intelligence (using the Chinese language) from North Korea, but none of the signals they had received were ever translated. So again, the lack of qualified linguists in intelligence who were fluent in Korean or Chinese caught the United States and its allies by surprise. The North Koreans were able to take Seoul within a week.

A similar event occurred several months later when General Douglas MacArthur had pushed the North Koreans back to the Yalu River, its natural border with Communist China. Chinese linguists from AFSA had picked up several telephone conversations and telegrams that the Chinese were preparing to enter the war. This was a case in which the linguists were able to help avert a major disaster. Unfortunately, though, the general disregarded his linguists' warnings and as a result, 30 Chinese divisions crossed the river into North Korea on November 26, 1950. Since the troops who were fighting at the front lines were not prepared for the Chinese, the attack came as a complete surprise. General MacArthur and his troops had to retreat back to the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, and many American soldiers lost their lives. A few months later, President Truman relieved the general of command, and the war continued for another two and a half years.

Meanwhile, on the civilian side of the war, the CIA was involved in covert operations with General Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Chinese forces in Taiwan. Following World War II, the tenuous alliance between the general and Mao Tse-tung broke and after nearly 10 years of fighting against the Japanese, civil war resumed in China. Mao's Communist forces finally defeated Chiang's forces in 1949. Chiang and his most loyal followers fled to Taiwan, where they would live in exile for the rest of their lives. At the beginning of the Korean War, the CIA, along with Chiang's forces and several U.S. military veterans, set up guerilla camps on several small islands off the coast of mainland China. Their mission was to collect intelligence from the Chinese mainland forces by conducting guerilla raids. Some Americans and Chinese Nationalist guerillas were employed as interpreters. Many of the American interpreters had gained their knowledge of Chinese while volunteering to fight with the Chinese Army during World War II. They collected intelligence on Communist Chinese military personnel, naval and commercial shipping on coastal ports, and military forts by taking captives from the mainland and interrogating them or by translating captured documents. Their contribution to the Korean War was minimal at best because neither Taiwan nor the U.S. was truly prepared to allocate its combat resources toward a large-scale assault

on the Chinese mainland. The operations came to a halt when the Korean War ended in a truce in 1953 (Holober, 1999).

The other major conflict between Democracy and Totalitarianism in which the U.S. became heavily involved was the Vietnam War. Vietnam, known as Indochina at the time, had been a French colony. It was famous for its vast resources of rubber. When the Japanese invaded Indochina during World War II, the French surrendered it to them without a fight. The Indochinese, then led by Ho Chi Minh's guerilla forces, fought the Japanese until the war's end in 1945. Instead of becoming a free nation, however, the French regained control of the colony. Feeling angry and betrayed, Ho Chi Minh turned his fury on the French and with Communist support, drove them out of Indochina at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954. Shortly thereafter, the French sued for peace under the Geneva Accords. Indochina was then split into two countries, North Vietnam and South Vietnam, with the understanding that they would be allowed to vote for reunification. Ho Chi Minh retained control of North Vietnam. South Vietnam, on the other hand, was known as a "regroupment zone" (Prados 1996, p. 118). It was controlled by Ngo Dinh Diem, a politician who was under heavy U.S. influence. Fearing that reunification would lead to Vietnam becoming a totalitarian nation, President Eisenhower convinced Diem to withdraw his support of the Geneva Accords and declare South Vietnam an independent, democratic nation.

Initial forays made by the CIA into North Vietnam were not very successful. North Vietnam was classified as a "denied target" (Shultz 1999, p.8) because of its strong intelligence and secret police forces. It was virtually impossible for the CIA to recruit agents who were willing to risk their lives to reunite the North with the South under democratic rule. In contrast, North Vietnamese agents were able to move into the South at will through the Ho Chi Minh Trail, which runs along the border between Vietnam and Laos. They assimilated themselves into the local villages and assassinated any leader who stood in the way of reunifying the South with the North. When President Kennedy was inaugurated in 1961, he was desperate to find a way for the CIA to infiltrate the North. William Colby, the CIA's station chief in South Vietnam, suggested that the U.S. conduct psychological warfare (psywar) operations. Psychological warfare is a common tactic used in the intelligence community to convince enemies that they are not going to win the battles in which they are fighting. Its ultimate goal is to compel the enemy to surrender with a minimal loss of bloodshed by utilizing fake propaganda. Colby thought that Communist governments were paranoid by nature. He reasoned that if the U.S. could drive them crazy by bombarding them with psychological propaganda, then the North would capitulate (Shultz 1999). He became the agency's director in 1973.

Vietnamese linguists from the U.S. military and South Vietnam were recruited in the CIA's psywar campaign against North Vietnam. Some of them were employed as translators of propaganda materials. One type of propaganda material used was a leaflet. They were printed in Vietnamese on small sheets of paper and dropped from the sky or included in small gift kits. The leaflets contained brief messages that told the enemy to surrender or die. Other types of materials employed for propaganda were forged written documents (e.g. letters, messages), blackmail, and radio broadcasts (Shultz 1999). The fake letters and messages were designed to make the North think that many of their soldiers had died on the battlefield. They contained graphic details of how the soldiers had supposedly died. The radio broadcasts were used to spew fake propaganda about the alleged hatred the Chinese held against the Vietnamese. However, the broadcasts also contained hidden messages for the psywar teams (Conboy and Andrade 2000).

Other linguists worked as interpreters. As U.S. military involvement in the war escalated, more and more personnel were trained in the Vietnamese language at DLL. By 1973, more than 20,000 U.S. military personnel had studied Vietnamese at the school (United States Army, [http://fas.org/irp/agency/army/tradoc/cszsc/dli/dli\\_history.htm](http://fas.org/irp/agency/army/tradoc/cszsc/dli/dli_history.htm) 2002). Most of these linguists belonged to Special Forces units who were helping the South Vietnamese Army find and kill suspected North Vietnamese Army (NVA) agents. Others were stationed with intelligence units performing interrogations of North Vietnamese military personnel and civilians. One U.S. military linguist, Sergeant David Elliot,

related a story of how he assisted in the interrogation of several fishermen who were kidnapped near Danang.

This [the interrogation] continued for two days. We slept in a tent near the beach, and the Vietnamese, who was an ARVN [Army of the Republic of Vietnam] captain ... from the north-a Catholic-would bring down the reports and I would translate them. It was mostly questions about targets, especially around Dong Hoi. (Conboy and Andrade 2000, p. 111)

So again, Vietnamese military and civilian linguists acted as a hidden strength for U.S. intelligence. They used their language skills in an attempt to reunite North and South Vietnam into one democratic nation. Yet, in the end, their work went for naught. The U.S. gradually lost the will to fight, and like the French at Dien Bien Phu, they were driven out of Saigon on April 30, 1975. Thus, South Vietnam fell under Communist rule, and Saigon was renamed Ho Chi Minh City. The failure of the Vietnamese linguists to win the psywar campaign over the North Vietnamese still haunts the U.S. to this day.

There was one bright spot where American linguists played a role in winning the Cold War-the "Iron Curtain" of Eastern Europe. As stated previously, Germany became occupied by Allied forces at the end of World War II. East Germany was controlled by the U.S.S.R. while West Germany and West Berlin were controlled by the U.S., France, and Great Britain. The U.S.S.R. felt threatened by its previous allies' democratic control over Western Europe. So, it began to establish the "Iron Curtain" by setting up strong leaders who espoused totalitarian beliefs. Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Poland tried to resist, but to no avail. West Berlin was more successful in defying Soviet occupation attempts due in part to the Berlin Air Lift of 1948-49. Nonetheless, the symbol that would come to represent the Cold War-the Berlin Wall-was built in 1961 to prevent more East Europeans from migrating to the West in the hopes of obtaining what they perceived to be a better life.

Linguists were mainly stationed in West Germany. They spoke a variety of languages including Arabic, Persian-Farsi, German, Polish, Russian, Czech, Slovakian, Serbian, Croatian, and Ukrainian (David E. Maney, personal e-mail communication, July 18, 2002). Some of them were employed as signals analysts, but many of them were employed as human intelligence collectors (e.g. interrogators, counterintelligence operatives). The human intelligence collectors conducted debriefings on civilians and military personnel who managed to escape to West Berlin or to West Germany and wished to obtain asylum. David E. Maney, a former Polish interrogator linguist with the U.S. Army Interrogation Center-Europe (USAIC-E) in Munich during the late 1980s, outlines the initial procedure of applying for asylum:

[T]hey [all escapees] were required by German law to... give their names, ages, family names and history back two generations, military service, education, job history, etc. Copies of these forms were sent to USAIC-E. Screeners at USAIC-E would read over the forms and using Priority Intelligence Requirement (PIR) guidelines, would flag the forms of individuals who matched the guidelines within the PIRs. These individuals would then be sent a letter asking them to travel to Munich, to speak with NATO authorities regarding their asylum requests. USAIC-E had a hotel which was set up expressly for these sources.

Once in Munich the sources were met by the Interrogator assigned to them. The Interrogator introduced himself as a member of NATO, and offered them 25 deutschmarks per day to speak about their background, military service, and/or life within their home countries. The Interrogator also offered to assist the source in his or her asylum

request. If the source was interested in applying for political asylum in the United States, the Interrogator would offer to arrange an interview with the US Immigration and Naturalization Service. Over 90% of the sources happily agreed to speak with the NATO Representative. (Personal e-mail communication, July 18, 2002)

Next, he states that during the debriefings, the sources were evaluated on their knowledge, "level of access", and credibility. He describes "level of access" as being the amount of access sources had based on prior military security clearances or on the amount of knowledge about a particular subject in which the interrogator had an interest. Interrogators tailored the questions to fit the escapees' occupation and level of access. When they were finished, the interrogators had to immediately file a report of each debriefing with their sections. The reports would then be evaluated and sent through the chain of command to G-2 (the Chief Intelligence Office), the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), the State Department, and other intelligence agencies (e.g. the CIA). He recounts this process in a story about a source who had served as a Polish Army cook in an armored division.

This source generated a lot of interest from DIA due to his recent service and the unit to which he had been assigned. The overall debriefing of this source lasted six weeks, and debriefing sessions were conducted four days per week, for approximately six hours each day.

The Source's primary duty was as a field cook. The Interrogation Plan called for collecting information on the Source's unit, from squad level all the up to Division HQ; the unit's primary post or base of operations, including the use of aerial and satellite photographs to identify each building and area within the Post's main compound; the unit's equipment, including the quantity, type, age, and condition of all equipment and weapons, from the individual soldier's equipment issue up through the major weapons systems; logistics and re-supply procedures; food types and specific dishes served both in garrison and in the field, daily menus, portion amounts, food preparation, and the approximate caloric content of each meal served, both in garrison and in the field.

Over the course of the six week debriefing approximately 50 Intelligence Information Reports, based upon the debriefing notes, were written and filed with DIA for distribution to the other interested agencies. Included in these reports were drawings of the Divisional Compound with buildings labeled by function and unit, and detailed drawings of the Mobile Field Kitchens themselves. (Personal e-mail communication, July 18, 2002)

As you can see, interrogator linguists like David played a hidden role in U.S. intelligence. They acted as the primary contact for their sources and were the key to getting information that other U.S. intelligence agencies needed to know but were unable to obtain on their own. Some of the information they had obtained might have seemed unimportant to the average person; but in the world of intelligence, even the smallest details that sources revealed would have become important had the Cold War turned into World War III. I do not know how many sources were debriefed (that information probably continues to be classified), but the number must have been enormous. Yet, these linguists played a hidden, but important role which led to the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and with it, the end of Totalitarianism in Eastern Europe.

### **Effects of Linguists on Events in U.S. History: Desert Storm**

Desert Storm was another point in U.S. history where linguists were effective. On August 1, 1990, Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait. Sadaam Hussein's intent was to seize the country's vast oil fields and annex the country as punishment for not agreeing to cut oil production to raise prices. The U.S. had allied itself with Iraq in its war with Iran during the 1980s. After the war, Iraq owed the U.S. \$80 billion. Iraq did not have the money to repay the U.S. because most of its oil resources had been depleted. They had begun to rely on Kuwaiti oil to meet their economic needs, but oil prices were fairly low at the time. As a result, the Iraqi government could not meet its financial obligations to the U.S. Sadaam then began to blame his problems on Kuwait and the West. Eventually, the Iraqi military began a series of tactical maneuvers that culminated in the in were employed as signal and human intelligence collectors. Human intelligence collectors debriefed thousands of Iraqi prisoners of war. Most of the POWs asserted that they had surrendered due to the collapse of morale. This collapse of morale was due in part to psywar planners who distributed leaflets in Arabic to specific Iraqi units proclaiming the Coalition's intentions to bomb their positions if they did not surrender. The POWs also asserted that psywar planners also broadcasted messages in Arabic that their safety would be guaranteed if they agreed to surrender (Bin, Hill, and Jones 1998). United States House of Representatives 71-430 CC (1993) states that these tactics "were a major contributor to the collapse of Iraqi morale that made an overwhelming victory also swift and relatively bloodless for the Coalition forces" (p. 3).

One note of interest is the role of female interrogator linguists during Desert Storm. This was the first major war in which they got to play a direct role in gathering human intelligence. During a class break, one of the male instructors from the interrogation school spoke about his experiences during Desert Storm. At one point, he said, "The Iraqi prisoners *wanted* to talk to the women" (personal communication, April 1992). This statement came as a surprise to me since the Arab world has been (and continues to be) seen as a male-dominated culture. Whether the Iraqi POWs' interest stemmed from a natural curiosity about American women serving in the military or from attempting to see if they could exert some amount of psychological control over their female interrogators, I do not know. However, female interrogators were able to prove that they could handle their male POW sources and gather intelligence from them.

### **Effects of Linguists on Events in U.S. History: Terrorism**

There is no time in recent history where linguists were more heavily required than in preventing terrorist attacks on innocent Americans. Robert Baer, a retired CIA field operative who had served most of his career in the Middle East, gives an example of a problem in finding intelligence agents who were fluent in at least one Middle Eastern language.

Dewey [Clarridge, the head of the Counterterrorism Center] couldn't even recruit the staff that he had been promised. After six months, he could put his hands on only two Arabic speakers, one of whom was me. But since the other officer managed a branch, that left just me to travel and meet agents. That wasn't a lot, since about 80 percent of CTC's targets spoke Arabic. There were no Persian, Pashtun, or Turkish speakers at all. (Baer, 2002, p. 86)

If the CIA had more agents who could speak the local languages of the Middle East, they would have been much more effective in recruiting sources from terrorist organizations and stopping them from kidnapping or killing American citizens. One of the most prominent U.S. citizens kidnapped and killed in Beirut, Lebanon was the CIA's station chief, William Buckley. He was never heard from again, nor was his body ever found. In addition, two significant bombings had occurred in Beirut the year

before Buckley's kidnapping. The first one occurred at the U.S. Embassy; seventeen U.S. civilians, including six CIA officers, were killed. The other one occurred at the U.S. Marine barracks; 241 Marines were killed. The terrorists who plotted these acts have never been found.

Baer outlines similar problems with finding agents and sources fluent in Middle Eastern languages in regards to the bombings of Pan Am 103 and the most recent attacks on September 11, 2001. In both cases, the terrorists had plotted the attacks in Germany.

Bonn didn't have a single Middle Eastern agent to run down leads—neither an Arab nor an Iranian. For that matter, it didn't have a single Muslim agent in all of Germany's enormous Islamic community, a failing that would become painfully obvious in the wake of the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks when trail after trail began to trace back across the ocean to Hamburg and elsewhere. In the case of Pan Am 103, Bonn didn't have a single source at the Frankfurt airport to say whether anything suspicious had occurred before 103's feeder flight departed. (p. 136)

So again, the lack of agents who were fluent in the local languages of the place in which they were spying had a negative effect on the U.S.'s capability to infiltrate terrorist cells and collect intelligence from sources that would have had some first-hand knowledge of what was going to occur. These two attacks, along with many others, could have been prevented. On the other hand, even when agents received solid information that an attack was imminent, Baer says that there were times when the information was either ignored or disregarded by superiors who would not or did not care to pass the information to the proper authorities. Regrettably, these failures in intelligence over the last 20 years have led to the needless deaths of close to 4,000 Americans.

### **Conclusion**

Four issues were reviewed in this paper. The first issue was the consideration and implementation of several foreign language policies from 1781 to the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The next issue was how U.S. government agencies recruit their linguists. The third issue was the problems encountered in the use, misuse, or non-use of linguists in the U.S. government. The final issue was the effects that linguists had or did not have on major events in U.S. history from World War II to the recent terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. The lack of a cohesive foreign language policy has been disastrous for the United States. It has caused Americans to believe in the myth that they do not need to learn a foreign language to maintain their economic and physical security. It has also caused a massive shortage of linguists. Most of the events in U.S. history that were outlined in this paper point to one thing. If the U.S. government had employed more linguists to handle the heavy volume of foreign intelligence, it could have been more prepared to meet enemy threats and prevent surprises such as Pearl Harbor, the entrance of Communist China into the Korean War, and the terrorist attacks against Americans in Lebanon, the World Trade Center, and the Pentagon.

If linguists are to have a greater impact on the national security of the United States, several things need to be done. First, the U.S. government must implement a foreign language policy that allows immigrants to retain their native languages and strongly encourages native-born Americans to acquire a foreign language by studying overseas. President Carter's 1979 Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies contained some interesting suggestions that might be helpful in reviving foreign language programs. Encouraging the study or maintenance of heritage languages might be useful as well.

Second, government agencies must allocate its linguistic resources more appropriately. As evidenced by my personal experience in the Army regarding the non use of certain linguists, the government has allowed a potentially valuable resource to

slip away from them. If government agencies like the Army do not provide multiple opportunities for linguists to use the training they have received, then they will look elsewhere for better, higher paying opportunities. Finally, situational analyses provided by linguists must be taken seriously by their superiors. If the information that linguists provide is accurate and reliable, then superiors like General MacArthur and Mr. Baer's CIA supervisors should act upon it without delay. Imagine how much longer World War II would have lasted if Admiral Nimitz had not acted upon the information his linguists had received about Yamamoto's flight plans.

Conversely, imagine how MacArthur could have kept his promise to "have the boys home by Christmas" if he had acted upon the information he received from the Chinese linguists who were monitoring enemy phone and wire communications. Imagine how the U.S. could have been better prepared for terrorist attacks against its citizens if the CIA and FBI had more agents who spoke Middle Eastern languages.

In conclusion, the U.S. cannot afford to solely rely on its technological capabilities to spy on people who wish to destroy it. A few of the events in U.S. history presented in this paper have shown that linguists, not technology, were the hidden strength behind intelligence capabilities and successes. When I graduated from interrogator school, I received a pin that contained the Military Intelligence Corps motto, "Strength Thru Intelligence". If the U.S. is to live up to that motto, it needs the services of human linguists who are dedicated to gathering real time intelligence from fellow humans who may not speak English.

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### Acknowledgements

This article was first written in 2002 as part of the author's M.A. non-thesis paper at the University of Florida. The author would especially like to thank Dr. Helena Halmari for her advice and assistance in writing this article as well as her contribution as a reference. The author would also like to thank her former mentor David E. Maney for recounting his experience in Germany.

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## **The Effects of Formal Instruction and Study Abroad on Improving Proficiency: The Case of the Spanish Subjunctive**

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*It has been assumed that combining living in a native speech community with formal classroom instruction creates an ideal learning environment for foreign language learners. This study examines the extent to which formal instruction affects the oral discourse of advanced learners in target-language speaking environments. From a discourse perspective, the study compares the speech of native speakers of Spanish with participants who received four weeks of grammar instruction on a difficult structure -- the Spanish subjunctive -- while studying in a graduate program in Mexico for two months. While no statistically significant difference was found in participants' use of the target structure before and after instructional treatment, the study suggests that some participants were able to compose tightly structured argumentation over time and only a learner at the Advanced-High level could produce native-like discourse in hypothetical situations.*

According to the Proficiency Guidelines for speaking issued by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) (revised 1999), one of the major distinctions between performance at the Advanced and Superior levels is that the language produced by speakers at the advanced level is "of the anecdotal and descriptive kind rather than the more sophisticated and precise language needed to support opinion, to hypothesize, or to maintain discussion of an issue in the abstract" (p. 15). Advanced learners need to have mastered certain language features, depending on the target language, before they are able to perform successfully at the Superior level. Mood selection (the process of determining whether a Spanish verb requires the indicative or the subjunctive) is often related to functions characterizing speech at the superior level, such as hypothesizing. A good command of the Spanish subjunctive, thus, would enable foreign language learners to know how to perform well linguistically at tasks such as persuasion, hypothesizing about an impersonal topic, and supporting or defending opinions. To move from the advanced to the superior levels, learners need to master how to express their opinions in terms of the mechanical aspects of the language as they develop their communicative competence. It has been assumed that combining exposure of a native speech community with formal classroom instruction creates the best learning environment for foreign language (FL) learners. Foreign residency in a target language country also was found to be one predictor of better overall oral proficiency as shown in studies on the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) (Freed, 1998; Magnan, 1986). The purpose of this study is to examine the extent to which formal instruction impacts

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of advanced learners in a study abroad program in Mexico. Hence, we speculated that formal instruction, particularly on the use of the Spanish subjunctive in an immersion environment might bring about advancement in learners' proficiency of Spanish.

