The fluidity of foreign language instruction; an intersection of personal teaching pedagogy and proposed second language teaching (SLT) principles.

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Chapter 1: Proposed SLT principles

Introduction

The number of second language teaching methods is increasing fast enough that some theories risk becoming obsolete before being practiced. However, a number of second language researchers have noted that the road from such theories to their practice is barely travelled.

In the first chapter of his book, Principles and Practices in second language Acquisition, Krashen (1982) notes that there is a lack of interaction between second language theorists, applied linguistics researchers and teachers. He argues that the failure of researchers to communicate with teachers has resulted in the latter using their own intuition and experience to inform their teaching practice. In part, he suggests that theorists both in theoretical and applied linguistics could benefit from learning and teaching languages in order to gain a deeper understanding of language learning and instructors would benefit from results of the research done by the theorists.

Krashen (1982)'s proposal, which is not uncommon, implies that there is a need for such an interaction between second language theorists, applied linguistics researchers and teachers, and that the teacher relying on their intuition is insufficient. In an attempt to find out whether such an interaction is crucial to language pedagogy, I first look at principles shared by three language teaching methods. From these shared principles, I then draw potential applications that I would expect an instructor informed by one or more of these methods to practice in their language classroom.

I then present my research, which consists of an interview with a foreign language professor, analysis of his course materials and an observation of his class. I then compare the findings of my research to the potential applications of the methods discussed in this paper with the aim to answer my research question.

From my research, I conclude that the shared goal of the second language theorists and second language instructors of maximizing opportunities for the learner’s language development leads them to more or less similar conclusions about what practices to pursue. As such, this interaction might not be imperative to second language pedagogy. It seems to be effectively replaced by the experience of instructors.
Background

In line with the interaction that Krashen (1982) proposed, Andrew Sangpil Byon (2002), a Korean applied linguist, also suggests that instructors need exposure to explicit pedagogic insights. He maintains that possessing both theoretical and practical knowledge of different methods and approaches can be a useful contribution to the development of the instructor's own teaching philosophy. He argues that it is the role of the instructor to be familiar with and take into consideration the different learning strategies and one should not attempt to instruct from a misguided view of a generalized strategy.

Many second language teaching theories were developed with the aim to equip the instructor with the knowledge needed to create opportunities for second language learning while accounting for the different learner strategies.

In looking at the context that necessitated the numerous second language teaching theories that exist today, Stephen D. Krashen and Tracy Terrell (1983) give a brief background on some prominent L2 teaching theories and their subsequent failure to meet the need of the students i.e. to communicate using the target language. Krashen and Terrell note that emphasis on grammar and production of the correct form of language, as opposed to communication of meaning, accounts for the failure of the discussed L2 teaching theories in producing the intended results when applied in classrooms. An example of such second language teaching theories discussed in this book is the Grammar translation method. This method mainly consisted of learners committing words to memory, translating sentences and applying grammatical rules to their exceptions (Bahlsen cited in Krashen & Terrell 1983). It was criticized for its inability to develop the learner's communication skills in the target language. As a reaction against the grammar translation method, there was an emergence of alternative methods whose shared goal was to focus on communication in the target language as the end result of the language learning process; these came to be known as the natural methods.

Whether the terms method and approach are interchangeable or not has attracted much debate. For instance, Hammerly (1971) lays out the difference between an approach, which he defines as a set of assumptions about the nature of whatever is being discussed, and methods, which he defines as procedures that align with the assumptions made. However, the continuation of the debate over
these terms is beyond the scope of this paper, and throughout this paper, I will be using the terms approach and method interchangeably.

The second language teaching methods discussed in this paper

In this section, I will discuss three principles underlying each of the three second language teaching methods. The purpose of this section is to highlight the similarities across these second language teaching methods.

**Direct method**

**Overall perspective**

While there is no consensus on the definition of the Direct method, most definitions note that the Direct method places a strong emphasis on oral work since communication i.e. exchange of meaning (Richards & Rodgers 1986) is held to be both the means and goal of language learning. It is also known for its attempt to incorporate some of the principles underlying first language acquisition. The development of this method was mainly prompted by a pushback against the grammar-based approaches that had reduced foreign language learning to a repetition of codified rules of morphology and syntax (Toni cited in Krashen & Terrell 1983) that were to be delivered by the instructor and eventually memorized by the learner. Most critics of the grammar-based approaches highlighted the fact that it overlooked the importance of oral work in language learning. As a result, the Direct method, among others, was posited as a more holistic approach to language learning. In light of communication as the goal, accurate verbal input that the learner can comprehend is vital to language development.