### Acquisition of the Spanish Subjunctive

The Spanish subjunctive mood is used to express uncertainty, disbelief, desire, an event of which the speakers lack experience or something that is not realized when they presuppose (are not asserting) information. On the other hand, the indicative mood is associated with actions that are real, factual, and that actually take place when speakers believe that they are asserting the true value of information (Terrell and Hooper, 1974). A common generalization of mood selection is that when a proposition expressed by the complement clause is asserted, the complement clause appears in the indicative mood; when a proposition is not asserted, the subjunctive mood is used in the complement clause. Expanding on the notion of assertion, Mejías-Bikandi (1994) claims that it is a speaker's intention, not the truth-value of a proposition, which explains all cases of mood, especially those after expressions of emotion. The indicative mood is used in a complement clause when the speaker's intention is to indicate that a proposition is part of an individual's view of reality. When speakers express their emotional attitudes, they use the subjunctive mood to acknowledge that they are familiar with the proposition of the complement clause. Mejías-Bikandi's pragmatic account of subjunctive use also illustrates the complexity of mood selection in Spanish. As such, in learning the Spanish subjunctive FL learners need to (1) process verbal morphology, (2) analyze complex syntax, and (3) interpret discourse-pragmatic relationships between states and events in the main and subordinate clauses in sentences such as *Espero que te manden la carta pronto* (I hope that they send you the letter soon). Because of its difficulty, gaining control over mood selection is often a true stumbling block for many non-native speakers of Spanish in achieving more advanced levels of language proficiency.

Previous research on the acquisition of the Spanish subjunctive by FL learners has tried to address the following questions: (1) To what extent do learners at various proficiency levels attend to the target structure in the input? (2) How does a learner's grammatical competence influence the acquisition of the Spanish subjunctive? (3) What type of instruction affects the acquisition of the subjunctive? Several conclusions can be drawn from some of the previous research based on learners' levels, although years of studying Spanish do not necessarily correlate strongly with FL proficiency. Beginning learners (first semester university students) are less likely to attend to the differences in verbal morphology as they read or listen to a passage; whereas intermediate learners (third or fourth semester university students) can dedicate more attention to target forms during comprehension (Lee, 1987; Lee and Rodriguez, 1997; Leow, 1993, 1995). Intermediate learners seem to struggle with the production of complex syntactic structures, which account for the majority of subjunctive usage; as a consequence, they perform poorly in subjunctive mood selection (Collentine, 1995; Terrell, Baycroft, and Perrone, 1987). Concerning the effects of formal instruction and natural exposure, learners at more advanced levels in the university with extended experience living abroad benefit more from form-focused instruction than those who have had little or no natural exposure to Spanish (Stokes, 1988; Stokes and Krashen, 1990). Explicit instruction that directs learners' attention to the target form in the input and that is meaningful and communicative has a positive effect on acquisition (Collentine, 1995; Farley, 2001; Pereira, 1996). Grammar teaching on the subjunctive has a limited effect, partly because learners first need to acquire a knowledge of complex syntactic structures (i.e., main clause and subordinate

clause), which in turn establishes the conditions for acquiring verbal morphology in mood selection (Collentine et al., 2002).

One of the shortcomings of previous studies is that measurements of learners' abilities to use the subjunctive were limited to written and oral sentence completion tasks, isolated sentence production tasks, or guided conversations; measurements hardly went beyond extended speech or written text. As Collentine (2003) criticized, oral sentence completion tasks as used in Stokes (1988) and Stokes & Krashen (1990) are problematic because producing isolated sentences does not directly assess FL learners' acquired knowledge of mood selection in spontaneous speech. We believe that analysis from a discourse perspective will reveal how learners utilize their grammatical knowledge as they search for discourse type or plan to construct their ideas to make a proposal, defend their arguments, or hypothesize about impersonal issues.

## **Method**

The current study attempts to investigate extended speech produced by advanced learners as the result of formal instruction on the Spanish subjunctive in a target language setting. The research questions that guided the design of this case study included:

1. Do advanced learners make more correct mood selection in speaking after formal instruction on the Spanish subjunctive in an immersion environment?
2. To what extent did advanced learners of Spanish perform differently from native Spanish speakers in terms of discourse structure?
3. To what extent did advanced learners of Spanish perform differently before and after formal instruction on the Spanish subjunctive in terms of discourse structure?

### *Participants*

For the purpose of this case study, the participants consisted of two groups: a learner group and a baseline group. Participants <sup>1</sup> of the learner group were six English-speaking advanced learners, three males and three females, who were in-service teachers of Spanish at secondary schools in the United States. They studied in an intensive graduate summer program <sup>2</sup> and lived with a local Mexican family, some with other American roommates. They all received four weeks of traditional grammar instruction, focusing on the Spanish subjunctive, while taking a second course in English on subjects related to second language learning and teaching. The instruction, five days a week, for two hours each day, was a lecture-discussion format in which the explanation of the rules of the target form was presented, followed by practice exercises in various types of activities such as filling in a blank, sentence completion, or composition. Mid-term and final exams of the course reflected what students practiced with these exercises. One day each week, the class discussion was directed to pedagogical issues. To raise students' awareness of the target structures in actual usage outside of class, students also needed to keep a linguistic journal in which they noted and analyzed usage of the target structures. The participants were volunteers who were interested in assessing their oral proficiency but were not aware of the nature of this study. All were at Advanced levels on the ACTFL scale as measured in the pre-test. (See more information about the test in the next section.)

The baseline group consisted of nine educated speakers from various Spanish-speaking countries, intended to form a data pool with more universal and general

use of Spanish. The native speakers took a speaking test as a baseline for the qualitative analysis.

#### *Assessment instrument and data collection*

Each participant took the Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview (SOPI), a standardized test developed by the Center for Applied Linguistics. Unlike a grammatical test or a sentence completion task, data elicited from SOPI provide a tentative indication of the participants' ability to speak in extended monologue. The tape-mediated test was used instead of the ACTFL OPI because of SOPI's consistent quality of language input in interview questions.<sup>3</sup> The data elicited through SOPI could result in more discourse-like speech, a feature of a higher level of language proficiency (Shohamy, 1994; Stansfield and Kenyon, 1992). The conditions of SOPI make examinees, especially more proficient ones, speak in more structured discourse (Koike, 1998).

The pre-test was conducted during the first few days of instruction. The first post-test was conducted immediately after the four-week course ended, and the second post-test was administered during the last week of the nine-week summer program. Concerning the baseline group, each native speaker of Spanish took one form of the three speaking tests (one pre- and two post-tests), resulting in three sets of speech samples for each test.

#### *Data Analysis*

To examine the participants' improvement in using the subjunctive, data generated from speech on two topics, considered tasks at the superior level in the SOPI, were selected and transcribed for data analysis in this study. The two topics characterized as superior descriptions were: (1) hypothesizing an impersonal topic, and (2) supporting an opinion on certain issues.

In the quantitative analysis the use of the subjunctive mood was examined in both the complement clauses of a matrix expressing modality and the if-clauses referring to hypothetical situations. The target forms were categorized according to the contextual information in the discourse: (1) obligatory contexts, (2) variable contexts, and (3) hypothetical contexts. In this study, the obligatory context was defined according to the traditional orientation, which classified uses of the subjunctive in complement clauses as determined by their syntactic functions: nominal, adjectival, and adverbial. Thus, imperatives were not included in the data analysis. The variable context in this study was defined as a context where the mood selection was variable depending on speakers' intentions or semantic-pragmatic tone. When speakers want to assert a proposition they would use the indicative mood in complement clauses. There are, however, occasions when speakers want to express some doubts about their opinion by using the subjunctive mood instead of the indicative (e.g., *Yo creo que los alumnos se cansen después de 10 meses*/ I think these students may become tired after 10 months). In contexts where either the subjunctive or the indicative were allowed, only those uses of the subjunctive that were found to be coherent with the overall non-assertive meaning intended by the speaker were considered accepted (or correct use). Because one of the topics under study dealt with hypothetical situations, a third category, hypothetical contexts, was included for analysis (e.g., *Si los jóvenes tuvieran algo así para hacer, ellos podrían ayudar mucho a sus comunidades*/ If those youngsters had something like this to do, they could help their communities a lot). To quantify the frequency of correct use of subjunctive forms we used the percentage of the number of correct forms supplied by the advanced learners in obligatory contexts, in variable contexts, or in hypothetical contexts divided by the total

number of corresponding contexts that required the uses of the subjunctive. The mean of accuracy rates in pre- and post-tests were compared using non-parametric procedures – Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed ranks test, because the sample ( $n = 6$ ) is so small, the scores cannot be assumed to be normally distributed.

In the qualitative data analysis, we adapted a discourse approach suggested by Silva-Corvalán (1994) in coding and comparing the discourse elements of the speech data. The discourse structure of hypothetical situations includes: macro-frame, hypothetical statement, argumentation, anchoring, qualification, disclaimer, and coda. (See Appendix A for detailed definitions.)

## **Results and Discussion**

To address the first research question of whether advanced learners<sup>4</sup> made a more correct mood selection in speaking after receiving formal instruction while living abroad, we will present the results of the quantitative analysis in the section “Accuracy in Using the Subjunctive.” To address the second and third questions regarding differences between native speakers’ and advanced learners’ discourse structures and the differences before and after formal instruction by advanced learners, the results of qualitative analysis will be presented in the sections of “Discourse Structures of Hypothetical Contexts” and “Discourse of Supporting Opinions.”

### *Accuracy in Using the Subjunctive*

The results of the quantitative analysis showed that the mean accuracy rate of the speech by the advanced learners in obligatory contexts increased by 20.95% from 66.67% to 87.62% in post-test 1, but the mean dropped to 68.33% in post-test 2. As in the variable context, the mean dropped to 75.00% and 67.85% in post-test 1 and post-test 2, respectively, from 83.34%. However, the  $n$  was only 2 in the pre-test, and  $n = 4$  in the post-tests, which indicated that not all advanced learners produced the target form in the variable contexts, particularly the pre-test. It seemed that after students learned the notion of certainty/uncertainty and pragmatic presupposition in mood selection, they tended to use more of the subjunctive mood in the complement with the *creer* matrix. Regarding the hypothetical contexts, surprisingly, the accuracy rate dropped to 24.34% and 27.08% in post-test 1 and post-test 2, respectively, from 36.42%. However, it should be noted that the instances of the subjunctive uses in the learners’ speech increased progressively, which indicated a tendency toward improvement after instruction. Nevertheless, as shown in Table 1, the results of the Wilcoxon signed ranks test revealed that there was no significant difference in the matched-pair comparisons of the accuracy rate between pre- and post-tests in the three contexts.

Table 1. Summary table of Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test Results Between Pre- and Post-test 1 and Between Pre- and Post-test 2 in Three Contexts.

Contexts	Mean accuracy rates	SD	(Post-test - score) – (base-line score)				Wilcoxon Signed Rank	
			Neg. Rank	Posit. Rank	Ties	Total	Z	p-value
<b>Obligatory</b>								
Post test 1	87.62	17.04	0	3	2	5	-1.604	.109
Post test 2	68.33	40.99	0	2	3	5	-1.342	.180
<b>Variable</b>								
Post test 1	75.00	50.00	1	1	0	2	-.447	.655
Post test 2	67.86	47.20	1	1	0	2	-.447	.655
<b>Hypothetical</b>								
Post test 1	24.34	23.82	4	1	1	6	-.674	.500
Post test 2	27.07	30.51	2	3	1	6	-.405	.686

Note: • negative rank denotes post-test 1 or 2 < pre-test  
 • positive rank denotes post-test 1 or 2 > pre-test

### *Discourse Structures of Hypothetical Contexts*

To address the research question regarding the difference between the advanced learners and Spanish native speakers in terms of discourse structure, we examined hypothetical discourse on impersonal issues and discussions of abstract topics. On the topic of hypothesizing an impersonal issue, the following presents an analysis of a typical hypothetical discourse produced by a Spanish native speaker (NF) on the issue of four-year mandatory study of foreign languages in American high schools:

1. *Bueno, Dr. Roca, Yo pienso que* (Qualification)
2. *eso sería de mucha ayuda.* (Hypothetical statement)
3. *Pienso que* (Qualification)
4. *cada uno de los estudiantes necesita saber al menos un idioma que no sea su idioma nativo como inglés.* (Argumentation)
5. *Y creo que es necesario* (Qualification) [tape stopped as it needed to be changed to side B]
6. *... Este desarrollaría un nivel de aprendizaje mucho mayor* (Hy/statement)
7. *y eso le ayudaría en su... en su futuro cuando quieran viajar a otros países.* (Hy/statement)
8. *Pienso también que* (Qualification)
9. *a mucho alumnos no les gusta la idea.* (Argumentation)
10. *Pero, luego de un tiempo de adaptación ellos pudieran llegar a eh acostumbrarse de la idea de tener un año... tener todos los años una*

*clase de un idioma diferente que no sea inglés. (Hy/statement)*

1. Well, Dr. Roca, I think that (Qualification)
2. This would be a great help (Hypothetical statement)
3. I think that (Qualification)
4. Each of these students needs to know at least one language that is not their own native language such as English. (Argumentation)
5. And I think it is necessary (Qualification) [tape stopped as it needed to be changed to side B]
6. ...This would be developed into a greater level of learning (Hy/statement)
7. And it would help them in the future when they would like to travel to other countries. (Hy/statement)
8. I also think that (Qualification)
9. Many students do not like this idea. (Argumentation)
10. But, later after a period of adaptation, they could accept that all students take a language course, other than their native language, for one year, or one class every year. (Hy/statement)

The structure of the hypothetical discourse by the native speaker NF contained four hypothetical statements, two supported by argumentation. The speaker envisioned a cause for disagreement with his previous statements as shown in lines 8 and 9. As a consequence, he made a hypothetical statement in line 10, which had a second function as a counter-argument for lines 8 and 9. The speech sample also contained three qualifications, which softened his tone. There was no anchoring, a strategy of connecting the hypothetical statements to the real world and factual information, which is cognitively less complex to produce and often used by less proficient speakers (Silva-Corvalán, 1994).

A closer examination of the discourse structures of advanced learners revealed more assertiveness than native speakers as they were asked to hypothesize about the consequences of an abstract topic. A typical example of this type of discourse structure by a learner BI in the pre-test is illustrated below on the question of the twelve-month school year for children in the United States:

1. *Pues yo creo que para los niños desde cinco a doce años sería muy bueno (Hy/Statement)*
2. *porque no tienen el cerebro tan desarrollado y se olvidan muchas cosas durante el verano, (Argumentation)*
3. *Pero, en cambio, para los adolescentes con más años, no estoy tan segura si es buena idea (Disclaimer)*
4. *porque van a perder la oportunidad viajar y hacer programas de intercambio. (Argumentation)*
5. *Y sé muy bien que los profesores no les gusta mucho (Qualification)*
6. *porque también tienen que hacer sus programas (Argumentation)*
7. *y también les gusta viajar durante los veranos para mejorar sus habilidades (Argumentation)*
8. *Pero para los niños sería muy buena idea (Hy/Statement)*
9. *porque muchos padres que no pueden cuidar a los niños durante el verano y es muy duro para ellos encontrar a alguien para ayudar con*

*los niños.* (Argumentation)

1. Well, I think that it would be good for kids between five and twelve years old (Hy/Statement)
2. because they do not have well-developed minds and they forget a lot of things during the summer. (Argumentation)
3. But, on the other hand, I am not sure if this is such a good idea for those older adolescents (Disclaimer)
4. because they are going to miss many opportunities for traveling and attending exchange programs. (Argumentation)
5. and I know very well that many teachers do not like this (Qualification)
6. because they also have to make their programs (Argumentation)
7. and they also like to travel during the summer to improve their abilities. (Argumentation)
8. But, it would be a good idea for young students (Hy/Statement)
9. because many parents cannot take care of their children during the summer and it is difficult for them to find someone to help them with their kids. (Argumentation)

Participant BI's discourse contained two hypothetical statements and five supportive argumentations, with one qualification and one disclaimer. Rather than speaking in the hypothetical world as the task required, the speaker used more assertive sentences (as demonstrated by more indicative usage) to support her stand on the issue. In line 5, she probably wanted to say that this would be a good idea although she knew that some teachers would not like it. By selecting the indicative mood, she gave the impression of an assertive and assured style of communication in reference to a hypothetical situation. As with verb morphology, the higher instances of indicative over subjunctive created a more assertive discourse than that of a native speaker. Additionally, the only use of the conditional is limited to formulaic speech such as *sería bueno* (it would be good), which was also a more frequently used form in the speech samples of non-native speakers in hypothetical situations.

The last research question addresses how formal instruction makes a difference in the oral production of advanced learners in terms of discourse structure. We analyzed the discourse structures of hypothetical tasks by the non-native speakers and categorized them into four main types: listing advantages and disadvantages, supporting opinions with argumentation, supporting opinions with argumentation in less assertive style, hypothesizing on possible consequences, which represents a continuum of characteristics of proficiency levels from Advanced-Low to Superior. The results showed that in contrast to the less assertive speech produced by native speakers (as shown in the sample speech by NF above), the advanced learners tended to support their opinions in assertive style in nine (9) of the eighteen (18) tests on this topic. Only one (TH) of the six participants successfully performed similar to native speakers in hypothesizing on possible consequences. Table 2 presents the results of the qualitative analysis of the hypothetical discourse structure by advanced learners from pre- to post-tests.

Table 2. *Discourse Structures of Advanced Learners on the Task of Hypothesizing on Consequences of Impersonal Issues*

<b>Subjects</b>	<b>Pretest</b>	<b>Post-test 1</b>	<b>Post-test 2</b>
BI	Supporting opinions	Supporting opinions in less assertive style ↑	More assertive statements of advantage and disadvantages
ST	Supporting opinions in less assertive style	Supporting opinions	Supporting opinions
KK	Supporting opinions in less assertive style	Supporting opinions in less assertive style	Supporting opinions
TH	Combination of supporting opinion and hypothesizing on consequences	Supporting opinions	Hypothesizing on consequences ↑
JC	Supporting opinions in less assertive style	Supporting opinions	Supporting opinions
RD	Mostly assertive statements of advantage and disadvantages	Supporting opinions ↑	Supporting opinions only at the beginning but narrating anecdotes later (anchoring)

↑ denotes the improvement from the previous test

In the first post-test, for a less proficient learner (Advanced Low) like RD, instruction had a positive impact on his speech. His discourse structure changed from a simple listing of advantages and disadvantages to one of supporting his opinions with the occasional appearance of hypothetical statements. Like RD, participant BI also benefited from formal instruction, whereas participant KK's performance remained the same in the immediate post-test. On the other hand, the performance of the other three participants seemed to move farther away from a native-like discourse on post-test 1. In the immediate post-test, they tended to state their opinions in an assertive style with occasional uses of hypothetical structure.

In the second post-test, participants BI, KK and RD failed to maintain the same level of performance they had in post-test 1. In the performance of a less proficient learner, RD, the effect of the instruction seemed not to be retained one month later. Most of his utterances were stated in a real-world frame regardless of the task's requirement. Although these participants were highly motivated and dedicated to improve their language proficiency, exposure to the target language environment seemed to have limited effects on their task performance. The discourse structures used in hypothetical situations by participants ST and JC in post-test 2 were the same as in post-test 1 with no improvement after the pre-test. While these learners were supposed to hypothesize consequences about an abstract topic (mandatory study of foreign languages in American high schools or

mandatory participation of study abroad programs) in the post-tests, most of them stated their opinions regarding such a proposal. It is plausible that they expressed their opinions on the advantages and disadvantages of the issue without addressing the task's requirement because they could easily relate to their personal experiences in studying abroad programs. This is particularly obvious with a less proficient learner such as RD.