Pestalozzi, a former Swiss pedagogue and reformer who made notable contributions to the Direct method, believed that the faculty of speech had the power to link sensory experience to the faculty of thought (Laviosa 2014), and thus form meaning in the learner’s mind. Guided by this belief, Pestalozzi’s pedagogic style centered on stimulating learners’ senses, which he believed would in turn stimulate the faculty of their speech. He maintained that the key is to let the learners observe the contexts in which the words are used to name, describe and define objects so that the child would incorporate these words in their speech when they were finally sure of them (Laviosa, 2014).
Role of Grammar

It should be noted however, that though to date the proponents of the Direct method have questioned the efficacy of explicit instruction of grammar at the cost of oral work, they still acknowledge the crucial role of grammar in language learning. In the Direct method, the learner is not explicitly taught grammar at the early stages of learning but is instead expected to, with authentic interaction, slowly pick up the grammatical patterns underlying the language they are being exposed to. Put differently, the induction of grammar rules by the learner who has been exposed to authentic language is parallel to the previously mentioned process suggested by Pestalozzi of the learner finally forming meaning of a word after observing the contexts in which it is used. This view of grammar is to be expected since this method relies on the process undergone by children learning their first language.

Classroom activities

Since the emphasis of the Direct method is communication, instructor-learner and learner-learner interactions are carried out in the target language and translation is prohibited. The prohibition of translation in direct approach classrooms today can also be traced as far back as to the pioneers of this method, such as Gouin, who believed that the process of second language learning is similar to that of first language acquisition (Richards & Rodgers 1986). This belief implied that the second language learner, just as a child acquiring a first language, should be motivated to learn and use language by their desire to convey and receive meaning. Therefore, it was recommended and believed to be sufficient to use the target language exclusively. However, since the learners would not understand the authentic input in the initial stages of their learning, the instructor was encouraged to use demonstrations and actions to facilitate comprehension. As the learners would come to know the meaning of the words (i.e. by associating the instructor’s demonstrations to the words), the instructor would go on to teach new vocabulary using the known words. This belief that language should be used as a means to exchange meaning did not only result in the exclusive use of the target language in classrooms, but also partly contributed to the current view of grammar in the Direct method. To date, in this method, grammar is taught inductively since emphasis is put on the meaning rather than the form of the language.

When it comes to error correction in the Direct method, any persistent errors from the instructor’s end will not only hinder the learner from picking up underlying grammar patterns but
they will also, and more importantly, hinder them from achieving the end goal of their learning i.e. communication. In light of this, the instructor is expected to use native like oral communication in their interactions with learners. On the other hand, errors from the learner’s end are not often explicitly corrected if they do not interfere with meaning. In cases of errors that interfere with meaning, the instructor indirectly corrects the learner i.e. by rephrasing what the learner has said in an acceptable form and in so doing, the instructor gives the learner an opportunity to note the difference and thus learn.

**Task based language teaching (TBLT) method**

**Overall perspective**

TBLT is generally defined as a teaching method that focuses on task, and not language, as the unit of instruction. In so doing, TBLT treats language as a means to an end. As a reaction against teacher dominated language learning classrooms, the TBLT approach is designed to place learners at the center of learning by giving them functional tasks that engage them primarily in meaning exchange and also use of language for real-world, non-linguistic purposes (Branden 2006). A distinction is made between pedagogic tasks- communicative activities done in the classroom to improve user’s language skills- and target tasks which the learner is expected to complete outside the classroom using language competence from pedagogic tasks (Bygate et al. 2015). The students are forced, by these tasks, to use whatever language resources they have in order to solve a given problem (Willis cited in Brown & Bown 2014). The development of the TBLT approach continues to be informed by the SLT research that affirms tasks as vehicles to elicit language production (Branden 2006).

**Role of Grammar**

TBLT curricula are heavily dominated by tasks that learners will need to perform in order to acquire various language skills (Branden 2006) and as such, the primary concern and application of TBLT is not explicit instruction or acquisition of grammatical forms. The focus is not primarily on the form but on the meaning, since the association between form and meaning is seen as inevitable for meaningful use of language. The learner engaged in the given tasks in a TBLT classroom acts as a language user and not as a language learner (Branden 2006).
The task designer, the instructor in this case, is encouraged to design tasks that create opportunities for the language user to, preferably, consciously make the form-meaning mappings. With careful manipulation from the task designer, the tasks can increase the likelihood of the language user perceiving the linguistic form (Tomlin et al. 2016) and in so doing acquire the form as a means to task completion. As Bygate et al. (2015) point out, carefully designed task content draws the language user’s attention to grammatical tools, conceptual and semantic domains needed for task completion.

**Classroom activities**

The instructor takes on different roles in the TBLT classroom, such as designing tasks that will elicit authentic use of the target language, giving clear task instructions to learners and evaluating the process of their task completion. The language user, who is expected to be engaged in the given tasks, processes comprehensible input and produces comprehensible output. Assessment is based on task completion and not necessarily on mastery of the target language since doing something with the language rather than simply knowing the language, is the essential principle of TBLT (González-Lloret, 2017). As part of the assessment process, the instructor engages with the learners by for instance clarifying, asking questions and correcting errors (Bygate et al. 2015).

Error correction in a TBLT classroom can occur at any stage in the process of task completion. An example of a task that would be given to the learner is to relate their intentions to meanings and then meanings to linguistic forms (Bygate et al. 2015) and have interlocutors signal if they can understand what the learner is trying to say. The learner’s success can be measured by the degree to which interlocutors are able to understand the learner’s conveyed message; if the interlocutors do not understand, the learner receives immediate feedback on the gaps in their communication. Successful communication is seen as evidence of the learner’s ability to use the different components of language (Bygate et al. 2015).

**Audiolingual method**

**Overall perspective**

Broadly defined, the Audiolingual method is a style of teaching languages that focuses on oral skills i.e. listening and speaking. These oral skills are prioritized over reading and writing
which are introduced after setting some level of foundation of oral skills. To understand the Audiolingual method, it is important to first look at the model from which it borrowed its principles, the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP). The ASTP was proposed in 1942 to meet the US government’s need to train military personnel in multiple languages. The ASTP focused on developing the military personnel’s ability to carry out meaningful conversations and have an accurate understanding of the phonetic and structural components of the target language(s) (Johansen 1999).

The ASTP was created, partly due to the contributions of behaviorists like B.F Skinner who believed that language was a set of “rules governed structures in hierarchical order” (Johansen 1999) and thus mastery of it was a matter of practice through drills. When describing Skinner’s approach to language learning, Lightbown & Spada (2013) argue that it hinged on the stimulus-response-reinforcement cycle, with the stimulus being the authentic verbal input to which the learner was exposed, the response being a repetition of it and then reinforcement is in the form of successful communication or error correction.

Role of Grammar

In this method, the instructor’s role was threefold, to model authentic language use, to control stimulus input and to conduct oral drills. On the other hand, the learners are expected to memorize structures to the point of producing them automatically (Johansen 1999) and grammar is to be induced from pattern drills apart from explanation. The Audiolingual method, like its partial parent model ASTP, maintained that language use consists of a set of habits in the use of language structures. Emphasis is placed on speaking, specifically as it relates to pronunciation and native like use of the language. Learners are expected to achieve acceptable pronunciation by imitating a native informant or trained linguist (Hammerly 1971) who serves as the model for authentic language.

Classroom activities

Krashen & Terrell (1983) attempt to summarize the main activities of Audiolingual method classrooms step by step. The language forms, lexical and grammatical, were presented through dialogs reflecting real communication. The learner then has drills in which the language forms introduced to them in the dialogs are manipulated with the hope that they become the learner’s
unconscious habits. The learner then goes on to apply the acquired structures in guided dialogues. Benseler & Schulz (1980) note that it is through these dialogues, conducted in the target language, that learners are exposed to language samples that contain words that are commonly used by native speakers of the target language. In this method, translation is avoided since the goal is for habits to be formed in the target language. Prohibition of translation can be partially credited to the contrastive analysis hypothesis (CA), which has significantly contributed to the development of the audiolingual method. The CA hypothesis asserts that the learner’s L1 is the main source of errors in their L2 language learning process. This hypothesis is infamous for its inaccurate or uninformative predictions based on an overemphasis on the interference of the learner’s mother tongue with the target language (Heydari & Bagheri 2012). The influence of the CA on the audiolingual method is perhaps most visible in how errors are treated; the instructor, aware of this hypothesis, presupposes what errors the learner is most likely to make given their first language and adjusts teaching materials, as much as possible, to meet the assumed needs of the learner. An example of the influence of CA can be seen in the dialogue drills in which words are presented in pairs that highlight a difference in form that the L2 learner is thought to potentially encounter difficulty with due to their L1 (Richard-Amato 1996).