The only evidence of the positive effect of formal instruction in the immersion environment was found in TH. A plausible explanation is that TH, whose global oral proficiency was Advanced-High, began the program with a higher proficiency level than others in this study. To perform a superior level task such as hypothesizing consequences about an abstract topic, learners need more cognitive processing capacity to sort out the complex relationships of various elements in a discourse, such as lexis, verb morphology, syntactic structures, pragmatic functions of assertiveness and hypothetical. With regard to learners at Advanced-Low or Advanced-Mid, the demands and concerns of speaking accurately with complex mood selection must have taxed their ability to plan to construct unique ideas and search for socially appropriate discourse types as they spoke. As discussed earlier, the instances of the target structures progressively increased in the tests after instruction, which suggests that these advanced learners were able to incorporate what they learned into their speech but their discourse style was not native-like. They saw the trees but failed to find the forest. Pedagogical intervention and an immersion experience in a relatively short period of time in this study appear to have a limited effect in helping advanced learners undergo significant changes in constructing hypothetical discourse.

### *Discourse of Supporting Opinions*

Analysis of the discourse structure of the native speakers' samples of supporting opinions revealed that there was usually a qualification (e.g., *Pues yo creo que* /well, I think that) in the beginning, followed by a statement conveying a stand on the issue at hand. Such a statement also has the function of establishing the macro-frame or topic, which may be expressed through the use of a hypothetical statement as well. The body of the discourse structure may be organized as shown in the models in Table 3.

Table 3. *Argumentation Patterns of Native Speakers on the Task of Supporting Opinions*

<b>Solid Listing</b>	<b>Interrupted Listing</b>
Argumentation	Argumentations
Argumentation	Qualification
Argumentation	Argumentations
Summary (optional)	Summary (optional)
Coda (optional)	Coda (optional)

The "solid listing model" includes a number of arguments in a consecutive order, concluded by a "summary" or a "coda". All or some of the arguments may be stated hypothetically and in some evaluative manner. Elements like "summary" and "coda" were not present in most of the samples, partly because of time constraints, and because speakers used other ways to signal the end of the talk (i.e., the conjunction "y" (and) preceding the last argument or statement).

The “solid listing model” is illustrated in the following transcript produced by one native speaker (MID) on the issue of the elimination of physical education:

1. *Ay, creo que* (Qualification)
2. *es un error muy grande eh eliminar las clases de educación física en en los colegios públicos ya sea en nivel alto, en nivel primaria.* (Stand/Macro-frame)
3. *Las clases de educación física son necesarias tanto para los niños como para los jóvenes porque se necesita un balance entre la mente y el cuerpo.* (Argumentation)
4. *Eh, los niños pueden, ah, aprender también a jugar a los deportes competitivos. De este tipo de de educación física, pueden salir; pueden ah estar en movimiento, pueden correr; y no estar; ah, solamente ah enfocados en la parte intelectual, ¿no?* (Argumentation)
5. *También se ayuda socialmente el el tener interacción con los demás alumnos en en este tipo de juegos o de gimnasia o o de deporte.* (Argumentation)
6. *Y, ah, me parece que también es muy importante en el nivel más alto en en la secundaria. Por ejemplo, ah, el mantener una tsk un balance entre ah la mente y el cuerpo. Y la clase de educación física mantiene a las muchachas y a los muchachos mucho más activos.* (Argumentation /Evaluation)

1. Ah, I think that...(Qualification)
2. It is a big error ah, eliminating physical education classes in public schools regardless if at a higher level or at elementary level. (Stand/Macro-frame)
3. The physical education classes are important for children as well as for teenagers because they need a balance between mind and body. (Argumentation)
4. Eh, children can learn also how to play competitive sports. With this type of physical education they can go out, they can, eh, keep moving, they can run and not being, eh, only focusing on the intellectual part, no? (Argumentation)
5. It helps also to socially interact with other children in these types of games or physical training or of sports. (Argumentation)
6. And, eh, I think that it is also important at a higher level in secondary schools. For example, eh, keeping eh tsk a balance between the mind and the body. And the physical education class keeps girls and boys much more active. (Argumentation/Evaluation)

Participant MID’s discourse structure began with a qualification followed by her stand on the issue. This corresponded to the prevalent form of introduction to the topic for both native and non-native speakers. The introduction was followed by four supportive argumentations clearly stated and developed. Instead of a coda, the conjunction “y” signaled the end of the talk.

The “interrupted listing model,” the predominant one in the native speakers’ speech, consisted of two sets of argumentations, usually separated by a qualification and with some sets composed of two to five consecutive argumentations. Qualifications were used to restrict the argumentations and they were used only in one instance to introduce one argumentation at the time. On the other hand, hypothetical statements had different functions. They were used: (1) to express a position on the issue (e.g., *un año de servicio*

*sería espléndido para los estudiantes./ a year of service would be great for the students), (2) to support a position (e.g., *de ese, ah, con este tipo de actividades los jóvenes eh podrían desarrollar un sentimiento más claro hacia la comunidad en la que viven./ from that, eh, with this type of activities the youngsters would be able to develop a clearer feeling toward the community in which they live), (3) to hypothesize about a different option or counterargument (e.g., *Quizás en forma voluntaria muchos estudiantes no lo, no querría tomar este tipo de responsabilidad./ Perhaps in a voluntary way many students would not – would not want to take this type of responsibility). This last function was not present in the solid listing model where the speaker would express several supporting ideas to only one position.***

The following presents an analysis of a typical discourse produced by a Spanish native speaker (MP) on the supporting opinion topic about mandatory community service for high school graduates.

1. *Me parece que* (Qualification)
2. *el servicio para la comunidad para los alumnos graduados de liceo es extremadamente importante.* (Stand/Macro-frame)
3. *Yo considero que* (Qualification)
4. *de ese, eh, con este tipo de actividades los jóvenes, eh, podrían desarrollar un sentimiento más claro hacia la comunidad en la que viven.* (Hy/Statement)
5. *El hecho de que están brindando su tiempo, su esfuerzo, su capacidad técnica o física en forma gratuita sin compensación económica considero que es extremadamente importante para el desarrollo de los jóvenes.* (Argumentation/ Evaluation)
6. *Pienso que* (Qualification)
7. *le da una oportunidad de creer como personas y de entender que a veces no, el dinero no lo es todo, que necesitan desarrollar actividades o destinar tiempo o algunas de sus habilidades en forma gratuita ah para compensar la comunidad, que en cierta forma les brinda a estos jóvenes también un montón de servicios. Esto es una forma de auto, digamos de compensar lo que ellos reciben.* (Argumentation)
8. *Eh, o sea que, yo estoy de acuerdo con esto de que se imponga en forma, digamos, eh obligatoria.* (Stand/ Repetition)
9. *Quizás, en forma voluntaria muchos de estos estudiantes no lo-- no querría tomar este tipo de responsabilidad.* (Hy/Statement)
10. *Ese mi punto de vista.* (Coda)

1. It seems to me that (Qualification)
2. community service for high school students is extremely important. (Stand/Macro-frame)
3. I consider that (Qualification)
4. from that, eh, with these types of activities, the youngsters would be able to develop a clearer feeling toward the community in which they live. (Hy/Statement)
5. The fact that they are giving their time, their efforts, their technical physical capacities in a volunteered form without financial compensation, I consider, is extremely important for the development of youngsters. (Argumentation/Evaluation)
6. I think (Qualification)

7. it provides him/her with an opportunity to think and to understand that sometimes money is not everything, that they need to develop activities or to assign time or some of their abilities free eh to compensate the community, which in some ways gives these young people also a great deal of services. This is a voluntary way, let's say, of compensating what they receive. (Argumentation)
8. Eh, that is to say, I am in favor of this imposed, say, mandatory form. (Stand/Repetition)
9. Perhaps, in a voluntary way, many of these students would not-- would not like to take this kind of responsibility. (Hy/Statement)
10. This is my point of view. (Coda)

Regarding differences between native and nonnative speakers on the task of supporting an opinion, the advanced learners' data were analyzed on the basis of the model outlined above in Table 3. The results showed one similarity and three contrasting features. The speech samples by the two groups were similar in the discourse structure of introductory statements. As discussed earlier, the position statement was preceded by a qualification in general. The contrasting features between the native and learner groups found in the speech of advanced learners are as follows:

1. There was an insertion of a qualification right after the position statement.
2. Argumentations were usually preceded by more than one structural element, i.e., anchoring, repetition of position statement, hypothetical statements, disclaimers, etc.
3. There were very few instances where two or more argumentations appeared in a consecutive order.

To open their speech, the learner group tended to insert a qualification right after a position statement and before the first argumentation. The function of the qualification may not be that of restricting the value of the argumentations as shown in native speech, but rather a strategy of gaining time to phrase the following argument. Secondly, the use of more than one structural element before each argumentation seemed to divert the advanced learners' discourse into different paths, which did not help in the construction of their arguments. As a consequence, the first and other argumentations did not occur when expected but much later in the discourse, or did not appear at all.

To illustrate the aforementioned characteristics, the transcript of RD's discourse in the second post-test on the topic of eliminating physical education follows:

1. *Bueno, señor, este: si fuera estudiante otra vez en la prepa, me gustaría tener una clase de educación física.* (Hy/Statement)
2. *Emm, porque? Pues, a mí me gustan los deportes.* (Anchoring)
3. *Y yo pienso que* (Qualification)
4. *muchos, a muchos jóvenes les gustan los deportes, no?* (Argumentation)
5. *Y la verdad es que en los EE.UU. nosotros tenemos un problema, un gran problema.* (Macro-frame)

6. *porque a veces los jóvenes llegan a las casas, pues, especialmente los jóvenes, los niños en la primaria, en la escuela secundaria, ellos no hacen nada. Este los padres están en sus trabajos y los jóvenes, los niños solamente miren la televisión. No hacen nada.* (Argumentation)
7. *Entonces, en mi opinión,* (Qualification)
8. *es un problema.* (Macro-frame repeated)
9. *Y luego cuando ellos están en en la prepa. unos tienen trabajos, y después de la clase, trabajan. No participan(e) a el en los deportes.* (Argumentation)
10. *Entonces, en mi opinión,* (Qualification)
11. *los jóvenes necesitan(e) las clases de de la educación física* (Stand)
12. *porque no hacen ejercicios, comen, tomen, pasan tiempo con los amigos, pero no hacen los ejercicios.* (Argumentation repeated)
13. *Y cada año yo pienso que* (Qualification)
14. *la gente de los Estados Unidos es más gorda. Entonces, es tan importante que nosotros tenemos las clases de educación física en la prepa.* (Stand)

1. Well, Sir, this, If I were high school student again, I would like to take a physical education class. (Hy/Statement)
2. Mmm, Why? Well, I like sports. (Argumentation)
3. And I think that (Qualification)
4. many, many youngsters like sports, don't they?
5. And the truth is that we Americans have a problem, a big problem (Macro-frame)
6. because sometimes youngsters return home, well, especially young children, the children in elementary school, in high school, they do nothing. The parents are at work and the youngsters, the children only watch television. They do nothing. (Argumentation)
7. Thus, in my opinion, (Qualification)
8. it is a problem. (Macro-frame repeated)
9. And then when they are in high school, some have jobs and they work after class. They do not participate in sports. (Argumentation)
10. Thus, in my opinion (Qualification)
11. those youngsters need physical education classes. (Stand)
12. because they do no exercise, they eat, drink, spend time with friends, but they do not exercise. (Argumentation repeated)
13. And each year, I think that (Qualification)
14. people in the United States become heavier. Thus, it is so important that we have physical education classes in high school. (Stand)

In RD's sample, he did not open the speech with a qualification, nor did he state a general position at the beginning; instead he addressed the abstract situation by hypothesizing from a personal perspective (e.g., *Si fuera estudiante de la prepa, me gustaría*

*tener una clase de educación física/* If I were a high school student, I would like to have a physical education class). RD's position on the issue was formally stated in the final statement. For this reason, his argumentation was not well developed and did not address the question directly. It seemed that RD tried very hard to demonstrate his grammatical knowledge, but it took him a while to decide what he wanted to say and what his stand on the issue was. These learners, particularly the less proficient ones, were less effective in composing an argumentation as they adopted the communicative strategy of gaining time to form their utterances. When trying to find a way to express their opinions, their reasoning tended to deviate from their basic frame of reference, which resulted in a need to include extra repetitions and qualifications before an argumentation.

Regarding the effects of instruction, there was an increase in the number of argumentations, a function of the topic, over time, which made advanced learners' discourse closer to that of the native speakers. The topic required speakers to support their opinion on a controversial issue. Native speakers tended to express a number of reasons in support of their opinions. The most evident feature of the fully developed discourse of native speakers (eight of the nine discourse samples) was the presence of at least three distinctive argumentations and several instances of more than three. In the pre-test, non-native speakers were unable to include as many argumentations as native speakers. Underdeveloped argumentations made the learners' discourse incomplete and their opinions not fully supported. This seemed to be due in part to the limited time available for their responses and the insertion of a larger number of qualifications, anchoring and repetitions than native speakers, which in turn were most likely a product of their language proficiency at the moment. In both post-tests 1 and 2 all but two advanced learners (JC and KK) had an increase in the number of argumentations in support of their opinions. The number of argumentations included in JC's discourse decreased and that in KK's did not change across the three tests. Regarding discourse structure, both ST and KK demonstrated the "interrupted listing model" like native speakers in the post-test 1, whereas only one participant (TH) in the post-test 2 produced this type of structure. Only one of the samples (BI's post test 1) resembled the "solid listing model" present in the native speaker's speech. As in BI's discourse, learners who stated more argumentations tended to structure their discourse more tightly. Table 4 shows the number of argumentations in the discourse structures of the advanced learners. Additionally, the length of discourse produced by less proficient learners progressively increased across the three tests, and as length of discourse increased, the argumentations and hypothetical statements became more sophisticated.

Table 4. *Numbers of Argumentations by Advanced Learners on Task of Supporting Opinions*

	Pre-Test	Post-Test 1	Post-Test 2
BI	1	3 <sup>a</sup>	4
ST	1	3 <sup>b</sup>	3
KK	2	2 <sup>b</sup>	2
TH	1	2	3 <sup>b</sup>
JC	2	0	1
RD	2	3	4

<sup>a</sup> denotes the tight structure of the solid listing model with all three argumentations in a consecutive order

<sup>b</sup> denotes the interrupted listing model with instances of two consecutive argumentations.

### Conclusion and Implications

Learners of Spanish at the Advanced levels on the ACTFL scale are generally accurate in terms of verb morphology in tenses, are competent in producing a matrix of main and subordinate clauses, and are developmentally ready to make mood selection. The development of accuracy and sophistication in grammatical expression is essential in reaching higher levels of proficiency. Given the ceiling effect, in which advanced learners take many years to advance to the next level of proficiency, it is not surprising that there was no significant difference statistically in the accuracy of their use of target forms before and after explicit grammar instruction in this study. However, the progressive increase in the usage of target structures after instruction is a clear indication of learners' improvement in grammatical sophistication in spontaneous speech. We suspect that a grammaticality test (e.g., contextualized preference test or grammaticality judgment test) might be able to reveal the effects of instruction on grammatical knowledge, though it is not the focus of assessment in this study. Future research could also examine different types of tests or explore the effects of longer periods of foreign residency.

Among studies of second language acquisition in the study-abroad context and in Spanish subjunctive acquisition, the current study is unique in that it examines advanced learners' oral production of difficult mood selections beyond the sentence level and explores their patterns from a discourse perspective. In regard to supporting opinions, some participants were able to compose tightly structured argumentation over time. This study also found that most advanced learners still could not construct a hypothetical discourse the way a native speaker would. Only the learner at the Advanced-High level benefited from the combined effects of formal instruction and the immersion environment. That is, most of the advanced learners were able to form the complex structure of the Spanish subjunctive at the sentence level in a majority of contexts. However, the uses of the target structures in their speech appeared forced and unnatural. There was a gap between their knowledge of the target structure and what they needed to know about its function in terms of discourse pragmatics. After intensive study of the target forms while living abroad, the advanced learners seemed weak in developing their discourse competence, the

ability to construct full-text by connecting cohesive and coherent utterances in a socially and culturally accepted manner.

For foreign language learners, therefore, it is not sufficient simply to know just how a form functions within a given sentence; one must also master the discourse features of grammatical forms. Thus, knowing the mood system in Spanish means not only knowing which form constitutes the modality (volition, doubt/denial, belief) of an utterance, but also knowing how each mood selection can be used to reveal a speaker's intention as well as signaling other relationships within the larger text. This study suggests that direct teaching of discourse grammar (regularities and rules beyond sentence level) is needed. Sentence-bound grammatical knowledge has traditionally been a prominent feature of foreign language instruction. However, it is simply insufficient to teach grammar and, at the same time, expect learners to implicitly develop awareness of pragmatic regularities, cohesion, and communication strategies in formal and informal situations.

It should be noted that the results of this study are limited because of the small number of participants involved. Future research should be conducted on more foreign language learners with various assessments and by different types of instruction before the results of the combined effects of formal instruction and an immersion experience can be generalized to a larger population.

#### *Appendix A*

##### **Elements of the discourse structure of hypothetical situations (Silva-Corvalán 1994, 78-81)**

1. Macro-frame: serves to establish a discourse topic.
2. Hypothetical statement: presents speakers' statements about their possible actions, attitudes, and beliefs given a certain state of affairs. (e.g., if p then q).
3. Argumentation: present reasons offered in proof, rebuttal of or as the motivation for a position.
4. Anchoring: the strategy of linking the hypothetical statements of the real world by means of illustrative narratives or exposition of relevant facts.
5. Qualification: moderates or restrict the hypothetical statements, making them less strong. They are often conveyed by *creer/believe, pensar/think, puede que/could be that, probablemente/probably*, etc.
6. Disclaimer: conveys speaker's reluctance or refusal to accept responsibility for the certainty of this conjecture about possible situations.
7. Coda: marks the end of a text. (e.g., *Eso es lo que yo pienso /That is what I think*).

## Notes

1. Those who did not complete both pre- and two post-tests were excluded from data analysis in this study. The original data pool included nine participants. The six participants included in the data analysis were all rated at the advanced level of the SOPI pre-test, except for one at the Advanced-High. Their previous experiences of learning Spanish range from 6 to 14 years in the USA and two had traveled to Spanish speaking countries or had attended study abroad programs prior to this one in the study.
2. The graduate program was geared to foreign language teachers and it provided students with opportunities to enhance their Spanish proficiency while living in Mexico, and to enrich their knowledge of second language acquisition theory and practices as well as Spanish linguistics.
3. For a detailed description of SOPI and the comparisons of SOPI and OPI, please see Kuo, J. & Jiang, X. (1997).
4. The results of the SOPI pre-test conducted before the formal instruction indicated that ST, JC and RD were at the Advanced-Low level, BI and KK were at Advanced-Mid and TH was at the Advanced-High based on ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines-Speaking (revised, 1999).

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### Acknowledgements

We thank all the participants who kindly volunteered in this research and *Centro Mexicano Internacional* in Mexico for its generous assistance. Earlier versions of this research were presented at Kentucky Foreign Language Conference, April 2002, and at the International Conference of Discourse Analysis: Language, Culture, and Values, in Pamplona, Spain, November 2002. We are grateful to Frances Mecarty-Dunlap and anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on earlier drafts, and to Su-I Hou for her useful suggestions regarding statistical analysis. We are also indebted to Dr. Gordon Jackson for his detailed and constructive suggestions for the revision of this article.

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## **Students' Evaluations of Dialogue Journals Perspectives On Classroom Themes**

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A dialogue journal is a series of collaborative, ongoing reflections between a teacher and a student, interacting in a forum of written, informal 'conversation'. Used at all levels ranging from K-12 to post-graduate contexts and in disciplines such as language, history, biology, mathematics, and teacher education, dialogue journals have received considerable research attention (Bain, Mills, Ballantyne & Packer, 2002; Black, Sileo & Prater, 2000; Brown, Sagers & LaPorte, 1999; García & Colón, 1995; Gray, 1998; Lally, 2000; Lee & Zuercher, 1993; Nassaji & Cumming, 2000; Peck, 1996; Popkin, 1985; Popp, 1997; Sanders, 2000; Todd, Mills, Palard & Khamcharoen, 2001); many of these investigations have focused on the role of journals in new teacher development, second language acquisition and literacy.