Chapter 2: How do these SLT principles compare to what happens in an actual foreign language classroom?

Potential applications from these principles

It would be a difficult task, if at all possible, for any one instructor to validate the claim that they strictly adhere to one SLT theory to the exclusion of all others. One of the reasons this claim to exclusive adherence is invalid is that, as shown from the methods discussed in this paper, there are multiple shared principles across various SLT theories that it would be hard to tell which principle one is using at every given moment. Therefore, the potential applications drawn in this section reflect the shared principles of these methods without necessarily being traceable to any one of them exclusively.

Classroom activities
• Since the common goal of language learning in the methods discussed in this paper is communication, I would expect that a professor who is consciously applying the principles of these methods would provide students with opportunities that allow them to use language to achieve a certain goal, thus allowing them to learn language by using it.

• There is a consensus, among the three methods discussed in this paper, on the necessity of authentic input for the learner’s language development. Language is seen as means of communication, and as such, there is no better way to learn how a language is used than from its native speakers. I would therefore expect an instructor relying on the principles of any of these methods to use authentic input in the classroom as much as possible. Such input includes but is not limited to: recordings of native speakers, news channels from countries in which the target language is used as a first language etc.

• I would expect the instructor to use the target language as much as possible in order to give the learner exposure to the grammatical structures of the language. However, in the very beginning stages of language learning it might be necessary in some instances to permit the use of a non-target language. Such instances include but are not limited to cases where the instructor has tried explaining a point in the target language using gestures, visual aids, or writing on the board, but to no avail.

Role of Grammar

• Given that communication, not learning grammar, is the end goal of these methods, I would expect an instructor applying the principles of these methods to teach grammar through various activities, and thus allow learners to deduce grammatical structures. However, in cases where learners are having difficulty deducing grammatical structures, I would expect the instructor to teach grammar explicitly.

• In the methods discussed in this paper, more so the TBLT method and the Direct method, implicit error correction is an inevitable part of grammar induction. Since in these methods learners mainly deduced grammatical structures, I would expect that an instructor who is consciously applying the principles of any of these methods to default to implicit error correction as this would give the learners the opportunity to learn grammar structures as they self-correct.
Methodology

The purpose of this research is to find out if a given professor is aware of second language teaching theories that might be informing his pedagogy. If so, how I want to find out how he was able to draw applications from these theories. In the case that the professor is unaware of any second language teaching theories that has informed his pedagogy, I will find out from him what informs his pedagogy and how he bridges the gap between principles guiding his pedagogy and the applications that I will observe in his classroom. I will also be cross-referencing with his course materials to see if they reflect the principles guiding his pedagogy. The results of this research, in comparison to the applications discussed in the previous work will provide the answer to the question of whether or not an interaction between second language theorists and second language instructors is necessary for second language pedagogy. Below are some of the questions that this research will address.

- Is the professor aware of any second language teaching theories that have informed his teaching pedagogy?
  What is his teaching pedagogy, and how did he develop it?
- How does he come up with his lesson plans?
- How does he treat grammar instruction?
- What is his view on the use of the target language in a classroom?
- How do his course materials relate to the objective of his class, as he has stated it?
- What do his classroom activities look like?

To do this, I interviewed a professor who teaches elementary French as a foreign language to college students about his teaching materials and strategies. In this interview, I asked the professor questions to help me to know any second language teaching theories that he might be aware of, informed about or trained in. I also looked at the course objectives and assignments of his class to see how they relate to the principles guiding the professor’s pedagogy.

I sat in one of this professor’s beginner French classes to observe how his teaching strategies relate to the objectives of the class. I looked out for how applications of the principles underlying pedagogy relate to the applications of the instructor relying on principles of the methods discussed in this paper.
Interview

The professor’s personal pedagogy

In talking about his personal pedagogy, the professor mentioned that he prefers not to have lectures since students need to communicate both to him and with each other. Since it is an elementary class, he thinks that there is still a need to build a foundation, and as such, in the class they use language as the medium to learn culture, grammar and vocabulary. He elaborates on the grammar structures that the students will have studied the night before and does not give grammar or vocabulary lectures, unless someone is missing out on something or there is a specific need for it. He pointed out that the classroom is activity driven and not grammar driven. These activities allow students to use knowledge that they have acquired.

When I asked about whether he is aware of any second language teaching theories he told me he is invested in practice but when he comes across something interesting, he reads it. He gave me an example of an article he read recently about a study that shows that people are more emotional in their native language and more rational in their second language. He also added that he is constantly on the lookout for something that can work for his class. He also mentioned that he exchanges information on what worked and what did not work in class with his fellow professors. He pointed out time as the main reason he is not aware of many teaching theories. He added that between exchanging information with his fellow professors, planning lesson plans and looking out for new insights in language pedagogy, he does not have time to look at the theories that are out there.

I asked him why he thought it important to update his pedagogy through exchanging information with other language professors and attending conferences and he told me that it is necessary in order to keep growing and stay current.

When I asked him about his take on the use of the target language in a classroom, his response was that ideally, the objective is to use the French and he works hard to minimize the use of English since this is the only shared language in the classroom but he sometimes allows it. He specified that he only allows it in situations where it would take too much time to explain/express something in French. Based on his assessment, French is used in more than 90% of his class.
I asked him why he made the effort to minimize the use of a non-target language, English in this case, in the classroom, and he said that English is not just a language; if he allows the use of English the thought process of the students will stay in the English world. He added that he wants them to immerse themselves in a Francophone experience since only in immersing themselves in the target language can they gain the ability think in it.

In concluding, he said that 50 minutes of class alone are not enough but can be complemented by the work outside class. He pointed out that if work is done consistently and in the order in which he assigns it, it should not take more than 45 minutes of work outside class every day. He believes this work outside of class is important as it gives student an opportunity to interact with the learning material without the filter of the professor.

On the course syllabus he mentions that students will have to sign up for the French table-where students meet with a professor or teaching assistant and have a meal as they practice speaking in French.

**How he comes up with lesson plans and teaching materials**

When I asked how the professor comes up with the daily lesson plan, he told me that he uses the textbook called *Motifs. An introduction to French 6th Edition*. He then tries to find ways in which students can learn grammar, vocabulary and culture through the content in each chapter. He uses the learning objectives that are listed at the beginning of every chapter as his road map and comes up with a lesson plan in view of the 5 skills that this class is aimed to develop i.e. presentational writing, presentational speaking, Interpersonal communication, interpretive listening and interpretive reading.

When I asked about the materials that the professor uses, he told me he uses “materials that are both contemporary and more relevant to students.” Such materials include real-world artifacts such as French podcasts and newspapers since he believes they allow for more authentic teaching and learning. He also uses *Motifs* textbook and iLrn, *Motifs’* online workbook.

Some of the materials listed on the course syllabus include, a web documentary about immigration and “Photo de classe”, a free online project about diversity in a Paris elementary classroom. There is also a list of several French and Francophone artists and several links to YouTube channels and media.
I went on to ask about the cases in which the lesson does not go according to his lesson plan and what he does in those instances. He shared that since he has been teaching this class for three years, he is familiar with it enough to anticipate what points will be trickier. He added that in trickier cases he has two options; he can re-explain the grammar rule, which he does not think is going to help, or he can reframe the grammar rule by putting it in a real-world structure e.g. by using an example that involves him or the student.

**The professor’s view of grammar and class activities**

When I asked about why the professor does not do grammar lectures in class, he replied that “grammar is best understood practically at this level,” but at 200 or 300 level teaching grammar specifically would be legitimate. He added that at this level, he is trying to build a foundation and keep the students engaged and does not want their French and Francophone world to be limited to grammar. His aim is that students become more proficient not performant, that is, that if they were for instance dropped in Paris, they would be able to function in the cultural context/society. He added, that he wants students to be exposed to the diversity of the thing we call France and Francophone. He recognizes the need to teach grammar and vocabulary successfully but with a heavy burden of deconstructing the stereotype of France.

He mentions in the course syllabus that students will not lose any points for grammatical mistakes. Instead, they will be awarded extra if in their weekly writing homework, they use grammatical structures learnt in their current chapter.