While previous studies offer useful initial findings regarding journals' actual effects on learning, students' evaluations of first language (L1) dialogue journals in a second language (L2) context is an area that requires more thorough exploration. Freire (1970) criticized the view that learners are empty, passive recipients of knowledge. Indeed, Cole, Raffier, Rogan and Schleicher (1998) affirmed that an effective learner is rightly viewed as an active participant in the learning process:

Learners are not passive recipients of knowledge but active participants invested in the learning process. In this sense, effective learners should be able to take initiative, become actively engaged in the learning process, and assume responsibility for their learning. Journal writing provides a place for learners to develop an awareness of their own discovery processes. (p. 557)

Consequently, learners' insightful perspectives warrant further attention from teachers and researchers who view learners as valuable contributors to the learning process. The present study does not aim to measure journals' effects on L2 acquisition but rather to capture and interpret learners' own perspectives of the role of dialogue journals in their L2 classes. Moreover, this study recognizes learners as active participants in, and evaluators of, their own learning process. As such, it explores dialogue journal writing as a useful forum for necessary and meaningful collaboration between teachers and learners by focusing both on learners' journals as well as their own insightful evaluations of their journals.

## Literature Review

One of the earliest and most prolific use of journals has been in the context of teacher education (for example, see Bain et al., 2002; Black et al., 2000; Carter, 1998; Goldsby & Cozza, 1998; Gray 1998; Johnston, 2000; Numrich, 1996; Poetter, 1997; Richert, 1992; Stephens & Reimer, 1993; and Woodfield & Lazarus, 1998). Incorporated into education and methodology courses, dialogue journals written by teachers with teachers in training have been shown to have a positive impact on new teacher development.

Teachers' support for journals has spilled over into teacher/learner interaction in classrooms of various disciplines. Many studies in these contexts have focused on the acquisition of the academic material of a course, a grammatical feature in the case of a foreign language or a theoretical issue in the sciences (for example, see Lumley, 1987; Peck, 1996; Peyton, 1993; and Popp, 1997). In investigations on language acquisition, the effectiveness of dialogue journals is often articulated in terms of their impact on achievement; findings are expressed with test scores, supported by statistical analyses and discussed in reference to pedagogical implications. For example, Brown et al. (1999) examined the effect of dialogue journals on the acquisition of vocabulary by measuring the use of particular lexical items, comparing statistical frequencies, and in turn, arguing in support of journals as a natural source for L2 input.

Though these empirically-based studies demonstrate that dialogue journals enhance the learning process, learners' own perspectives regarding the implementation of dialogue journals in L2 courses have been relatively unexplored. One qualitative study describing the use of interactive diaries between adult language learners and teachers in training found that the adult learners "all agreed on the importance of having an opportunity to communicate so directly with their teachers" (Gray, 1998, p. 35). Similarly, the teachers recognized the value of regular, open dialogue with their learners. Another investigation found statistically significant learner preferences for the use of journals in the classroom. Journals were positively evaluated by students who expressed preference for the description of the "ideal class" as "a class where I write journals in English or in Spanish" as opposed to the alternative "a class where I do not write in journals" (Snow, 1996).

Exploring the development of literacy, García and Colón (1995) evaluated the role of dialogue journals among language-minority students in bilingual classrooms; these researchers recommended that students who are writing interactive journals "should not be forced into mandatory 'transitional' environments but should be allowed to continue to choose the language of communication [i.e., the students' first language] as long as necessary" (p. 55).

This reexamination of the role of the L1 in language teaching is relevant not only in bilingual contexts but also in the 'typical' L2 classroom; the long-supported prohibition of the L1 in L2 classrooms has recently been called into question (Cook, 2001). While the exclusive use of the L1 has been a driving force behind many prevalent methodologies and currently accepted language pedagogy, a growing body of research demonstrates the supportive, and even necessary, role of the L1 in L2 teaching. For example, Cook (2001) supports teachers' and students' use of the L1 to explain task instructions, interlink L1 and L2 knowledge, support learner-learner collaboration, and develop real life L2 use; furthermore, he concludes, "bringing the L1 back from exile may lead not only to the improvement of existing teaching methods but also to innovations in methodology" (p. 419). Based on previous findings, appropriate classroom innovations could reasonably include L1 dialogue journals.

## **Method**

The present study is part of a larger investigation (Ewald, 2004) of dialogue journals that were written between a L2 teacher (the author) and her students in several sections of a university level, first semester Spanish language course: that is, "Spanish 101". These journals were collected over a period of two-and-one-half years; subsequently, the journals were coded and then analyzed within a qualitative framework. While learners' perspectives were expressed individually, common journal themes emerged, providing a focus for this study. Therefore, though exploratory, this study is highly informed by learners' voices.

### *Participants*

Participants include 129 students (54 male, 75 female), representing a wide variety of majors. Learners represent sample groups from two large midwestern universities that both required one to two years of college level, foreign language instruction. Most learners were originally from the Midwest and, with only a few exceptions, all shared English as their L1. The majority of the students spoke only English although some of them had taken another language either in high school or in college. The language learners' Spanish background ranged from no previous language study to one to two years of high school level instruction.

### *Materials*

The journals were a required part of seven "Spanish 101" class sections (each comprised of 18-21 students); these classes were primarily conducted using a communicative language approach in which learners were encouraged to use Spanish as much as possible. As the primary language of the classroom, Spanish was used by the teacher and her students to complete assignments, discuss classroom management issues, and to negotiate classroom instruction. Learners received credit simply for completing the journals; evaluation was not based on content or grammar (see Appendix A for the instructions learners were given regarding the dialogue journals).

There were a total of five journals assigned over the semester, but learners were encouraged to write additional journals if they so desired. The suggested topics (see Appendix B) related to issues that learners confront in a first-year L2 classroom; however, learners were given the freedom to write on any course-related theme. The language teacher did not use dialogue journals for the direct purpose of teaching (i.e., practicing) Spanish, but rather, to create a forum in which meaningful dialogue could be achieved. Learners were encouraged to use journals to react to a classroom activity, analyze a language learning issue, suggest classroom events, evaluate a particular exercise from the curriculum, reflect on personal language learning experiences and development, and ask questions. Thus, journal content was indirectly, though essentially, related to course goals.

In contrast with Popkin's (1985) more advanced English as a Second Language (ESL) learners who were required to write journals in their target language, English, most of these "101" learners had no proficiency in their target language, Spanish. Thus, in order to access sufficient vocabulary and grammatical structures and to express themselves freely, it was necessary for them to write their journals in English. As in the spirit of Auerbach (1995), Cook (2001) and others, learners' use of the L1 in their dialogue journals was not considered to be a limitation of the assignment or of their learning experience.

### *Procedure*

Though learners wrote dialogue journals in order for me to respond to them (as did participants in Allwright & Bailey, 1990; & Numrich, 1996), they did not know that their journals might be used in a study. Trying to control the problem of ‘contamination of data’, I requested learners’ permission to use their journals for research purposes at the end of the course; all 129 learners consented.

Learners’ dialogue journals, including my instructor comments, were numbered 1-5, representing the journal number assignment, and labeled A-G, according to their respective class sections; additional journals, those not required for the course, were identified as extras (see Table 1 for information regarding the total number of journals completed). Journal #5 invited learners to evaluate the journals themselves. As always, however, this was a suggested topic and learners were free to explore any course-related issue.

Since the motivation for this study was to discover learners’ perceptions of the use of L1 dialogue journals in the L2 classroom, I did not attempt to control the content of the data analysis. The emphasis was on learners’ voices and their evaluation of dialogue journals as expressed in journal #5. Their voices were allowed to lead and reshape emerging research questions. Both qualitative and quantitative frameworks of analysis were employed, though not in a rigorous, statistical treatment of the data; rather, the quantitative analysis was focused on and limited to the use of raw numbers and percentages.

The 112 dialogue journal #5’s (collected from the 129 learner participants) went through an initial reading to begin a process of multiple coding. First, journals were read to determine if learners expressed positive or negative attitudes toward their use in the language classroom. Second, three themes frequently explored by learners emerged and were selected for analysis; finally, learners’ comments in all of the journals were coded according to these themes.

Though the analysis of the data is as objective as possible, there is clearly an interpretive function at work in determining the meaning of the learners’ journal reflections. Moreover, the conclusions of this study aim for transferability rather than generalizability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Informed by my own “insider perspective” as the teacher, the data analysis and resulting conclusions reflect this researcher’s interpretation which seeks to be “persuasive and stimulating rather than definitive or reductive” (Johnston, Juhász, Marken & Ruiz, 1998, p. 167); clearly, the data remain open to various interpretations.

### **Results**

First, to illustrate the journals’ reflective, and at times, dialogical nature, several excerpts from journals #1-4 will be highlighted. Then, these learners’ own evaluations of the journals (as expressed in journal #5) will be explored. Finally, quantitative data regarding the learners’ overall evaluations of these journals will be provided.

Journals #1-5 provide strong qualitative and quantitative evidence that these learners approved of the number of journals required for the course, appreciated the suggested topics and valued the role of teacher feedback.

*Learners' Perceptions: Number of Required Journals*

Learners commented on specific issues related to the use of dialogue journals in class. Though not asked, 10 learners specifically stated that dialogue journals should be continued in future classes. While most learners wrote that the number of journals required was "just about right", 12 learners reported their desire that more than five journals had been required for the course and suggested additional topics; four learners claimed that journals should be implemented in other classes.

For example, one of the learners (Jason) who was satisfied with the number of required journals replied to the suggested topic of journal #4 ("What do you think about using Spanish in the classroom?...") as follows:

*I feel it is very beneficial and rewarding in using only Spanish in class. I believe it helps you focus on thinking in Spanish and/or converting the ideas in my mind. For instance, when I am asked a question in class, my first approach is to find out what I am being asked in English so I can understand and think. I have to first remember the Spanish words which were spoken, then associate them with their English meaning. Then I try to build a response base in my brain and what I have heard in English and translate to Spanish so it can be spoken. I believe my brain functions slowly in this process and as I learn to listen, read, write and speak in Spanish, I will become more familiar and confident in the process, and it will hopefully occur spontaneously eventually. As time goes on, I feel I am learning and becoming more familiar and confident little by little, but I know I am nowhere close to where I need to be'. – Jason<sup>2</sup> (D<sup>3</sup>)*

His teacher responded with the following suggestion:

*Maybe just trying to associate them [Spanish words] with their meaning, not their English meaning, would prove more useful and quick than a process of translation . . . ? -- Teacher*

While Jason was open to the idea of using Spanish as the language of the classroom, he also expressed concern in journal #4:

*A slight drawback to speaking only Spanish in the classroom is that sometimes I am struggling to keep up with what has been said and storing it in my mind, then when I am asked a question, my mind goes blank, then I look like a dumb idiot. – Jason (D)*

This comment opened the door for his teacher to assure him that his feelings were normal, her perception of him was positive and he was performing well:

*I understand what you're saying but actually you don't. You come across as quite intelligent and that you're getting this. It is a learning process and the process is hard to go through. But be patient and just keep working on it. You're doing fine. -- Teacher*

Perhaps these personalized interactions were the reason that Jason supported the number of journals required. Rather than complaining that they were an extra assignment, he positively evaluated them in his journal #5 in the following way:

*Due to time restrictions such as work and other classes, this journal provided an alternate means of getting counseling and instructions from my instructor and she provided her insight, feedback, and answers in our journals which was very productive. . . . I feel that once a week for journal writing [more than the required 5 journals in a semester] was efficient for myself. This allowed for time availability for studying the vocabulary and practicing the speaking aspect of the class. I feel that this class requires a lot of time outside the classroom (6 hours/week) and the journal helped with time management and realizing where the difficulties are and the approach of how they may be corrected.*  
-- Jason (D)

Jason sees the dialogue journal as a way to manage the time problem rather than as a contributor to it. Though he was aware of the extensive time required for his language course, he approved of the number of journals assigned.

#### *Learners' Perceptions: Journal Topics*

The appropriateness of journal topics also received considerable attention from the learners. They claimed that the topics were “on target”, “relevant” and “right on the money”. Fifty-three learners (52.5% of those who wrote about the use of dialogue journals) explicitly claimed that topics were appropriate and relevant to the course; more specifically, they positively evaluated journal-writing in an open forum in which they could interact with their teacher regarding course-related topics as well as discuss individual questions and concerns.

Many learners believed that the journal topics were “suggested topics” and thus wrote about other course-related issues of concern or interest. In fact, 11 of the dialogue journals #5 (almost 10%) did not address the proposed topic, confirming that learners did feel free to choose their own content. As one example, though Cory completed all five of the required journals, in each one he chose to write about other topics that he selected. Additionally, in three of the five journals, Cory also addressed the suggested topic. On his own, Cory entitled his five journals:

*(1) Why I am Taking a Spanish Class; (2) Why I am Excited to go to Puerto Rico; (3) General Random Thoughts; (4) Spanish Spanish Spanish; (5) A Journal on Journals*

Each journal addresses what is implied by its respective title. To illustrate, half way through journal #3 (“General Random Thoughts”), Cory wrote:

*This brings me to my next thought – I would eventually like to live in a Latin American country and do work in the geological field – namely hydrogeology... this may be difficult to do without being able to speak to my co-workers. Some days, like yesterday for instance, it drives me nuts that I cannot already speak the language. I want to just be able to do it NOW. Other random thought – yesterday, for the first [time], I discovered all of the great periodicals in the [university] library. The rows and shelves hold more current periodicals than one could possibly read. I am looking for one in Spanish to help me with my everyday reading, to see how much I can already decipher. -- Cory (D)*

Clearly a highly motivated language learner, Cory was able to communicate with his instructor through his journals on a personal level. Given teachers' and students' busy schedules and the quantity of course material covered, the specific topics Cory chose to discuss are not normally addressed during a 'typical' language class. In her response, Cory's teacher had the opportunity to point him to a Spanish-speaking geologist on his own campus as well as highlight local bilingual magazines and newspapers to which he could refer.

As did many other learners, in his “Journal on Journals” (journal #5), Cory expressed that he enjoyed the freedom of this kind of open forum.

*I like that [the instructor] gave us a suggestion each time, but even more so I liked that we were able to write about anything that we wanted. Even though I didn't write on the suggested topic each time I did think about what I would have written had I written on that topic. Sometimes there just happened to be other things on my mind. -- Cory (D)*

These “things on Cory's mind” were able to be discussed because of the existence of the journals and the learners' freedom to explore course-related topics in an individualized context. Overall, these learners overwhelmingly supported the suggested topics as well as appreciated the opportunity to address other issues of concern and interest.

#### *Learners' Perceptions: Teacher Feedback*

Recent studies have emphasized the value of teacher feedback to students and to the reflective process (Bain et al., 2002; Todd et al., 2001). Given these previous findings, it is not surprising that 66 learners in journal #5 (65.4% of those who wrote about the use of dialogue journals) commented on the teacher's responses they had received. According to these learners, teacher feedback was an extremely important factor in evaluating the journals. They claimed that it kept the lines of communication open, let them know that their journals were being read and taken seriously, and helped them feel more comfortable about their concerns as well as think more deeply about the process of learning Spanish.

Both Jason's and Cory's interactions with their teacher provide examples of the typical feedback received by these learners. In addition, Lucy, Tad and Eleanor provide other useful illustrations.

Worried about successfully completing Spanish 101, Lucy's journal #1 includes several semi-rhetorical questions: "Can I do it?"; "Does it take a special kind of study method?"; "Will I learn enough to think in Spanish?"; "Will my reaction time be too slow?; Will speed be a part of the tests?". She concluded her journal:

*Basically, right now I'm worried about my capabilities. I finally found the courage to sign up for this class, now I hope I have the courage to follow through. I'll try the first homework assignment and see what effect that has on my confidence. -- Lucy (E)*

In response to several of Lucy's questions, her teacher wrote "sometimes", "yes", or "this takes a long time" and occasionally elaborated. But, recognizing Lucy's growing concerns, she further responded:

*Should I attempt an answer to all these questions?! Probably not – they are answers you'll need to come to on your own. However, studying a language is very different from other things because it requires 'doing' as well as 'studying'. Good! [an arrow pointed to 'I finally found the courage to sign up for this class...'] Stick with it. Stay caught up. Study hard. Ask lots of questions. Don't let too much time or material go by without understanding what we're doing. Let me know how I can help. Okay? -- Teacher*

In her final journal (#5), (after successfully completing the course), Lucy expressed her views about the journals themselves. She compared Spanish 101 journal-writing with previous, negative experiences in which she believed that students had not received adequate instructor feedback on work submitted:

*I believe the effectiveness of journals depends a great deal on the instructor. I have never had so much response, but have experienced the opposite. In one class, all tests, papers, and journals were returned with just a grade - not a single comment all semester. I never knew what I did right or wrong, and seriously began to doubt that anyone read what I had written. I was astonished when I got back my first journal in this class and found it covered with [the instructor's] handwriting! -- Lucy (E)*

It is clearly important to learners not only that their journals are read but also that their instructor takes time to consider and respond seriously to the content. In fact, one learner (Tad) reported in journal #5 that his initial reaction to journal assignments was influenced by the comments he received. As background, in journal #2, ("Do you view 'grammar' or 'fluency' as most important?..."), Tad expressed his belief that bad grammar affects fluency because it can lead to various types of misunderstandings. He summarized,

*In conclusion, I think it is really important for the teacher to get students to understand the grammar, before teaching them anything else. Most importantly, please don't go so fast. -- Tad (C)*

In her reply to Tad, his teacher challenged his ideas regarding fluency and commented:

*So good grammar leads to fluency? Sometimes, yes. But all the time? I don't know. I think some people have good grammar but not fluency, right? Seems like maybe they go together. They are both somewhat dependent on each other. -- Teacher*

Though Tad did not pick up on this theme in his next journal, it was his final comment regarding the pace of the class that is perhaps more interesting. Along with comments in his other journals, Tad's appeal (to not go so fast) reveals his willingness and sense of freedom to express his opinions regarding elements of the class itself. To this request, his teacher specifically responded:

*Sorry. It's a big challenge to cover all the material but to not go too fast at the same time. I will try to slow down as much as possible, OK? -- Teacher*

In his subsequent journals, Tad continued to express his views quite openly regarding the use of Spanish in the classroom and his criticisms of a particular quiz. In both cases, his teacher engaged in the discussion and addressed his concerns. In his evaluative journal #5, Tad expressed his belief that his journal comments had been taken into account:

*When I first learned about the journal assignment, I did not like the idea. There were two things that came into my mind that gave me a negative feeling about the journal. First, I did not see how a journal could help me to improve in studying Spanish. Second, I have to spend some of my time for it. And then, when I got my first journal back, I was really surprise[d] to get a lot of comments back. I realized by then that the journals are really being considered seriously. -- Tad (C)*

These examples indicate that teachers' serious attention to learners' ideas and suggestions can change learners' beliefs regarding a specific task and even their overall attitude. This study found that teachers' responses were of interest to learners because their interaction made it possible for the dialogue to be continued.

As a final example, Eleanor's journal #4 expressed her opinion on the use of Spanish in class:

*When I took Spanish in high school the second year we could only speak in Spanish. Frankly, I learned very little this way. I think it sounds good in theory, but it just made me nervous. -- Eleanor (B)*

Her teacher responded:

*Theory is great, isn't it?! Maybe we can find a 'happy medium' between too much Spanish and too little? I hope so! -- Teacher*

Though it was this teacher's class custom to require the almost exclusive use of Spanish from this point onward in the course, these particular learners' journal reactions prompted her to reconsider this practice and more fully appreciate, and accept, the presence of the L1 in class.

In her evaluative journal #5, Eleanor reported,

*My favorite part of the journal was getting the responses back. – Eleanor (B)*

This finding both supports a definition of good dialogue, “the open exchange of information, questioning to gain information and clarity, and responding to develop or support an idea” (Peyton, 1993, p. 171-172), as well as extends the definition to include a motivated, genuine interest on the part of the participants engaging in the interaction. That is, achieving good dialogue necessitates interested learner and teacher participation.