I asked what he sees his role as a language professor to be; he said he sees himself as a medium between the students and the French and Francophone world. He added that he tries to give them as many opportunities as he can for them to know the diversity and richness of France and the Francophone world. In line with this role, he sees himself as one on a mission to fight against stereotypes since he believes that deconstructing stereotypes is the best way to develop critical thinking which they can apply in any field.

Concerning error correction, he told me that he does not address pronunciation errors unless they have a grammatical impact; however, he would do more error correction in a 200 or 300 level where students are more confident.
He also added the he never corrects grammar by telling the students that they are wrong, instead, he gives them an opportunity to spot their mistakes and correct them. He believes they learn more from the process of correcting themselves.

When it comes to writing, he said he corrects it mainly through a collaborative effort. The students have a writing assignment due every Wednesday night. On Tuesday evening, they submit it to their partner who then makes suggestions, and on Wednesday morning, they consult the professor if they have any questions. The professor does not give them the answer but instead points them to context clues and hints that will set on the right track. Finally, the professor corrects the student’s final writing piece.

On the course syllabus he wrote that students should not be afraid to make mistakes and that even when they do not understand the relevant grammar structure or vocabulary, they should still find a way to express themselves since the only mistake they can make is to not participate.

He also shared about his professional development, he said that he attends conferences specifically on pedagogy, most of which are designed as workshops. In these workshops, he gets to learn about what has worked and what has not worked from fellow language professors.

**Course Materials**

The following objectives are taken from this class’s course syllabus. I chose these sentences because they reflect the principles guiding the professor’s pedagogy, as expressed in the interview. For instance, they also demonstrate that the aim of language learning is communication and authentic input is vital to the learner’s language learning development. These course objectives reflect a similar view of language and authentic input as that of the shared principles in the methods discussed in this paper.

- The focus of the course is on the student’s ability to use the language for communicative purposes
- This course will also introduce you to the cultural and ethnic diversity of the francophone world, while deconstructing clichés about France
• When you have a question about homework, assignment, deadline etc., use French in your email
• In addition to your work on the textbook and iLrn, it is essential that you seek out real-world sources to apply your growing knowledge. Examples of these real-world resources suggested by the professor include, a French YouTube channel, French public radio, French new clips online, French personalities in entertainment, media etc.
• Start a journal/blog in French and tell about your cultural/personal experiences
• The textbook and iLrn will provide you with a strong traditional base for building up your grammar and vocabulary, but only this real-world training will turn your acquisition of French into an authentic experience
• In world languages, the gold standard for measuring proficiency is your ability to communicate beyond the walls of the classroom

Examples of assignments given to students in the class

Imagine that you study at Sciences Po with a partner and you are going to get lunch at Basile, a cafeteria opposite to the school.

• Study the menu, and then write to your partner (cc the professor) to tell them what you want to eat.
• Read your partner’s response about what they would like to eat
• Write a dialogue between you two and the waiter of Basile to tell him what you would like to order

Send a google voice to the professor once every week. The aim of this assignment, as the professor states on the course syllabus, is for students to express themselves without a safety net and get a chance to practice their pronunciation. The professor strongly recommends students to not rehearse prior to sending the google voice but instead let this be a free-flowing speech.

Class observation notes

In the class I observed, the focus was on the use of indirect object pronouns in French. The professor devoted the class period to explaining one pronoun which the students had prepared for-in their assignment-before they went for the two-day break. As the professor mentioned
the interview, he does not introduce new grammatical structures or give explicit grammar lectures but instead reviews with the students the grammar that they prepare for in their assignments. These assignments, based on the course syllabus, are mainly writing exercises following the pattern of the examples listed under that grammar point. This gives the students opportunities to prepare for the grammar lesson and be prepared with their questions, which are answered during what the professor refers to as a “review of grammar”, in class.

The professor used gestures several times throughout the class. For instance, in talking about memorization, he pointed at his temples, and in describing a scenario at a cheese seller, he drew circles with his hands in the air and used his pen as a knife to cut the imaginary cheese. In addition to gestures, the professor also wrote on the board several times especially in explaining the use of the indirect object pronouns. He would frequently point at what he would have written on the board in the few cases where students did not verbally respond to whether they had understood what he had just explained. Since the professor purposes to use French as much as possible at the elementary level of French, the use of gestures and reliance of work written on the board is inevitable and necessary at elementary level. At this level, prior knowledge of French is neither expected nor required and hence cannot be presupposed. Instead of using English, the professor prefers to use gestures and his own notes to enhance the form-meaning connection.

I noticed that the professor’s voice was much louder and slower when he was explaining the use of indirect object pronouns than when he was talking about the assignments that the students will do throughout the week or asking about how their break was. This made me think that perhaps the professor was being intentionally slower and louder when he was dealing with grammar. The pace and audibility of his voice goes hand in hand with the use of gestures and notes on the board to compensate for not using a non-target language in the classroom.

In all class activities, with an exception of one, the students worked in pairs, and later shared with the whole class what they had just discussed. While the students were working in their pairs the professor would walk around spending a few minutes at each station and sometimes he would ask the students whether they were sure that was the answer or nod at what they are doing and say it is good. By asking the students whether they are sure, he gives them the opportunity to rethink, and hopefully identify and correct their mistakes. Nodding his head and saying good are
also forms of feedback to the learner that they are not making errors but instead expressing an understanding of what they are learning.

In the one activity that the students did not work in pairs, they had to write their own scenario following the six-step script that they had just read in their textbook of someone at the grocery store. After writing their scenario, they shared with the whole class. In this activity, among many that were done in this class, this professor who is not aware of and thus not consciously applying the methods discussed in this paper, gives students an activity that requires them to use language as a means to express themselves.

In explaining the idiomatic expression that the students heard in their listening exercise, the professor first asked whether anyone would like to guess in the context of the story, what the expression means. When he received no response, he rephrased the expression and included two students in it, but still received no verbal indication when he asked whether they understood. The professor finally said what the expression means. This is an example of the professor contextualizing the language. In doing so, the professor exposes the students to the use of language as its native speakers use it. This is to be expected since during the interview, the professor mentioned that he wants the students to become proficient, not performant.

For the listening exercise, the students listened to a podcast from *Podcast Français facile* and the professor commented on the podcast by saying that what the students were hearing is a normal conversation that is to be expected at a cheese seller in France. Even though the professor is unaware of the methods discussed in this paper, he still made the choice to play a podcast with native speakers of French. Based on the interview, the professor’s choice can be explained for instance by his desire for the students to have a French immersion experience in the classroom and be able to think in French. It is therefore interesting to note that the second language theorists and the professor arrive at the same conclusion, that authentic input is vital for language development.

Chapter 3: The overlap between SLT principles and professor’s personal teaching pedagogy
Discussion

In this section I will compare the findings of my research to the potential applications of the methods discussed in this paper.

Even though the professor indicated during the interview that he is not aware of any second language teaching theories that have informed his teaching pedagogy, there are many similarities between his pedagogy and what would be expected of an instructor relying on the principles of the methods discussed in this paper.

Classroom activities and course materials

The example of the writing assignment assigned by the professor will require students to use the language resources to achieve the task of communicating to the hypothetical waiter. In this assignment, students are given tasks that, if completed, will develop their language skills i.e. writing, reading and interpersonal communication. For instance, they have to read and recognize the menu items before they can write to their partner what they want to order, they then have to be able to read and understand what their partner has written in order to come up with an accurate dialogue. Even though the professor is not aware of any second language teaching theories, his assignments reflect what Bygate et al. (2015) defined as a target task in the TBLT task. The assignment also gives students the opportunity to develop language skills as they attempt to complete a task, and in that way, they are using language as means of communication. This view of language as a means to an end is reflected in all the natural approaches discussed in this paper.

The instructor mentions that he uses language as a medium for students to learn culture. For him, the end goal is not that students become performant but proficient, and this reflects the idea of using language for communication that is reflected in all the three methods discussed in this paper.

I noted that on the course syllabus, he mentions that homework will include online grammar and vocabulary exercises after reading grammar explanations (which are in English) from the textbook. This could be helpful in helping the students understand grammar explanations in advance before coming to class so that, as he mentions, they review instead the lesson instead of learning it from scratch. It can also help in minimizing the use potential use of non-target language in the classroom since the textbook already does that for the instructor.
Role of grammar

The professor mentions that he does not explicitly instruct in grammar in the classroom since he believes that grammar is best learnt practically. This belief, coupled with the professor’s objective for this class, which is to help students be proficient not performant, leads him to teach grammar based on the skills he would like them to develop.

In the classroom, the students did various listening, writing and oral expression activities that allowed them to use the grammar that they were reviewing in class.

It is clear that this professor, even though he is not aware of- and thus not consciously relying on the principles of the methods discussed in this paper- treats grammar instructions as I would expect an instructor applying principles of the methods discussed in this paper to do.