#### *Learners' Perceptions: Positive, Negative, and Neutral Reactions*

Analyzed quantitatively, learners' evaluations of L1 dialogue journals in their L2 classrooms also revealed learners' positive reactions (see Table 2 for a categorized frequency of learners' comments). Of the 112 journal #5's, 89 (79.5%) contained expressions reflecting a positive reaction. Explaining these reactions, learners claimed to have “liked”, “enjoyed” and “benefited from” the dialogue journals which they claimed “played a valuable role” and were “by far one of the most important aspects of the class”.

Of the 23 non-positive reactions (20.5%), only three were negative (2.7%). These three students either did not complete the journals, criticized them as an extra assignment or doubted that they had a “profound effect” on their coursework.

Nine responses represented neutral reactions toward the use of dialogue journals (8%). Some of these learners actually used the term ‘neutral’ to describe their reaction; however, without exception, all nine also articulated positive characteristics of dialogue journals.

Finally, the 11 remaining responses (9.8%) were not categorized as either positive, negative or neutral reactions due to the learners' choice of journal topic. These learners did not evaluate the use of dialogue journals; rather, they chose to write about a topic otherwise related to the course.

Therefore, on the whole, 89 learners (79.5%, or 88% excluding those who wrote off-topic) reacted positively to the use of journals. Also, 98 learners (87.5%, or 97% excluding those who wrote off-topic) reacted at a neutral or a positive level toward the use of journals in the language classroom. In addition to the qualitative data, these findings also indicate considerable learner support for the implementation of dialogue journals.

## **Discussion**

In addition to shedding light on students' perspectives on the use of dialogue journals, the results of this investigation reveal that researchers must choose and employ various frameworks of analysis with great care. While a quantitative analysis may be in danger of missing the most meaningful elements in studies on perceptions, it often is an appropriate measure of overall reaction. Nevertheless, its ability to organize and quantify a large amount of data is precisely the benefit that betrays its own capability; it risks hiding those qualitative elements of the data which often reveal the most interesting findings.

Describing the frequency of a particular dialogue journal comment disguises important qualities of the comment itself. First, a discrete number hides the strength of a comment. To illustrate, for many learners in this study, dialogue journals were described as the most instrumental course aspect and as an element without which learning could not have taken place. For others, journals were described as a good or great idea, effective, enjoyed, helpful, and liked. Ignoring the degree of reaction, all comments on this positive continuum registered as one occurrence within the category of "positive reactions".

Second, an overall frequency of occurrence hides the number of times that an individual learner makes the same type of comment within journal #5. For example, some learners casually offered a sincere, positive evaluation of their experience with journals. Others, raving with great enthusiasm, articulated journals' positive characteristics in multiple ways, offering words of gratitude for their implementation. In this study, no attempt was made to quantitatively distinguish these multiple comments which, though strongly stated, were counted together as a single positive reaction.

Finally, some learners expressed a particular reaction, positive, negative or neutral, but then qualified it with reasons and situations in which a different reaction could have also been relevant. For example, one student's initial suggestion that journals be eliminated was complicated by her other views that journals were "useful" and the instructor's comments helped to develop a "positive attitude" toward her. While quantitatively this learner's perspective registered as a negative reaction, it is obvious that her position was more complex than a mere number suggests.

Thus, though much care was taken to ensure that each learner's overall reaction was assigned to the appropriate category, an exclusively quantitative analysis cannot account for all of the relevant data that a thorough, qualitative analysis exposes. Where there was doubt, learners' reactions were categorized as either negative or neutral (rather than as positive). But perhaps more interesting than categories were the learners' explanatory comments, clarifying their evaluations of dialogue journals.

Consequently, it was also of great benefit to explore learners' perspectives qualitatively; providing a different type of access to the data, the qualitative analysis revealed interpretations of learners' perspectives and detailed shades of meaning which at times, surfaced only through a sensitive, more individualized reading. As is often the case, the qualitative analysis shed light on the quantified data; that is, learners' explanatory and narrative comments informed and enriched the quantified findings. For instance, learners expected that the number of journals be appropriate to a course's content and organization; willingly explored topics they viewed as relevant and helpful; and valued their teacher's feedback, connecting it with their image of a "good instructor" who cares about their learning.

These findings suggest several implications for teaching. First, and perhaps most obvious, is a learner-supported recommendation to include L1 dialogue journals in L2 classrooms. Though journals may not be useful to all students in all classroom contexts, these highly-positive evaluations of dialogue journals suggest that learners can benefit from this particular forum of written interaction. Second, these learners' approval of the number of journals required in their Spanish class, as well as their desire that journals be used in other classes, highlights the need to tailor course requirements appropriately to particular academic contexts. That is, when learners view a required aspect of a course to be useful, they benefit from its thoughtful implementation. Third, when teachers suggest topics for L1 dialogue journals, they should be aware that learners will evaluate the topics' relevance to their learning experience; learners also support and benefit from the freedom to write about other course-related themes and concerns. Finally, teachers must be aware that learners value meaningful interaction and expect teachers to respond to their journals as sincere dialogic partners. Learners are potentially interested in their teachers' comments, provided that journals are, in one student's words, "taken seriously".

### **Conclusion**

Current research has highlighted the effective nature of dialogue journals throughout various levels and academic disciplines. This study contributes to this larger body of literature by exploring students' evaluations of dialogue journals. These learners expressed very positive reactions toward the use of L1 dialogue journals in a L2 classroom context. Even those students whose reactions were interpreted as "neutral" recognized positive characteristics of the dialogue journal forum. Many learners approved of the number of journals required in their respective courses; moreover, several reported that they would have liked more required journals and wished journals were used in other classes.

Additionally, the majority of the learners liked the suggested topics, finding them to be appropriate and relevant to their language learning experience; clearly, learners also valued the freedom of the open dialogue journal forum to explore other course-related issues of interest or concern. Finally, these learners emphasized the important role of teacher feedback in dialogue journals; their comments demonstrated that good dialogue requires interest on the part of both teachers and students desiring to engage in meaningful interaction.

This study highlights several pedagogical implications as well as points to many areas for future research. First, there are discoveries to be made regarding learners' overall perspectives. These learners' reactions were based on classroom experiences with one teacher, and clearly, their perspectives reflected the nature of those particular interactions. Future research should compare learners' journals with several teachers in different classes, a situation which would likely impact learners' perspectives. Likewise, journal content in various courses should be further explored to determine how learners' actual use of journals corresponds to their perceptions of them. In addition to the themes analyzed in this study, learners explored several other language learning issues including anxiety, power and error correction strategies that are obvious areas for future study. Additionally, learners commented extensively on the benefits of a forum in which they could explore course-related topics with their teacher in their L1; strongly supporting previous findings regarding the acceptable, necessary role of the L1 in L2 teaching, these learners' positive reactions also warrant further research attention. Finally, this study overlooks teachers' perspectives on the use of L1 dialogue journals. A next logical step in this direction is to devise collaborative research that will include both teacher and learner perspectives.

## **Appendices<sup>4</sup>**

### *Appendix A*

#### **Journal Information Sheet (Instructions for Learners)**

--Between half a page and one page is probably a good amount, though if you want to write more you are welcome to.

--Typed, double-spaced.

--Required. Journals are not given specific grades although not completing them will definitely negatively affect your class participation and / or homework grade.

Journals are intended to be a method of communication between you and me. The purpose of the journal is to give you an opportunity to reflect on the content and form of this course, to express your reflections and to get some feedback.

There is no set format for the journal except for the items mentioned above. Journals will usually be required once every other week; but again, if you wish to write more often, please do so. The journal's effectiveness for you depends on you.

The only restriction on content is that the journals should be related to this course. Other than that, you are free to explore any aspect of the course. You might use the journal to react to an activity we've done in class, to analyze any issue relating to language or language learning that has either come up in class or that you think of on your own, to suggest something you would find useful for us to do in class, to analyze a particular exercise from the textbook or workbook (or any source) that you believe has helped you learn Spanish, to reflect on your own language learning experiences and development, to raise any relevant questions.

Usually I will suggest a possible topic for your journal. However, you are strongly encouraged to select your own topics. Furthermore, you are also urged to pursue topics over more than one week so that your reflections and questioning are given more room to develop.

*Appendix B*

**Suggested Journal Topics**

Journal #1. What concerns, if any, do you have about studying Spanish? And / Or whatever you want to write about.

Journal #2. Do you view “grammar” or “fluency” as most important? What does each term mean? Do errors affect both equally? And / Or whatever you want to write about.

Journal #3. How do you learn Spanish? Pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency. What do you find most effective? And / Or whatever you want to write about.

Journal #4. What classroom expressions do you need to know/would be helpful to know to use Spanish in the classroom? What do you think about using Spanish in the classroom? And / Or whatever you want to write about.

Journal #5. For final journal #5, I would like you to write about the journals themselves. Again, this is a suggested topic, feel free to answer any or all of the questions below and/or to write about whatever you want to write about.

\*Did the journals have any effect on your proficiency in and/or attitude toward this course or instructor? If so, what role did they play?

\*Were the above topics appropriate for the course? Do you have any topic suggestions?

\*Generally, were writing the journals and communicating with your instructor through them helpful? Why or why not?

\*Did your instructor comment on the content of your journals? If so, what effect did this have?

\*Would you have liked there to be more / less journals or was the number about right? Do you have any suggestions about the format of the journals in terms of whatever?

\*What is your overall (general and specific) reaction to journal writing in this course?

Table 1. *Number of Journals Completed*

Class Section	Journal #1	Journal #2	Journal #3	Journal #4	Journal #5	Extra Journals	Total Journals
A	18	16	15	15	16	2	82
B	13	19	19	13	14		78
C	18	18	18	18	18		90
D	13	12	12	13	13	3	66
E	14	15	14	14	15		72
F	17	17	16	16	17		83
G	20	21	21	21	19		102
Totals	113	118	115	110	112	5	573

Table 2. *Categorized Frequency of Learners' Comments*  
*Class Section (Number of Journal #5's collected)*

Learners' Reactions	A (16)	B (14)	C (18)	D (13)	E (15)	F (17)	G (19)	Totals (112)
Positive Reaction	12	11	17	9	13	13	14	89
Negative Reaction	1	1				1		3
Neutral Reaction	2	1	1	2	2		1	9
Wrote off topic	1	1		2		3	4	11
Learners' Comments								
"Continue using journals"	2	2	3		2	1		10
"More required journals"		3		1	4	4		12
"Journals in other classes"	2			1	1			4
"Topics were good"	8	6	7	7	10	7	8	53
"Good teacher feedback"	8	9	12	8	1	10	8	66

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Though misspellings have been corrected, students' journals are presented exactly as written by the students.

<sup>2</sup>All names in this study are pseudonyms.

<sup>3</sup>The letters in parentheses following the names of the student participants represent the students' respective class sections.

<sup>4</sup>These Appendices were previously published in Ewald (2004).

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### **Acknowledgments**

My sincere gratitude goes to the 129 participating students whose journals were invaluable and without whom this study could never have taken place. Thanks also, to Anne Edstrom and Carol Klee whose comments on earlier drafts of this paper were of great use. A previous version of this paper was presented at the 2002 annual meeting of the American Association for Applied Linguistics in Salt Lake City, Utah; thanks to several conference participants whose feedback was very helpful. Thanks too, to the reviewers whose comments were truly helpful.

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## **An Exploratory Study of Differing Perceptions of Error Correction between A Teacher and Students: Bridging the Gap**

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*This study was designed to measure and bridge the mismatch in perceptions of error correction (EC) between a teacher and his students. The participants were 32 students in two intact, beginner-level Spanish classes at a mid-size university in the Southwest of the US. The treatment consisted of two learner training (LT) sessions (see Reiss, 1981) in which the teacher explained to the students his approach to correcting written mistakes. Alternate forms of a questionnaire were administered on three occasions in order to obtain data about the students' opinions. A review of the literature identified four main issues related to EC that teachers and students disagree on: discouragement, learner readiness, meaning focus, and grammar. These four areas were therefore the focus of both the LT sessions and the questionnaires. The results showed a significant change in the students' perceptions related to EC after the treatment. Thus, the paper concludes by calling for studies and methodologies that consider a more open and fluid dialogue between second language acquisition (SLA) findings, L2 classrooms, and students' awareness of their L2 learning.*

Numerous researchers have noted that there is often a mismatch between the procedures that second language (L2) students and their teachers see as effective for language teaching and learning (Green, 1993; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; McCargar, 1993; Miley & Gonsalves, 2003; Noels, 2001; Peacock, 2001; Reid, 1995; Schulz, 2001). Particularly, current research reveals four main sources of mismatch between teacher and student perceptions with respect to error correction (EC): (a) affect and discouragement (as a possible outcome of EC), (b) learner (un)readiness to acquire certain structures as a justification to not exhaustively correct students' mistakes, (c) the importance of a focus on meaning in L2 writing (as opposed to writing as a form of language practice), and (d) the importance and prioritization of accurate grammar in L2 writing. These differing views can cause problems in L2 acquisition (Green, 1993; Schulz, 2001). More specifically, the disparity between the two groups may have a negative affective impact by causing tension, demotivation, frustration, and other learning conditions that are counter-productive to instructed SLA (Garrett & Shortall, 2002; Green, 1993; McCargar, 1993; Morris & Tarone, 2003; Noels, 2001; Noels, Clément, & Pelletier, 1999; Peacock, 2001; Reid, 1987; Terrell, 1977; Tse, 2000). However, as Peacock (2001) points out, the opposite is also true; a match between students' and teachers' beliefs as to what constitutes efficacy in language instruction results in harder work and greater gains in students' L2 learning.

Some researchers such as Schulz (2001) and others (Hyland, 2000; Hyland 2003; McCargar, 1993; Peacock, 2001) recommend that teachers address this potential detriment by exploring their students' perceptions regarding issues in their language learning and, in doing so, equip themselves with the knowledge needed to deal appropriately with discrepancies that arise. Others take this argument one step further by calling for a cooperative, student-inclusive approach to dealing with mismatches in perceptions (e.g., Hyland, 2000; Hyland, 2003). Ferris (1999) additionally recommends that teachers also

remain current on the literature that deals with topics of contention. Still others argue that the teacher knows best and should, thus, employ the approaches and techniques that they consider fitting (Mantello, 1997). This study, however, lies somewhere between these extreme points of view by including the students in the dialogue of how EC is practiced without requiring a compromise of the instructor's empirically and experientially-founded beliefs. This study seeks to find out if the gap in perceptions between teachers and students regarding EC could be bridged via learner training (LT) (Reiss, 1981). Specifically, it explores the difference in perceptions of written error correction between students and their teacher. Is there a gap in perceptions between students and their teacher? Can student opinions be changed via LT? And is this, in fact, a measurable change in their perceptions?

### *Literature Review*

Many studies have noted in recent years the need for further investigation in instructed SLA relating to teachers' and students' perceptions in general and, specifically, to EC (e.g., Ferris, 1999; Tse, 2000). Hedgecock and Lefkowitz (1994) recommended that research look into form-focused behaviors of the teacher and the extent to which students who prefer it are able to benefit from it. Closer to the focus of this paper, Noels et al. (1999) call for longitudinal, experimental research into how students' perceptions of language learning can be affected by teachers' behavior. Lastly, a paper by Perpignan (2003) recommends a "comprehensive analysis of the intentions and interpretations of the exchange from both the teacher's and the learner's perspective, as well as of the dynamic nature of the dialogue within its full pedagogical context" (p. 259).

One area in definite need of this type of inquiry is EC, which in recent years, has become a highly and hotly debated issue. Teachers and researchers alike openly question its necessity as well as how and when it can best be utilized in instructed SLA (Brandl, 1995; DeKeyser, 1993; Doughty & Williams, 1998; Ferris, 1999; Gass & Magnan, 1993; Leow, 2000; Lyster, Lightbown, & Spada, 1999; Mantello, 1997; Omaggio Hadley, 2001; Pica, 1994; Schultz, 2001; Truscott, 1996; Truscott, 1999a; Truscott, 1999b). While it is true that an EC component is still considered fundamental to most L2 classes, there is now a heightened sensitivity toward its role and the outcomes that it may or may not yield. Truscott (1996), for example, interprets DeKeyser's (1993) study as offering support for McCargar's (1993) hypothesis that EC would fail to incite widespread improvement in L2 students. Indeed, there is some evidence that the effectiveness resulting from different types and frequencies of EC may be a function of individual differences among the students and not necessarily attributable to the EC itself (DeKeyser, 1993; Lyster, 2001; Mantello, 1997).

Another often cited argument against the value of EC relates to a natural order of acquisition. The debate over how and when to correct mistakes rarely lacks mention of the difficulty that L2 teachers encounter in their need to recognize students' readiness to acquire certain structures (Crookes & Chaudron, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 2001; Lightbown & Spada, 1999; Lyster et al., 1999; Philp, 2003).

There is no shortage of evidence pointing to the fact that a perceptual mismatch between teachers and students regarding EC is common across L2 classrooms (Green, 1993; McCargar, 1993; Peacock, 2001; Schulz, 2001). Numerous studies (e.g., Peacock, 2001; Schulz, 2001) reveal that EC (in both written and spoken language) is desired and seen as necessary by at least 88% and as many as 98% of L2 students, who generally place a higher value on EC than do their teachers (Green, 1993; McCargar, 1993). Hyland and Hyland (2001) also studied English as a second language students' perceptions of different forms of written feedback (i.e., praise, criticism, and suggestion). They found

that in addition to a disparity in preferences between students and teachers, considerable variation also exists among students.

In contrast to the inter-student variability found in Hyland and Hyland's (2001) study, Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1994, 1996), Leki (1991) and Hyland's (2003) studies of second and foreign language classes all revealed a strong, uniform preference in students for form-focused feedback on "all their errors" (Leki, 1991, p. 206) especially in academic contexts where the preferred work is that which is error-free (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1996; Hyland, 2003; Mantello, 1997). One of the striking conclusions is that EC was "highly valued by all of them" (Hyland, 2003, p. 228). Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1994) further analyzed the results of their study and proposed that such an inclination is attributable to two major factors. First, learners mainly view their language use as "a form of language practice" (1994, p. 157). Along the same lines, Truscott (1999a) claims that L2 students unknowingly adhere to behaviorist notions that relate language learning to habit formation. Second is the influence of the priority that L2 teachers give to form (Porte, 1997; Truscott, 1999b). Krashen (1999) echoes this finding in his assertion that adult L2 learners expect attention to be given to grammar correction in the classroom as a result of past experience in language classrooms.

Whatever the cause, students seem to be generally opposed to the idea that they are "allowed" to make mistakes (Green, 1993). Multiple studies show that they are actually overwhelmingly in favor of EC (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Hyland, 2003; Schulz, 2001; Truscott, 1999a). Overall, it seems that students tend to view EC not as pejorative but rather as a constructive element that is necessary to L2 learning (Noels et al., 1999). That said, one final element of EC to consider from the student perspective is affect. Students' preferences in real life situations (i.e., upon being corrected in class) versus on self-report measures such as questionnaires or course evaluations may contradict each other. EC in the L2 classroom has been shown to produce negative feelings (e.g., anxiety, embarrassment, frustration) (Garrett & Shortall, 2002; Green, 1993; Morris & Tarone, 2003) and a decrease in motivation (Brandl, 1995; Gardner, 1985; Noels, 2001; Noels, et al., 1999; Peacock, 2001).

The views of EC from the other side of the desk are quite different. One belief held by many L2 teachers is that they should not correct every student error that is made (McCargar, 1993; Schulz, 2001). This belief stems mainly from the training that they receive. At some point during their teacher training programs, most language teachers receive instruction on a version of the communicative language teaching method that, as both Lightbown and Spada (1999) and especially Truscott (1999a) are quick to point out, encourages anywhere from a reduction to a total rejection of attention to formal aspects of language. It is a broad method that sometimes opts for more focus on meaning with focus on form (e.g., EC) occurring only as needed.

Teacher training, supported by wide agreement amongst SLA researchers, also maintains that the learner's path is predictable (i.e., that it follows certain stages and sequences) yet non-linear (Doughty, 1991; Ellis, 1984; Lightbown & Spada, 1999; Long, 1990; Mackey, 1999; Philp, 2003; Pienemann, 1998; Spada & Lightbown, 1999; VanPatten, 1998). Furthermore, most teacher training programs also uphold the belief that errors may assist L2 learners to adjust and reformulate their interlanguage system (Gass & Varonis, 1994; Nicholas, Lightbown, & Spada, 2001; Philp, 2003). In light of this, many teachers wish to foster the idea that mistakes are okay. Many teachers, then, choose not to correct students' errors in an effort to avoid contradicting the message that mistakes are okay (Lyster, 2001). Such beliefs supported by teacher training programs and SLA literature are two major contributors to teachers' belief in reduced EC.