Conclusion

From my research, it is clear that there is an overlap between this professor’s pedagogy and what I would expect an instructor relying on the methods discussed in this paper to do. However, as the professor mentioned in the interview, he is not aware of any second language teaching theories but instead focuses on updating himself on what is working for other language instructors. The lack of knowledge in second language teaching theories in this case might be compensated for by advice from fellow professors and experience in teaching this class. It is also worth noting that this professor’s pedagogy is driven by his aim to give students a French immersion experience and give them opportunities to develop their thought process in this language. This aim seems to be one of the guiding principles of his pedagogy. The application of this principle, among others, leads the professor to the same conclusion as the theoreticians who proposed the methods discussed in this paper.

My research was limited in that I could not interact with the students or gain access to their performance on various assignments and exams. This limitation makes it difficult to arrive at any solid conclusion about the success of the professor’s pedagogy, and as such, this overlap between his pedagogy and the principles underlying the methods discussed in this paper does not necessarily mean that students successfully learn French as their second language in this class.
However, looking back at the intermediate French class that I took with this professor, I now see how most of his objectives for this elementary class overlap with those of that intermediate class. I remember learning about the diversity and complexity of the Francophone literature in his class, it is then that I was introduced to questions like; what qualifies literature as Francophone, a French author or writing that is in the French language? These questions, that are pertinent to the French and Francophone identities would constitute most of our discussions in class, and this met the professor’s objective of immersing us in a Francophone world during our class periods. We also watched films that depicted various political aspects of France at that time such as freedom or lack of it of religious expressions and the infamous role of the police in immigrant neighborhoods in France. We would then write critical essays on the topics tackled in these films. This writing process coupled with the discussions in class, helped me to better understand and be equipped to analyze problems facing France and the Francophone world with an acute awareness of the complexity of the issues at hand. I have gone on to take various French literature analysis classes and have noticed and been told by my professors that I have a critical and rigorous analysis of the texts we read in class.

In summary, while there is no way to measure the success rate of this professor’s pedagogy as discussed in this paper, from my experience of taking an intermediate class with him whose course objectives and teaching style do not seem to significantly differ from this one- I would say his pedagogy was effective for my learning of French as a second language.

**Suggestions moving forward**

It would be helpful to consider other reasons that might be hindering the potential for the learner to be proficient in the second language they are pursuing. An exploration of these reasons might be useful to second language pedagogy in ways that the potential interaction between theorist and second language instructor has been hypothesized.

Ross Steele (1989) argues that lack of clear goals and decontextualized language are the main factors that contribute to the low rates of students who go on to achieve proficiency in foreign languages. He suggests that it is important to reassess our teaching goals in order to have clear and measurable goals that the learner can work towards and be able to track their progress. He adds
that expecting, for instance, to be fluent in one year in a non-intensive language course is unrealistic even with the help of ideal technological aids. This failure to meet goals at the elementary level produces little to no incentive for the learner to pursue more advanced levels.

In line with the findings of my research, Steele (1989) maintains that language teaching should be treated as a way to introduce learners to other ways of interpreting the world and as such, the role of culture in the language should not be neglected since it is part of the target language as it is used by native speakers. Steele's emphasis on the role of culture in the development of language skills is not new or uncommon. Demedio (1979) mentions that several universities, convinced by the need for cultural integration in foreign language instruction in both language development and positive attitude towards native speakers, added courses that deal with teaching of culture in foreign language courses.

In summarizing results from his experiment with learning activity packages in French culture, Demedio (1979) says they show that integration of culture in foreign language instruction is beneficial for learners. He also added that they hold some promise in offsetting the significant dropout rate in foreign language courses as interest in culture could potentially be an incentive for the learners to pursue language learning further.

Both of these authors come to a somewhat similar conclusion in that they both see the contextualization of language as a potential solution to the dropout rates in language courses. This emphasis on the contextualization of language by researchers is parallel to the push for authentic input by SLT theoreticians, such as those who designed the methods discussed in this paper. While the proposed benefits for authentic input may be mainly for language development skills and not necessarily for positive attitude towards native speakers, there is potential for the two-authentic input and contextualization of language- to be mutually beneficial. The need for authentic input can in some ways be addressed by an appropriate integration of culture into language classrooms and this in turn will expose learners to native speakers and their ways of using the target language.
REFERENCES