Another impetus for the reduced role of EC chosen by L2 teachers is the preference to avoid an over-controlling or negative appearance in the eyes of their students

(Noels, 2001; Noels et al., 1999; Tse, 2000). Noels et al.'s (1999) study of the impact of teachers' communicative style on motivation found that students who perceive their teachers as controlling (i.e., not supportive of students' autonomy) and uninformative (i.e., do not provide useful feedback) are more likely to be amotivated, have higher levels of anxiety, and have less desire to continue studying the language.

Finally, many teachers chose not to correct all students' errors because they believe that exhaustive EC is simply ineffective. Truscott (1996, 1999a) is perhaps the most adamant and influential among those who oppose EC. He bypasses the question of "how?" by means of resurfacing the fundamental debate of "if?" oral and written grammar EC should be employed at all. His answer is "no." He claims that EC should be altogether abandoned, citing a potpourri of motives for such drastic action: (a) explicit EC can be detrimental, (b) many teachers themselves are unable to completely understand students' mistakes and therefore should not attempt to fix them, (c) it is nearly impossible for a teacher to adequately balance consistency with variation to account for their students' individual linguistic and affective needs because the effectiveness of different EC techniques depends on certain attributes of the individuals (e.g., previous achievement, extrinsic motivation, and anxiety) (DeKeyser, 1993). Truscott (1996, 1999a) also supports his claims by citing several studies (e.g., DeKeyser, 1993; Van den Branden, 1997) that showed anywhere from little positive effect to a negative effect resulting from oral grammar correction.

In sum, what the literature relevant to this study of teachers' and students' perceptions of error correction tells us is that we have three related conditions. The first is that most language teachers no longer view exhaustive EC as necessary or helpful (e.g., Ferris, 1999; Truscott, 1996). The causes of this belief and consequential reduction in correcting students' (written) errors are found mainly in their professional training during which language teachers come across convincing practical and theoretical evidence (e.g., discouragement, learner readiness, and focus on meaning vs. on grammar) that they should not correct every student error they encounter (e.g., Ferris, 1999; Truscott, 1996). Second, multiple studies have found that L2 students generally hold to the antiquated behaviorist notion that their mistakes are inherently bad and, particularly in writing, must be corrected by the teacher (e.g., Hyland, 2003; Schulz, 2001). These two conditions combine to produce our third: the injurious mismatch between what students believe to be helpful and what the teacher actually does (e.g., Garrett & Shortall, 2002). This very gap, that has been found to decrease the effectiveness of instruction, is what we address in the following study.

## Method

The problem addressed in this study is the difference in perceptions of written error correction between students and their teacher. Each Subproblem carries with it an assumption that is supported by the research cited above. Subproblem 1 assumes that the teacher whose class was used for this study is representative of university foreign language teachers in terms of his beliefs and practices as they relate to EC. Subproblem 2 assumes that an affirmative answer is found to Research Question 1.1. Given these assumptions, the following two subproblems and their research questions were addressed and tested:

Subproblem 1: Is there a gap in perceptions between students and their teacher?

1.1 - Before the treatment period, is there a gap between the students' and the teacher's perceptions of EC on written work?

1.2 - After the treatment period, is there a gap between the students' and teacher's perceptions of EC on written work?

Subproblem 2: Can the students' opinions be changed via Learner Training Sessions (aka., treatment)?

2.1 - Is there a change in the students' perception of how discouragement and learner readiness relate to EC before and after the treatment on these areas?

2.2 - Is there a change in the students' perception of how grammar and a focus on meaning relate to EC after the treatment on discouragement and learner readiness?

2.3 - Is there a change in the students' perception of how grammar and a focus on meaning relate to EC after the treatment on these areas?

2.4 - Is there a change in the students' perception of how discouragement and learner readiness relate to EC after the treatment on grammar and a focus on meaning?

2.5 - Does learner training on how discouragement and learner readiness and on how grammar and focus on meaning relate to EC equally help change the learners' perceptions?

### *Participants*

All 37 participants who formed part of this study belonged to one group of second-semester Spanish students in two intact classes at a mid-size university in the Southwest of the US. Of the 37 students 22 were female and 15 were male. With the exception of one native speaker of German, all were Anglophones between the ages of 17 and 24. Their experience with Spanish language instruction varied from one semester to five years. The teacher was a graduate student who was a near-native speaker of Spanish.

### *Materials*

Three alternate forms of a four-section, 16-item questionnaire were employed to measure the students' opinions regarding the four identified issues relating to EC: discouragement (D), learner readiness (R), meaning focus (MF), and grammar (G). Before creating each alternate form, a 24 item questionnaire bank was written; six items per issue were included, three of which the teacher agreed with ("X" items) and three that he disagreed with ("Y" items). Each form of the questionnaire therefore included an equal number of questions from each issue (e.g., Discouragement) as well as an equal number of items that the teacher agreed and disagreed with (see Appendices A and B).

The three questionnaires were given to the students as a pretest, midtest, and posttest. After all the data were collected, each X item was coded as a score ranging from one to five (from disagree to agree). The Y statements were coded oppositely thus ranging from five to one (from agree to disagree). Averages for each of the questionnaires as well as for each issue within each questionnaire were then obtained to analyze the data. Additionally, in order to answer research questions 1.1 and 1.2, the teacher took the pretest and posttest forms of the questionnaire.

The reliability coefficients were calculated for the three questionnaires as well as for each of the four issues within each questionnaire. The questionnaires' total reliabilities were consistently moderate (.69 - 0.71) although the individual issues' reliabilities varied more and were generally weaker (.18 - .85). All statistical analyses for this study were performed using SPSS 10.0 (Noru is, 2000).

*Procedure*

This study had only one group of participants. Therefore, in order to enhance the generalizability of its findings, a time-series design was employed (see Hatch & Lazaraton, 1990). The decision for this design was based primarily on the multiple measures and treatments that were to be used.

Participants were informed that their participation in the study was voluntary and would in no way affect their class grade. All data gathered were kept anonymous and informed consents were gathered for each student. Participants were told that the purpose of the study was to see what they thought about their writing in Spanish and that there were no right or wrong answers. Information about the purpose of the questionnaires and the learner training sessions was purposely kept vague as to not create a bias in the answers.

As displayed in Table 1, the study was carried out over the course of five phases. Phases I, III, and V consisted of administering three alternate forms of a questionnaire of attitudes towards EC (see Appendix A). Phases II and IV were the LT sessions (aka., the treatment). The first form of the questionnaire (pretest) was administered prior to any treatment, the second questionnaire (midtest) followed the first treatment, and the third questionnaire (posttest) was administered after the second treatment. Participants' scores for each category were based on their ratings on the 5-point Likert scale applied to each item.

Table 1  
*The Five Phases of the Study*

Stage	I	II	III	IV	V
	Pretest	LT session 1: discouragement & learner readiness	Midtest	LT session 2: meaning focus & grammar	Posttest

The treatment was carried out in two phases. Each learner training session focused on two of the issues related to EC; LT1 dealt with D and R while LT2 focused on MF and G. The objective of each session was to open a dialogue with the students about how these issues relate to decisions of how and when to correct their written mistakes. The content of the sessions was research-supported yet simple and informal so that it would remain accessible to the students without being intimidating.

Both sessions were conducted during the last ten minutes of two class periods and in the L1. The primary materials used for the learner training were two differently corrected copies of a student's composition that were shown on a transparency. Discussed over the course of the two LT sessions were the two versions' of feedback and their salient features. The first copy was an example of the feedback that the teacher actually gave a student, which was mainly meaning focused and was not exhaustive in terms of the EC that was provided. The grammar mistakes that were marked were those that the teacher deemed appropriate to that student's level and communicative needs/objectives.

The second copy of the composition, however, was quite different. Most of the marks focused on improper grammar usage. The paper's grammar was corrected exhaustively, all but ignoring the student's level, content, and affect.

After presenting the different types of feedback on the composition, the topics assigned to each session were briefly explained. Some mention was also made of the empirical, logical, and practical basis on which the teacher's beliefs rest but the dialogue was kept at a level accessible to the students. The classes were able to identify instantly with the idea of being discouraged by a teacher's marks. The treatment given to learner readiness, being a concept that students would not be as familiar with, included some background information (e.g., that learners cannot acquire certain structures before their L2 development allows, like present before past before future before conditional or [-ing] before past tense [-ed] before third person singular [-s]). For meaning focus, emphasis was put on the relative importance of content and accuracy in (L2) writing. In the grammar component of the LT sessions the teacher explained that grammar should be seen as more of a means than an end to successful communication. Next, the LT sessions turned to a series of discussion questions that related to the two contrasted approaches to EC. Some of the sample questions used to lead the discussion were as follows:

1. Do you think that getting a paper back that looks like this (show heavily marked composition) might frustrate you compared to getting one that looks like this (show reduced EC composition)?
2. How many of you think that you would benefit from errors that are marked in this way?
3. Would you prefer to get a composition with comments about the message that you are trying to get across and the language errors, or one that just focuses on the language?

The questions dealt with the distinct types of EC as they pertain to the two issues focused on in each LT session. Finally, the students brought to the discussion their own comments, questions, and doubts.

In addition to the two formal learner training sessions, the topics discussed during the scheduled sessions (e.g., the roles that learner readiness, meaning focus, etc. play in EC) were recycled whenever the students received feedback on their writing. That is to say, each student had multiple opportunities to see how what they had learned during the scheduled sessions applied to their work. Therefore, while the two learner training sessions were the only occurrences of scheduled, prepared treatment, the explanations and training given during the sessions were reinforced throughout the entire treatment period. Lastly, in order to not confuse the topics, discussion during each LT session did not include the two topics assigned to the other session.

## **Results**

Table 2 through Table 5 present the results of the data collected and analyzed for the present study. These results are contextualized in terms of each of the seven research questions guiding this study as stated in the "Method" section.

Table 2  
*Students' and Teacher's Scores Before and After the Treatments*

Treatment	Before Treatment 1					After Treatment 2				
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	$\eta^2$	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	$\eta^2$
Total	39			-88.38*	1.00	32			-13.54*	0.86
S	38	2.87	0.25			31	3.73	0.47		
T	1	4.88	0.44			1	4.88	0.44		
Discouragement				-12.77*	0.82	32			-11.50*	0.82
S	38	2.74	1.13			31	3.43	0.76		
T	1	5.00	0.00			1	5.00	0.00		
Readiness				-16.24*	0.88	32			-5.59*	0.51
S	38	2.72	0.78			31	4.05	0.70		
T	1	4.75	0.50			1	4.75	0.50		
Meaning Focus				-13.38*	0.83	32			-9.08*	0.86
S	38	3.70	0.56			31	4.04	0.59		
T	1	5.00	0.00			1	5.00	0.00		
Grammar				-26.53*	0.95	32			-10.74*	0.79
S	38	2.30	0.61			31	3.41	0.69		
T	1	4.75	0.50			1	4.75	0.50		

Note. \* $p < .001$ ,  $df_{30}$ ,  $t_{crit} = 3.65$

The results in Table 2 display the students' and the teacher's scores before and after the treatments. To account for the possibility of a change in the teacher's perception of how to provide appropriate feedback, pre and post data were collected from the teacher as well. The data specifically address research questions 1.1 and 1.2; is there a gap between student and teacher perceptions? And does this gap remain after the treatments? As can be seen from Table 2, there are two differing total student means before and after the treatments (2.87 and 3.73 on a scale of 1, least agreement with the teacher to 5, most agreement). The teacher's opinions vary only slightly for the four issues (from 4.75 – 5.00), while students' opinions, conversely, differed much more ranging from 2.28 to 4.05. The data show a significant difference between students' and teacher's perceptions, as well as a significant change in student perceptions upon completion of the treatments. Overall, students' scores showed substantial variation on multiple planes: among themselves, among the four issues, and over time.

The results of the midtest, which was administered after the first treatment (or LT session) are presented in Table 3. These data show the progression in the students' opinions from before to after the first treatment. As can be seen, the students' midtest mean (3.50) appears to have already distanced itself from the scores on the pretest (2.87) gathered before any treatments. As previously stated, the focus of treatment 1 was how DISCOURAGEMENT and LEARNER READINESS play into decisions about EC. The before and after scores for these two areas show a significant change in students' perceptions, thereby providing a positive answer to research question 2.1.

Furthermore, in order to test research question 2.2, the students' average scores on MF and G before and after LT1 were compared using a paired-samples *t*-test to see if the treatment had an effect on the students' opinions. The observed *t* values for MF and G were -2.07 and -4.50, respectively, pointing to a significant change in the area of grammar but not for meaning focus. Though this was not the intended effect of Treatment 1, a change is noted; thus providing a partial answer to research question 2.2.

Table 3  
Students' Scores on Four Areas Before and After Treatment 1

Treatment	Before Treatment 1			After Treatment 1			<i>t</i>	$\eta^2$
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Total	38	2.87	0.25	33	3.50	0.24	-7.10*	0.61
Discouragement (D)	38	2.74	1.13	33	3.44	0.80	-2.63*	0.18
Readiness (R)	38	2.72	0.78	33	3.62	0.80	-4.90*	0.43
Meaning Focus (MF)	38	3.70	0.56	33	3.97	0.54	-2.07	
Grammar (G)	38	2.30	0.61	33	2.97	0.62	-4.50*	0.39

Note. \* $p < .02$ ,  $df 32$ ,  $t_{crit} = 2.46$

The students' scores before and after treatment 2 (the LT session focusing on MEANING FOCUS and GRAMMAR, and how these play into EC), are shown in Table 4. The observed *t* values for MF and G were -0.41 and -3.19, respectively, thus indicating a significant change in students' perceptions with respect to grammar, but not with regard to meaning focus. This provides a partial but positive response to research question 2.3. However, with respect to research question 2.4, no significant difference was found for the areas of D and R, confirming that the second treatment did not have a measurable effect in these two areas.

Table 4  
Students' Scores on Four Areas Before and After Treatment 2

Treatment	Before Treatment 2			After Treatment 2			<i>t</i>	$\eta^2$
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Total	33	3.50	0.24	31	3.73	0.47	-20.04*	0.93
Discouragement	33	3.44	0.80	31	3.43	0.76	-0.08	
Readiness	33	3.62	0.80	31	4.05	0.70	-1.75	
Meaning Focus	33	3.97	0.54	31	4.04	0.59	-0.41	
Grammar	33	2.97	0.62	31	3.41	0.69	-3.19*	0.25

Note. \* $p < .02$ ,  $df 30$ ,  $t_{crit} = 2.46$

The final research question (2.5) addressed the relative effectiveness of the two treatments. The results convincingly point to the latter session, which discussed the roles of MF and G in EC, as the stronger of the two. To better analyze this research question the students' average changes in scores between the pretest and the midtest as well as between the midtest and the posttest were calculated. They were then compared using a paired-samples *t*-test to see if the treatments had an equal effect on the students' opinions. As shown in Table 5, the observed *t* value was -10.75 and thus a significant difference after the second treatment is noted.

Table 5  
*Difference in Change of Opinions Between After Treatment 1 and 2*

Treatment	After treatment 1			After treatment 2			<i>t</i>	$\eta^2$
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Total	33	0.48	0.40	31	1.92	0.53	-10.75*	0.79
Discouragement	33	0.60	1.52	31	0.02	1.08	1.46	
Readiness	33	0.94	1.08	31	0.40	1.29	1.43	
Meaning Focus	33	0.30	0.77	31	0.06	0.76	1.06	
Grammar	33	0.71	0.87	31	0.44	0.77	1.07	

Note. \* $p < .05$ ,  $df 30$ ,  $t_{crit} = 2.04$

### Discussion

The present study has addressed the problem of a difference in perceptions of written EC between students and their teacher. Within this main problem, this study has identified two subproblems and aimed to accomplish two corresponding goals. The first was to see if there was a gap between the students’ and teacher’s perceptions of EC in the areas indicated by the literature (see, for example, Hyland, 2003; Schulz, 2001). The second goal was to find out if learners’ opinions could be changed via learner training sessions. The results indicate that the answer to both of these questions is yes.

With respect to the first goal of the study, the results of the first research question addressed (1.1) indicate that indeed there was a perceptual gap between the students and their teacher, particularly in the area of grammar. This was not surprising in light of the numerous findings of previous studies that showed similar results (Green, 1993; Hyland & Hyland, 2001; McCargar, 1993; Schulz, 2001). This finding, especially given its strength of association ( $\eta^2 = 1.00$ ), would suggest that the gap was large enough to be a detriment to the students’ learning (Morris & Tarone, 2003; Noels et al., 1999; Peacock, 2001). As for the second research question (1.2), there was still a statistically significant difference between the students’ and their teacher’s opinions after the treatment. This result, however, must be interpreted with consideration to the observed *t* values before and after treatment; before the treatment it was much larger (-88.38) than after the treatment (-13.54) (see Table 1). This difference shows that by the end of the study the difference in perceptions had indeed been reconciled to a noteworthy extent, and thus, making students aware of their learning process, even during one class period, can impact students’ perceptions and their overall learning process.

The second goal addressed students’ changes in opinion regarding the four issues as they individually and collectively related to EC. Overall, the students’ and teacher’s perceptions were significantly reconciled following both LT sessions. Research questions 2.1 and 2.2 were answered by comparing pretest and midtest scores (refer to Table 3). The overall difference between the two measures was quite large indicating that learner training on discouragement and readiness was effective not just in changing the students’ opinions about those areas but about MF and G as well. In fact, the change for G, which was not explicitly discussed in LT1, was -4.50 and that of discouragement, which was one of the two major foci for that portion of the treatment, was only 2.63. Since discouragement was never explicitly mentioned in the second LT session, we might conclude that this result points to the level of predisposed notions of how students view grammar and its importance to their “successful” learning.

Since the LT session prior to the posttest dealt with MF and G, the greatest changes were expected in these areas. Students' opinions on G changed more than any other area while MF was surprisingly the area of least change. The observed *t* value for R (-1.75), an area which was not discussed in LT2, was actually much larger than that of MF (0.41).

It was expected that the issues of greatest change in the midtest and posttest would be those that were focused on in the preceding LT sessions. The results indicate that this was not the case. The greatest changes following both LT sessions were in the students' opinions of readiness and especially grammar. While it may be argued that such a finding be attributed to the fact that these two issues were where there was the greatest difference to begin with (see Table 2), we would argue otherwise.

Regardless of the topics dealt with in the LT sessions, students' opinions about G were significantly affected. It appears that G is some kind of pervasive, underlying element which is bound to the other issues in the students' minds. This finding falls in line with Hedgcock and Lefkowitz' (1994) claim that learners focus on formal aspects of language, viewing their language use as "a form of language practice" (1994, p. 157) in which grammatical accuracy takes precedence over fluency and other communicative objectives. Similar to other studies of SLA in academic contexts (for example, Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1996; Hyland, 2003), the students were equating successful writing to that which is grammatically error-free. Then, once the students were exposed to some of the other issues that factor into EC, their views of G underwent a major shift because of its centrality in relation to all the other issues.

## **Conclusion**

The findings of this study have important implications for the L2 classroom. First of all, it is apparent that students need to be trained to become more effective L2 learners by better interpreting the feedback they receive from their teachers. To this end, teachers need to reevaluate their methods not only in terms of what the research literature claims but also with consideration to how their students perceive learning and teaching practices. That is not to say that teachers should conform to what their students believe to be helpful. Rather, teachers need to be aware of potential (and real) mismatches between what students see as effective and what is believed to be effective. Teachers must also be willing to engage in an open dialogue with their students about the expected and the actual learning process. By doing so, the students' perceptions are accessible and the teacher is able to voice to them his/her opinions, thus identifying student needs and areas of potential mismatch. Practices such as this may be the only informal means by which a teacher can identify the perceptual disparities between themselves and their students.

Furthermore, what teachers believe to be effective in terms of teaching methodology and practice should be based on research and experience as opposed to intuitions about how languages are best learned; and in turn, shared with students via formal and informal learner training, such as the ones used in this study. More and more, it seems that the mysteries of SLA are revealed through research only to the academic community while leaving learners in the dark. Language learners, meanwhile, seem to be adhering to behaviorist notions about SLA that have long since antiquated themselves. Though it is not necessary to expose students to linguistic theory in the classroom, it seems that both their potential and the teacher's success are being limited by keeping students in the dark about how languages are learned. Discussing the learning process in terms of learning strategies, communicative strategies, use of teacher feedback, and general studying techniques can be the difference between the successful language learner and the student who struggles continuously in the classroom.

Although the findings in this study are confirmed by the research literature, further research is necessary before any generalizing statements can be made with respect to changes in specific teaching methodology. At the very least, exploratory studies are needed in which teachers delve into their students' perceptions of EC and other practices common to the L2 classroom (e.g., pair work) (Ferris, 1999). This preliminary step will likely identify other gaps in perceptions which later studies can attempt to reconcile via learner training or other means.

Further research is also needed in other contexts and in other cultures. This study examined perceptions of a foreign language class in which the teacher and his students came from the same culture. But, the question must be posed of whether the gap in perceptions would be greater and/or less reconcilable if the educational values of the teacher and student were different. It is this type of research that can eventually be most beneficial in bridging the gap between teachers and students.

## Appendices

### *Appendix A – Alternate Questionnaire Forms*

#### *Opinions about Error Correction – Questionnaire 1*

This is an anonymous questionnaire designed to measure your opinions about error correction on written work. There are no right or wrong answers. The opinions you express here will in no way affect your grade. In the line provided, please write the letter that best describes the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

A	B	C	D	E
I disagree	I somewhat disagree	no opinion	I somewhat agree	I agree

\_\_\_ 1. The discouragement that may result in students from lots of corrections is a valid reason for a teacher to not mark every mistake.

\_\_\_ 2. The area of my writing that the teacher should mark most is my grammar.

\_\_\_ 3. For my Spanish to improve, I need my mistakes corrected, regardless of their difficulty or level.

\_\_\_ 4. Teachers should not take into account the negative emotional impact that marking errors might have on their students.

\_\_\_ 5. I prefer to see comments on my paper that have to do with my accuracy, not necessarily the content of my writing.

\_\_\_ 6. My level of knowledge and ability in Spanish should determine which mistakes are marked on my papers.

\_\_\_ 7. If I get corrected on advanced grammar structures I probably won't be able to incorporate these structures into my future writing.

\_\_\_ 8. The teacher should not consider the students' feelings in correcting students' mistakes.

- \_\_\_\_ 9. The mistakes I make should be marked even if they have to do with structures and issues that we haven't seen yet in class.
- \_\_\_\_ 10. The most important aspect of my writing in Spanish is the message that I am or am not able to convey to my audience.
- \_\_\_\_ 11. When I write I place the most importance on getting my meaning across as best I can.
- \_\_\_\_ 12. It is not helpful for a teacher to correct all of my written grammatical mistakes.
- \_\_\_\_ 13. I prefer that all my grammatical mistakes be marked by the teacher.
- \_\_\_\_ 14. I do not expect the teacher to provide me with more comments and corrections on my Spanish grammar than on any other aspect of my writing.
- \_\_\_\_ 15. It makes sense for a teacher not to correct all their students' mistakes on account of the negative feelings that the students might feel.
- \_\_\_\_ 16. When I write in Spanish, I place more emphasis on writing "correctly" then on making sure that my audience understands what I want to say.

*Opinions about Error Correction – Questionnaire 2*

This is an anonymous questionnaire designed to measure your opinions about error correction on written work. There are no right or wrong answers. The opinions you express here will in no way affect your grade. In the line provided, please write the letter that best describes the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

A	B	C	D	E
I disagree	I somewhat disagree	no opinion	I somewhat agree	I agree

- \_\_\_\_ 1. It makes sense for a teacher not to correct all their students' mistakes on account of the negative feelings that the students might feel.
- \_\_\_\_ 2. When the teacher corrects mistakes, some thought should be given to how the number of corrections might be perceived by his/her students.
- \_\_\_\_ 3. The mistakes I make should be marked even if they have to do with structures and issues that we haven't seen yet in class.
- \_\_\_\_ 4. When I write in Spanish, I place more emphasis on writing "correctly" then on making sure that my audience understands what I want to say.
- \_\_\_\_ 5. If I get corrected on advanced grammar structures I probably won't be able to incorporate these structures into my future writing.
- \_\_\_\_ 6. I do not expect the teacher to provide me with more comments and corrections on my Spanish grammar than on any other aspect of my writing.

\_\_\_ 7. If I could choose only one area of my writing to be marked by the teacher it would be the grammar.

\_\_\_ 8. There are certain types of mistakes that should not be marked because of my proficiency level.

\_\_\_ 9. Teachers should not take into account the negative emotional impact that marking errors might have on their students.

\_\_\_ 10. Spanish students, regardless of their level, should have their mistakes marked by the teacher.

\_\_\_ 11. When I write I place the most importance on getting my meaning across as best I can.

\_\_\_ 12. Getting forms and conjugations right is not the most important thing for me to write well in Spanish.

\_\_\_ 13. The thing I should work on most when writing in Spanish is to be sure that my ideas and message can be understood by my audience.

\_\_\_ 14. Emotions should not play into the teacher's error correction.

\_\_\_ 15. Clarity of ideas is less important than clarity of forms (e.g., conjugations) for my writing.

\_\_\_ 16. The area of my writing that the teacher should mark most is my grammar.

### *Opinions about Error Correction – Questionnaire 3*

This is an anonymous questionnaire designed to measure your opinions about error correction on written work. There are no right or wrong answers. The opinions you express here will in no way affect your grade. In the line provided, please write the letter that best describes the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

A	B	C	D	E
I disagree	I somewhat disagree	no opinion	I somewhat agree	I agree

\_\_\_ 1. The teacher should not consider their students' feelings when deciding to correct mistakes or not.

\_\_\_ 2. The most important aspect of my writing in Spanish is the message that I am or am not able to convey to my audience.

\_\_\_ 3. When the teacher corrects mistakes, some thought should be given to how the number of corrections might be perceived by his/her students.

\_\_\_ 4. The thing I should work on most when writing in Spanish is to be sure that my ideas and message can be understood by my audience.

\_\_\_ 5. My level of knowledge and ability in Spanish should determine which mistakes are marked on my papers.

\_\_\_ 6. Emotions should not play into the teacher's error correction.

\_\_\_ 7. For my Spanish to improve, I need my mistakes corrected, regardless of their difficulty or level.

\_\_\_ 8. The discouragement that may result in students from lots of corrections is a valid reason for a teacher to not mark every mistake.

\_\_\_ 9. Spanish students, regardless of their level, should have their mistakes marked by the teacher.

\_\_\_ 10. I prefer to see comments on my paper that have to do with my accuracy, not necessarily the content of my writing.

\_\_\_ 11. Clarity of ideas is less important than clarity of forms (for example, conjugations) for my writing.

\_\_\_ 12. I prefer that all my grammatical mistakes be marked by the teacher.

\_\_\_ 13. Getting the forms and conjugations right is not the most important thing for me to write well in Spanish.

\_\_\_ 14. There are certain types of mistakes that should not be marked because of my level of proficiency in Spanish.

\_\_\_ 15. If I could choose only one area of my writing to be marked it would be the grammar.

\_\_\_ 16. It is not helpful for a teacher to correct all of my written grammatical mistakes.

*Appendix B – Questionnaire Item Bank*

Note: Statements marked “**X**” are those that I, the teacher/researcher generally agree with and those that are marked “**Y**” are those that I generally disagree with.

**Discouragement (A)**

1. The discouragement that may result in students from lots of corrections is a valid reason for a teacher to not mark every mistake. **X**
2. The teacher should not consider their students’ feelings when correcting mistakes. **Y**
3. It makes sense for a teacher not to correct all their students’ mistakes on account of the negative feelings that the students might feel. **X**
4. Teachers should not take into account the negative emotional impact that marking errors might have on their students. **Y**
5. When the teacher corrects mistakes, some thought should be given to how the number of corrections might be perceived by his/her students. **X**
6. Emotions should not play into the teacher’s error correction. **Y**

**Learner Readiness (B)**

7. My level of knowledge and ability in Spanish should determine which mistakes are marked on my papers. **X**
8. For my Spanish to improve, I need my mistakes corrected, regardless of their difficulty or level. **Y**
9. If I get corrected on advanced grammar structures I probably won’t be able to incorporate these structures into my future writing. **X**
10. The mistakes I make should be marked even if they have to do with structures and issues that we haven’t seen yet in class. **Y**
11. There are certain types of mistakes that should not be marked because of my level of proficiency in Spanish. **X**
12. Spanish students, regardless of their level, should have their mistakes marked by the teacher. **Y**

**Meaning focus (C)**

13. The most important aspect of my writing in Spanish is the message that I am or am not able to convey to my audience. **X**

14. I prefer to see comments on my paper that have to do with my accuracy, not necessarily the content of my writing. **Y**

15. When I write I place the most importance on getting my meaning across as best I can. **X**

16. When I write in Spanish, I place more emphasis on writing “correctly” then on making sure that my audience understands what I want to say. **Y**

17. The thing I should work on most when writing in Spanish is to be sure that my ideas and message can be understood by my audience. **X**

18. Clarity of ideas is less important than clarity of forms (for example, conjugations) for my writing. **Y**

**Grammar (D)**

19. It is not helpful for a teacher to correct all of my written grammatical mistakes. **X**

20. I prefer that all my grammatical mistakes be marked by the teacher. **Y**

21. I do not expect the teacher to provide me with more comments and corrections on my Spanish grammar than on any other aspect of my writing. **X**

22. The area of my writing that the teacher should mark most is my grammar. **Y**

23. Getting the forms and conjugations right is not the most important thing for me to write well in Spanish. **X**

24. If I could choose only one area of my writing to be marked by the teacher it would be the grammar. **Y**

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## **Action Research as a Professional Development Tool for Teachers and Administrators**

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*Many teachers and administrators would acknowledge there are areas of concern in their classrooms and schools. Whether termed “problems,” “issues,” “challenges,” or, as Nunan (1994) put it “puzzles,” they provide committed professionals with an opportunity to improve the status quo. Action research is one approach used in the education field for exploring areas of concern with the goal of understanding them and, ultimately, resolving them. The authors view action research as an important tool that can be used by teachers and administrators to reflect on and evaluate their practices. This short article will provide a brief review of the literature on action research, give an overview of the steps for doing action research, and discuss implications for teaching and language program management.*

### **Literature Review**

In the literature, one finds a sizeable number of definitions of action research primarily because, as Leo van Lier (1994) suggests, researchers have varied considerably in the purpose of their research. The term “action research” was first used in the social sciences by Lewin (1946) to refer to “a comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action” (p. 34). In education, Corey (1953) described it as “the process by which practitioners attempt to study their problems scientifically in order to guide, correct, and evaluate their decisions and actions” (p. 6). In second and foreign language learning (L2/FL), Jarvis (1980) posited that it should be viewed as an example of a teacher-development activity, not as research in the traditional sense because it does not involve an empirical study of a qualitative or quantitative nature that includes an elaborate study design, data collection method, and data analyses. Since 1980, a sizeable number of L2/FL researchers such as Crookes (1993), Bailey (2001), Bailey, Curtis, and Nunan (2001), Nunan (1989, 1990, 1994) and Wallace (1998) have examined action research and its use as a teacher development activity.

Campbell and Tovar (2004) initially emphasized the assessment aspect of action research; today, they see it primarily as a tool for professional development for both teachers and administrators. They define it like so:

Action research is a way for the teacher and administrator to examine practices in an organized, systematic way based on data such as classroom observations, student surveys, sensing sessions, etc. Its primary objective is to gain a better understanding of teaching and learning processes and to improve these processes.

The authors concur with Wallace (1998) who writes, “The aim... is not to turn the teacher [or administrator] into a researcher, but to help him or her to continue to develop as a teacher, using action research as a tool in this process” (p.19). As part of an annual professional development plan, all faculty at the Associate Professor and Professor ranks at the authors’ institution - the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC), the premier government institution that daily teaches as many as 33 languages to government personnel - are required to do one “mini action research project” (Faculty Support Form, 2006, p. 2).

### **Action Research: The Procedure**

Leo van Lier (1994) reports that, “Action research is traditionally depicted as a spiral consisting of cycles of several steps” (p.34). In Leo van Lier’s model, the teacher’s original goals) are revised as the action research is carried out. Bailey Curtis and Nunan (2001) provide a clear outline of the steps in the first cycle of action research.

1. Identify the problem.
2. Conduct preliminary investigation on the problem (baseline data is obtained).
3. Reflect on the problem and form a working hypothesis about what kind(s) of intervention strategy might solve the problem.
4. Plan the intervention strategy.
5. Activate intervention strategy and collect data.
6. Analyze the data and report on the outcome.

In the second cycle, teachers or administrators reflect on whether the working hypothesis has proven valid or must be changed. If the latter is true, they then retool the hypothesis and follow steps 4 through 6 above once again.

Data collection and analysis are key components of action research. Bailey, Curtis and Nunan (2001) posit that “the systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of data allow us to characterize the process as ‘research’” (p. 139). The types of data typically used in action research projects are interviews, questionnaires, school records (test scores, grades), journal entries, think-aloud protocols, audio/video recordings, students’ work, classroom activity maps, observer’s notes, and even photographs.

### *Sample Action Research Topics*

Any topic is valid as long as it targets an area of concern the teacher or administrator wants to explore. The following are a sampling of the mini action research projects suggested by DLIFLC teachers: Lowering academic disenrollment; teaching reading at the sentence and paragraph versus word level; reflections on the classroom observation process by a chairperson; using a variety of activities in the classroom; promoting learner-centered instruction. Below, sample summaries of two actual projects at DLIFLC. They represent two teachers’ first attempt to do action research.

#### *Topic 1: Teaching Reading at the Sentence and Paragraph Versus Word Level*

*Reflection:* The leader of a teaching team composed of six teachers observed that students in second semester classes seemed bored doing the predictable, daily activities of processing authentic reading and listening passages primarily by answering content questions based on those passages. Typically, the content questions were discrete-point in nature and couched in a testing rather than a teaching context. Specifically, students were asked to answer detailed content questions as if they were taking a test, i.e., to demonstrate what they had *not* understood rather than what they had understood. Students were not being asked to read or listen for broader categories of information within a given reading or listening passage, i.e., to demonstrate what they had understood as a

result of using the powerful language learning strategy: Focus on the known versus the unknown. For example, if a given reading or listening passage is about a car accident, the teacher can ask students to read or listen for categories of information such as “the people mentioned” or “the traffic—cars, buses, etc. mentioned.” The leader of the teaching team reflected on the problem of perceived student boredom. While she knew that the charter of the school required students to learn how to answer content questions, she was interested in exploring alternatives to content questions.

*Hypothesis:* If students were given alternative, task-based activities, they would be more engaged in the reading process.

*Data Collection:* She collected data on her hypothesis by distributing a simple, short questionnaire to students asking them to write down those classroom activities with reading and listening passages they felt were of most benefit and those they felt were of least benefit. The results of the questionnaire supported her hypothesis that students were indeed bored processing authentic reading and listening passages primarily by answering content questions based on those passages.

*Action:* The next step the leader of the teaching team took was to study a document entitled “Alternatives to Content Questions” prepared by the school Academic Specialist. Highly readable, the document outlined alternatives such as the following:

- Gisting or summarizing the main idea and two major supporting details of a given reading or listening passage instead of answering a list of discrete-point content questions as if students were being tested.

- Doing information gap activities in pairs and groups where each pair or group gets one of several parts of a given reading or listening passage to process. Next, the different pairs or groups share what they have understood with the whole class. In this way, the class progressively constructs meaning from the different parts.

- Answering questions or filling in a table with information pertaining to categories of information in a given reading and listening passage.

- Doing analytic summaries where the goal is to detect similarities and differences between two reading passages on the same topic, between two listening passages on the same topic, or between one reading passage and one listening passage on the same topic. For example, pair or group A reads passage 1; pair or group B reads passage 2. The pairs or groups then compare and contrast what they have read.

- Creating scenarios with role-plays based on a reading or listening passage.

The leader of the team met with the team to discuss using alternatives to content questions. Everyone read the document and decided to try to use one of the alternative activities the following week.

*Conclusion:* After using the alternative activities, teachers distributed a simple, short questionnaire that asked students to comment on them. The results of the questionnaire indicated students liked them. Specifically, they appreciated doing something different and less predictable. The team went on to use systematically all the alternatives listed in the document. The team observed that students seemed more enthusiastic doing their daily work. Also, the team noted that the students performed more successfully on assessments, e.g., quizzes or tests.

## Topic 2: *Department Chair Reflects on Classroom Observation*

*Reflection:* A department chair questioned his effectiveness conducting classroom observations. The chair understood that classroom observation was one of his responsibilities and that observing faculty was important in order to ensure the department's instructional program was running smoothly and that it met the institution's and students' expectations. He also understood that one of the primary reasons for conducting classroom observation was to provide feedback to his faculty for their professional growth and development. The chair reflected on the usefulness of the feedback he had been providing to the teachers in his department.

*Hypothesis:* The chair decided that his classroom observation might be more effective if he were to schedule/structure his observations by working with each of the teachers on a specific team rather than by randomly observing teachers from different teams.

*Data Collection:* He decided to review a number of the observation reports he had written following the observations he had done recently. As he read these observation reports, he recalled the discussions he had with each of the faculty and referred to the journal of notes he had kept on the discussions that had taken place when he met with each of his teachers to present the observation data and feedback. After reading the journals and the reports, the department chair realized that many of the issues brought up by the individual teachers had, in fact, not dealt with the actual classroom observation itself. For example, most of the teachers had brought up factors regarding the curriculum, the teaching team (relationships, conflicts), and other variables that had an indirect impact on the observation.

*Action:* The chair met with each of the teaching teams separately to discuss the new way he planned to do classroom observation by teams versus at random.

*Conclusion:* Following the process of teacher observation by teams, the chair discovered that classroom observation discussions/feedback sessions were more productive and grounded in the context of each teacher's reality.

### **Action Research: Possibilities for Collaborative Projects**

The authors have found that the majority of teachers and administrators at their and other institutions say doing action research is rewarding. Those who have never practiced organized, systematic (versus haphazard, random) reflection on what they are doing at the work place typically embrace the process, welcoming the opportunity to share findings with their peers. The first documented professionals to apply action research to the education field, Henry and Kemmis (1980), insist that reflection plays a key role in action research. They state: "Action research is a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve ... their understanding of these practices..." (p. 1). Burns (1999), an advocate of collaborative action research, highlights the value of reflection: "... classroom enquiry and self-reflection are important components of professional growth, providing a sound source for pedagogical planning and action ..." (p. 16).

There are scholars, however, who differentiate reflective teaching from action research. According to Richards and Lockhart (1996), in reflective teaching teachers may investigate particular aspects of teaching and learning and not change anything. Also, reflective teaching does not necessarily require the information gleaned be eventually shared or published. Action research, on the contrary, specifies the reporting, i.e., the sharing or publishing, of findings as a final step. This sharing usually leads to a greater appreciation of the importance of on-going professional development. Burns (1999) discusses the benefits of conducting collaborative action research, reporting

that “[c]ollaborative research offers opportunities for informal individual thinking to be transposed into more systematic and collective problem-solving”(p. 214). She posits, furthermore, that “[c]ollaborative action is potentially more empowering than action research conducted individually as it offers a strong framework for whole-school change” (p. 13).

### **Conclusion**

Although most teachers and administrators acknowledge they need professional development, they are often so busy with their daily routine that they neglect this critical area. Action research is a recognized tool for the development of professionals in the education field. The challenge facing us as serious educators is to make the commitment to take yet another step in the never-ending process towards becoming more effective and productive in the work place.

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## Review

**NorthStar Reading and Writing: High Intermediate (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed).** (2004). **NorthStar Reading and Writing: Advanced (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed).** (2004). By Andrew K. English & Laura M. English. New York: Longman. Pp. 246, and Pp. 253.

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The NorthStar Reading and Writing (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2004) series is a textbook widely used in Korea for academic reading or integrated skill courses. I have used both first and second editions of the high intermediate and advanced books in this series for teaching academic reading courses at a university level. I learned, in using them, that these volumes offer a great deal to teachers and students. In this paper, I'd like to discuss the general structure of the books along with their strengths and weaknesses based on my teaching experiences.

NorthStar is a five-level series targeting students from high beginning to advanced levels of study: introductory, low intermediate, intermediate, high intermediate, and advanced. The series is divided into two strands: reading and writing; listening and speaking. Each level of the reading and writing strand is composed of a student book, a writing activity book, CDs/cassettes, and a teacher's manual. As authors Andrew and Laura English state, the NorthStar Reading and Writing strand is designed to teach integrated skills in a college level setting. Since the two skills in each strand are intrinsically linked, the authors claim that the two skills can be taught effectively by integrating them. The authors consider reading and writing skills to be mutually reinforcing and thus beneficial to students if taught concurrently. They also believe that language will be more authentic, natural, and easily motivated if skills are taught together since skill integration may enhance retention of key vocabulary and grammatical structures.

The focus of this paper is the two student books of NorthStar Reading and Writing at the high intermediate and advanced levels. Each book contains ten chapters sequenced with different themes. Under each theme, two relevant readings are provided, often with different point of views. Each chapter of the series is structured in four parts: focus on the topic; focus on reading; focus on vocabulary; focus on writing. The first two sections deal with reading, while the latter two sections are writing lessons.

The activities in the reading lesson are based on current views with regard to teaching reading. The course presents reading as an interactive process between reader and text, in which readers constantly bring in previous knowledge to communicate with the text. The exercises are categorized into three parts: pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading activities.

The first section, called "focus on the topic," covers various types of pre-reading activities, namely introducing a theme, inducing a mindset and activating prior knowledge. It opens with discussion in pairs which the authors call "predicting": a few questions are given with one or two illustrations pertinent to the topic. The illustrations are stimulating enough to call up students' background knowledge. When they look at the relevant pictures along with the title of the chapter, students easily recognize what the unit will be about. I think this is a really good idea because the activity enables them to generate their latent content schema.

After the paired discussion, an information sharing activity asks students to check or discuss relevant ideas quickly. Another distinctive feature of the focus on topic section is that it usually provides a paragraph of text about the content together with a few questions. This brief text provides background knowledge before the students get into the actual text. Students are often asked to discuss their answers with their partners. At the end, a brief vocabulary activity teaches important or unknown words to help reading comprehension. It offers exercises, like checking right categories, matching synonyms, and finding appropriate definitions via multiple choice questions. In total, four different pre-reading activities are given to get students ready to begin the actual story. I think this section is well designed to meet the goals of a pre-reading activity; that is, it facilitates readers' content schema and provides them with background information.

Second, a section called "focus on reading" comprises while-reading and post-reading activities. It starts out with a few questions right before the text so that students will look for a few important issues while reading. This while-reading activity induces reader purpose to draw students' attention to the text. This is the only exercise for a while-reading activity, but it is successful since students subsequently read the story with a few objectives in mind.

After reading, students are asked to do either three or four types of post-reading activities. A good feature of these exercises is that they move from a macro to a micro level. Students are asked to pinpoint the main ideas of the reading and then to find detailed information through various activities such as T/F, multiple choice, completing a sentence, and filling-in a chart. A further activity on the content follows, and usually small group discussion comes at the end. Students enjoy the small group activity, which makes them discuss, report, and share their ideas.

Following small group discussion, another reading is given under the same theme. In general, the second reading is shorter than the first. A brief paragraph about the content is introduced with an illustration and questions in order to activate students' content schema. As in the first reading, students are to discuss the questions before getting into the content. After reading, they are asked to answer short questions. One interesting feature of this section is that an activity linking the first and second readings follows the activities for the second reading. This integrating activity is helpful because it encourages students to think critically by reacting to the different viewpoints of the two readings. It demands that students go beyond the text. By comparing and contrasting the two readings, students are asked to express their opinions on important issues, usually within a group. Students discuss, jot down their ideas, and share them with their classmates. They love this activity. I think reading multiple texts under the same theme has another advantage for learners, in addition to language learning purposes. These texts provide new information, which will eventually become part of useful world knowledge in their daily lives. By presenting various exercises, the post-reading activity checks readers' understanding of the content from macro to micro perspectives and promotes critical thinking.

Third, the focus on vocabulary section stresses reviewing important words. Actually, this section is a preparatory stage for the writing lesson. The last two sections, focus on vocabulary and focus on writing, are calculated to teach writing skills using material drawn from the reading lesson. According to the authors, the vocabulary work in this section has a different focus from the vocabulary exercises in the pre-reading activity. This section makes students review words which already appeared in the text. Students

study them in greater depth in order to make use of them when they write on the topic later. Students may also encounter some new items not previously presented in the text. The section offers four types of vocabulary exercises: analogies, filling-in blanks, multiple choices, and making a sentence using the words. In my teaching, I skipped this part for two main reasons. First, it was very time consuming to do these vocabulary activities in class: in fact, I did not even have enough time to cover reading related activities. Also, every student has a different vocabulary repertoire. Some students already know a lot of these words and some know less. I think it is a better idea to let students do this section alone by giving them the answer key.

Finally, the focus on writing section covers two things: grammar and writing. The grammar part explains grammatical points which appeared in the reading texts. It includes features such as passive voice, gerunds and infinitives, past unreal conditionals, tag questions, and identifying adjective clauses. Since it aims only at developing accuracy in writing about the topic, it is not at all exhaustive. It is interesting that this part also begins with a get-ready activity on the target grammatical feature. Then, an explicit explanation is given with sample sentences in a highlighted text box. After that, a couple of post-explanation activities follow in the form of multiple choice questions, choosing a proper word, filling-in blanks, and completing a sentence. As I do with the vocabulary section, I skipped this part because most of my students already knew a great deal about these grammatical rules, and we did not have enough time. Again, for the sake of time, I think it is a better idea to let students do this section alone by giving them the answer key. If they have questions, teachers can go over them in the class.

The second part of this section covers writing in a way that relates what students write to the preceding reading. In this way, students are able to connect their reading with their writing. The writing section covers various tasks such as topic sentences, three-part paragraphs, opinion essays, descriptive essays, cause-effect essays, narrative essays, compare and contrast essays, and developing an essay from an outline. It starts out with one of two types of exercise: sentence level or paragraph level. Sentence level exercises ask things like: choose a better descriptive sentence and discuss why; identify cause and effect in the given sentence. In the brief paragraph level exercise, students are to answer questions by analyzing a paragraph. Questions include: what two ideas are presented in the topic sentence; how does the main character support her idea; and what is the writer's opinion?

The next target writing feature or style is explained explicitly in another highlighted text box. A couple of relevant activities are followed by various exercises, such as multiple choice questions, completing a sentence, and completing a chart. Following this, several choices of writing topics are offered. Finally, a research topic is given for students to investigate on their chosen topic. I think it would have been better if the research topic had been given earlier than the writing topics because students could then have incorporated their research into their essays. This section can be taught more effectively by getting students to use the accompanying writing activity book. The writing book expands assignments from the student's book and leads students into the writing process (prewriting, organizing, revising, and editing).

As I did with the vocabulary and grammar sections, I skipped the final part of the series because teaching an academic writing skill demands a great deal of time. Teachers must provide students with feedback on their writing process, for instance on generating ideas, drafting by revisions, editing, and producing a final draft. Considering

the fact that language courses are mostly offered three hours a week in an EFL context, even focusing on the reading skill is overwhelming due to limited time. However, given a course with enough time, it would be very effective to connect reading and writing by making full use of the activities in these books.

Although these books aim to teach reading and writing skills, their primary focus seems to be reading because the writing tasks are based on the reading text. Accordingly, writing tasks are not ordered according to difficulty. For example, developing an essay from an outline in the high intermediate book should be placed earlier, instead of situating it in the last chapter. Similar cases exist in the advanced book. Another problem is that some writing tasks repeat within the high intermediate book, as well as in the high intermediate and advanced books. In short, teaching writing appears to be a secondary goal of this series.

Overall, these two books are good resources for teachers. However, the student volumes have a couple of drawbacks. First, some of the texts are not very appealing to the students. The texts are thematically sequenced to offer various genres such as descriptive, narrative, comparison and contrast, and cause-effect, separated into different themes. Students are offered exposure to various genres. However, in my experience, some of the topics failed to motivate the students' interest, and once students are turned off from the content of the text, the low motivation spreads into the rest of their activities. Instead of using only the texts offered in the book, I added my own supplementary reading pack to substitute for these unappealing stories. In the second edition, there are new topics and updated stories, so they look better, but there are still some which are not appealing to students. Although it is hard to please every reader, the authors do need to research this area to meet readers' satisfaction because the most important component for students reading a book is interesting texts.

Second, the level of distinction between high intermediate and advanced books is not clear. It appears that the length and difficulty levels of the texts are almost the same. The advanced level seems to be only a continuation of the high intermediate level. Many colleagues of mine are of the same opinion. In some ways, this is good because the reading proficiency of the students does not dramatically improve after one semester. However, there does need to be a clearer distinction between the two books. Apparently, there is a difference between intermediate and high intermediate levels in terms of the length of the texts, the complexity of sentence structure, and the difficulty of the activities.

On the whole though, the strength of these student books much outweighs their limitations. Given the fact that there are not many textbooks available for high intermediate or advanced levels, especially in an EFL context, these volumes are very useful for teachers searching for good reading or integrated skills textbooks for these levels. In general, NorthStar Reading and Writing offers flexible, rich resources to the English teaching professions. The student books provide a great range of activities such as reading, vocabulary, grammar, and writing. Teachers can select activities they wish to focus on within a given time constraint. Although the series focuses on both reading and writing skills, as many teachers do, it can be used to teach reading skills alone. Moreover, the student books are accompanied by a wide range of additional materials, such as a writing activity book, CDs/cassettes, and a teacher's manual. Teachers certainly can get more help by making use of these sources. Another great feature about this series is that the companion website extends assistance through the Internet. It supplies abundant resources

for teachers, such as a course planner, various vocabulary exercises, a writing checklist, and Internet activities. It also provides learners with various student book related materials. I recommend these two student books to teachers who need a good textbook for their upper level academic reading or integrated skills courses in reading and writing.

## General Information

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**General Information****Calendar of Events\*****2006**

- Southern Conference on Language Teaching (SCOLT)**, 16–18 February, Orlando, FL. Contact: Lynne McClendon, Executive Director, SCOLT, 165 Lazy Laurel Chase, Roswell, GA 30076; (770) 992-1256, Fax (770) 992-3464, Email: [lynnemcc@mindspring.com](mailto:lynnemcc@mindspring.com) Web: [www.valdosta.edu/scolt](http://www.valdosta.edu/scolt)
- Georgetown University Roundtable on Linguistics**, 3–5 March, Washington DC. Contact: Kendall King, Department of Linguistics, Georgetown University, Box 571051, 37th and O Streets, NW, Washington, DC 20057-1051; (202) 687-5956, Email: [Natalie.Schilling-Estes](mailto:Natalie.Schilling-Estes), Email: [ns3@georgetown.edu](mailto:ns3@georgetown.edu)
- Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages**, 9–11 March, Chicago, IL. Contact: Patrick T. Raven, Executive Director, CSCTFL, PO Box 251, Milwaukee, WI 53201-0251; (414) 405-4645, Fax (414) 276-4650, Email: [CSCTFL@aol.com](mailto:CSCTFL@aol.com) Web: [www.centralstates.cc](http://www.centralstates.cc)
- Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)**, 15–19 March, Tampa Bay, FL. Contact: TESOL, 700 S. Washington Street, Suite 200, Alexandria, VA 22314; (703) 836-0774, Fax (703) 836-7864, Email: [conventions@tesol.org](mailto:conventions@tesol.org) Web: [www.tesol.org](http://www.tesol.org)
- Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (NECTFL)**, 30 March–2 April, New York City. Contact: Northeast Conference, Dickinson College, PO Box 1773, Carlisle, PA 17013-2896; (717) 245-1977, Fax (717) 245-1976, Email: [nectfl@dickinson.edu](mailto:nectfl@dickinson.edu) Web: [www.nectfl.org](http://www.nectfl.org)
- Southwest Conference on Language Teaching (SWCOLT)**, 6–8 April, Phoenix, AZ. Contact: Audrey Cournia, Executive Director, SWCOLT, 1348 Coachman Dr. Sparks, NV 89434; (775) 358-6943, Fax (775) 358-1605, Email: [CourniaAudrey@cs.com](mailto:CourniaAudrey@cs.com) Web: [www.swcolt.org](http://www.swcolt.org)
- Association for Asian Studies (AAS)**, 6–9 April, San Francisco, CA. Contact: AAS, 1021 East Huron St., Ann Arbor, MI 48104; (734) 665-2490; Fax (734) 665-3801, Email: [anmtg@aasianst.org](mailto:anmtg@aasianst.org) Web: [www.aasianst.org](http://www.aasianst.org)
- American Educational Research Association (AERA)**, 8–12 April, San Francisco, CA. Contact: AERA, 1230 17th St., NW, Washington, DC 20036-3078; (202) 223-9485, Fax (202) 775-1824 Web: [www.aera.net](http://www.aera.net)
- International Conference on English Instruction and Assessment**, 22–23 April, Taiwan. Contact: Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, National Chung Cheng University, 168 University Rd., Min-Hsiung Chia-Yi, 621, Taiwan, R.O.C.; ++ 886-5-2721108, Fax ++886-5-2720495, Email: [admada@ccu.edu.tw](mailto:admada@ccu.edu.tw) Web: <http://www.ccunix.ccu.edu.tw/~flcccu/>
- National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages (NCOLCTL)**, 27–30 April, Madison, WI. Contact: NCOLCTL, 4231 Humanities Building, 455 N. Park Street, Madison, WI 53706; (608) 265-7903, Fax (608) 265-7904, Email: [ncolctl@mailplus.wisc.edu](mailto:ncolctl@mailplus.wisc.edu)

- International Reading Association (IRA)**, 30 April–4 May, Chicago, IL. Contact: International Reading Association, Headquarters Office, 800 Barksdale Rd., PO Box 8139, Newark, DE 19714-8139; (302) 731-1600, Fax: (302) 731-1057, Web: [www.reading.org](http://www.reading.org)
- Language Acquisition and Bilingualism**, 4–7 May, Toronto, Canada. Contact: Conference, 234 Behavioural Sciences Building, York University, 4700 Keele Street, Toronto, ON, Canada, M3J 1P3; Email: [labconf@yorku.ca](mailto:labconf@yorku.ca) Web: <http://www.psych.yorku.ca/labconference/index.html>
- Computer-Assisted Language Instruction Consortium (CALICO)**, 16–20 May, Honolulu, HI. Contact: CALICO, Southwest Texas State University, 214 Centennial Hall, 601 University Drive, San Marcos, TX 78666; (512) 245-1417, Fax (512) 245-9089, Email: [info@calico.org](mailto:info@calico.org) Web: [www.calico.org](http://www.calico.org)
- American Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL)**, 17–20 June, Montreal, Canada. Contact: AAAL, 3416 Primm Lane, Birmingham, AL 35216; (205) 824-7700, Fax (205) 823-2760, Email: [aaaloffice@aaal.org](mailto:aaaloffice@aaal.org) Web: [www.aaal.org](http://www.aaal.org)
- Language Testing Research Colloquium (LTRC)**, 29 June – 1 July, Melbourne, Australia. Contact: Email: [ltrc2006-info@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:ltrc2006-info@unimelb.edu.au) Web: [www.languages.unimelb.edu.au/ltrc2006](http://www.languages.unimelb.edu.au/ltrc2006)
- American Association of Teachers of French (AATF)**, 5–8 July, Milwaukee, WI. Contact: Jayne Abrate, AATF, Mailcode 4510, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL 62901-4510; (618) 453-5731, Fax (618) 453-5733, Email: [abrate@siu.edu](mailto:abrate@siu.edu) Web: [www.frenchteachers.org](http://www.frenchteachers.org)
- EUROCALL**, 4–7 September, Granada, Spain. Contact: Tony Harris, Email: [tharris@ugr.es](mailto:tharris@ugr.es) Web: [www.eurocall-languages.org/index.html](http://www.eurocall-languages.org/index.html)
- European Second Language Association (EUROSLA)**, 13–16 September, Istanbul, Turkey. Contact: Web: [www.eurosla2006.boun.edu.tr/](http://www.eurosla2006.boun.edu.tr/)
- American Translators Association (ATA)**, 2–5 November, New Orleans, LA. Contact: ATA, 225 Reinekers Lane, Suite 590, Alexandria, VA 22314; (703) 683-6100, Fax (703) 683-6122, Email: [conference@atanet.org](mailto:conference@atanet.org) Web: [www.atanet.org](http://www.atanet.org)
- American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)**, 17–19 November, Nashville, TN. Contact: ACTFL, 700 S. Washington St., Suite 210, Alexandria, VA 22314; (703) 894-2900, Fax (703) 894-2905, Email: [headquarters@actfl.org](mailto:headquarters@actfl.org) Web: [www.actfl.org](http://www.actfl.org)
- American Association of Teachers of German (AATG)**, 17–19 November, Nashville, TN. Contact: AATG, 112 Haddontowne Court #104, Cherry Hill, NJ 08034; (856) 795-5553, Fax (856) 795-9398, Email: [headquarters@aatg.org](mailto:headquarters@aatg.org) Web: [www.aatg.org](http://www.aatg.org)
- Chinese Language Teachers Association (CLTA)**, 17–19 November, Nashville, TN. Contact: CLTA Headquarters, Cynthia Ning, Center for Chinese Studies, Moore Hall #416, University of Hawaii, Honolulu, HI 96822; (808) 956-2692, Fax (808) 956-2682, Email: [cyndy@hawaii.edu](mailto:cyndy@hawaii.edu) Web: [clta.osu.edu](http://clta.osu.edu)
- National Network for Early Language Learning (NNELL)**, 17–19 November, Nashville, TN. Contact: Mary Lynn Redmond, NNELL, PO Box 7266, A2A Tribble Hall, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC 27109; Email: [nnell@wfu.edu](mailto:nnell@wfu.edu) Web: [www.nnell.org](http://www.nnell.org)

**American Association of Teachers of Turkic Languages (AATT)**, 17–20 November, Boston, MA. Contact: Erika H. Gilson, 110 Jones Hall, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ 08544-1008; Email: ehgilson@princeton.edu Web: www.princeton.edu/~turkish/aatt/

**2007**

**Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages**, 8–10 March, Kansas City, MO. Contact: Patrick T. Raven, Executive Director, CSCTFL, PO Box 251, Milwaukee, WI 53201-0251; (414) 405-4645, Fax (414) 276-4650, Email: CSCTFL@aol.com Web: www.centralstates.cc

**Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)**, 21–24 March, Seattle, WA. Contact: TESOL, 700 S. Washington Street, Suite 200, Alexandria, VA 22314; (703) 836-0774, Fax (703) 836-7864, Email: conventions@tesol.org Web: www.tesol.org

**Association for Asian Studies (AAS)**, 22–25 March, Boston, MA. Contact: AAS, 1021 East Huron St., Ann Arbor, MI 48104; (734) 665-2490; Fax (734) 665-3801, Email: annmtg@aasianst.org Web: www.aasianst.org

**American Educational Research Association (AERA)**, 9–13 April, Chicago, IL. Contact: AERA, 1230 17th St., NW, Washington, DC 20036-3078; (202) 223-9485, Fax: (202) 775-1824 Web: www.aera.net

**American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)**, 16–18 November, San Antonio, TX. Contact: ACTFL, 700 S. Washington St., Suite 210, Alexandria, VA 22314; (703) 894-2900, Fax (703) 894-2905, Email: headquarters@actfl.org Web: www.actfl.org

## Information for Contributors

### Statement of Purpose

The purpose of *Applied Language Learning (ALL)* is to increase and promote professional communication within the Defense Language Program and academic communities on adult language learning for functional purposes.

### Submission of Manuscripts

The Editor encourages the submission of research and review manuscripts from such disciplines as: (1) instructional methods and techniques; (2) curriculum and materials development; (3) testing and evaluation; (4) implications and applications of research from related fields such as linguistics, education, communication, psychology, and social sciences; (5) assessment of needs within the profession.

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Divide your manuscript into the following sections:

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  - Introduction
  - Method
  - Results
  - Discussion
  - Conclusion
    - Appendices
    - Notes
  - References
    - Acknowledgments
    - Author

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Identify the purpose of the article, provide an overview of the content, and suggest findings in an abstract of not more than 200 words.

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In a few paragraphs, state the purpose of the study and relate it to the hypothesis and the experimental design. Point out the theoretical implications of the study and relate them to previous work in the area.

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*Materials.* Describe briefly the materials used and their function in the experiment.

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

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