Experiential Learning Informs Classroom Instruction: Teaching Environmental Conservation in a Middle School Spanish Classroom

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Abstract

This paper examines the importance of experiential learning for teachers-as-students and its impact on language instruction through personal experience of the author, a middle school Spanish teacher who participated in an International Teachers' Workshop in Belize focusing on environmental science education. The author compares the approaches of Communicative Language Teaching, Content-Based Instruction, and Experiential Learning. She provides concrete examples of classroom practice rooted in the tenets of these three learning approaches, while using environmental science concepts gleaned from her experiential learning to guide language learning. The paper concludes with reflection on current practice and implications for others' implementation of similar curricula.

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Background

Experiential learning is the ideal mode of learning; it moves students from theory to practice in necessarily authentic tasks. Experiential learning can be a source of information for educators that informs their practice, and it can be used in the classroom to facilitate deeper understanding through real-world tasks. For world language teachers, terms like "real-world tasks" and "authenticity" form part of the regular classroom lexicon. In searching for ways to focus on real-world tasks that add authenticity to my classroom, I decided that I wanted to create a multi-disciplinary curriculum in my middle school Spanish classes that included environmental science concepts, but I felt unprepared to teach science. In July 2015, I had the opportunity to participate in a teachers' workshop in Belize that focused on issues in environmental studies through PaxWorks, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. This experiential learning led to a complete overhaul of my curriculum and a reexamination of my teaching methods. To fully understand both the experiential learning that I participated in, as well as the context in which I implemented new information and created a completely new, science-based curriculum, background is necessary.

PaxWorks and Belize

PaxWorks is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization whose mission "is to empower girls and teach them leadership skills, foster analytical thinking inside and outside classrooms" (PaxWorks, 2015). The organization conducts projects in the U.S. and abroad, and it facilitates international collaboration. As part of its mission, PaxWorks organizes and supports an annual International Teacher Workshop to Belize, with the goal of fostering collaboration among teachers of disparate cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds and nationalities to strengthen

their instruction while examining issues in environmental science and experiencing diverse ecosystems first-hand.

The group that participated in the 2015 PaxWorks International Teacher Workshop comprised five educators from the U.S., a U.S. college student, a graduate student from China, and three Belizean teachers. The group was led by a U.S. professor of chemistry and a practicing professor and ecologist who has lived and worked in Belize for over twenty years. Our goal was to design curriculum around the environmental education concepts we explored through our interactions in the rainforests and coral reefs of Belize. Every day, the facilitators presented new information, then took the group into the field to give specific, real-life examples of the concepts discussed. Our evenings were spent in self and group reflection and in collaborative curriculum design.

Oak Glen Middle School

I teach introductory Spanish classes at Oak Glen Middle School in Hancock County, West Virginia. OGMS has 618 students enrolled in grades five through eight. Of those students, 52% are enrolled in the free or reduced lunch program. The county has many rural areas and several small towns. As a point of comparison, New Cumberland, the county seat, had a population of 1,103 as of the 2010 national census (United States Census Bureau, 2015).

My classes

I primarily teach beginning Spanish for students in grades five through eight. Fifth- and sixth-grade classes are held five days a week for forty-five minutes, and the course is nine weeks long. Based on conversations and a formal written survey, the typical student who enters my classroom for the first time has no language-learning experience, and little to no exposure to

Spanish. My goal in these courses is to provide students with the most fundamental language learning skills while engaging them in content they care about to foster lifelong curiosity in language and culture. This is often a daunting goal for a nine-week course given to ten- and eleven-year-olds, but I have found that it is not impossible. I chose to direct my content-based environmental science curriculum to my sixth-grade Spanish classes. These classes typically have between 16 and 28 students in them. Some students have had a nine-week introductory Spanish course in fifth grade; some have had no Spanish exposure or language-learning experience of any kind. Spanish is an elective class at the middle school level. Some students specifically elected to take Spanish class, while others did not. These conditions create a class group of widely varying ability levels, interest levels, and motivations. This kind of diversity presents advantages as well as challenges. The challenge at the forefront for any teacher of such a group is how best to serve every student's needs while maintaining rigorous standards and high expectations for their achievement. This was my goal as I set out to fundamentally change how I teach introductory Spanish classes.

Theoretical Basis

A holistic approach is warranted in order to provide the best possible language instruction to groups that vary considerably in their abilities, interests, experiences, and motivation. There is no single language-learning approach that works universally for every learner of every language. To serve diverse classrooms, language teachers often find it is necessary to borrow ideas from several approaches. For the purpose of my new curriculum, I examined the congruencies of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Content-Based Instruction (CBI), and Experiential Learning (EL).

Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching maintains interaction as the focus of its approach. Savignon (2002) provides an excellent explanation of CLT, writing that "CLT is properly seen as an approach, grounded in theory of intercultural communicative competence, that can be used to develop materials and methods appropriate to a given context of learning" (see Hymes, 1992 for an in-depth discussion of the term "communicative competence"). Savignon writes of the eight principles of CLT, including the ideas that "language teaching is based on a view of language as communication," "a learner's competence is considered in relative, not in absolute, terms," "culture is recognized as instrumental in shaping speakers' communicative competence," and, most pertinent to this discussion, "it is essential that learners be engaged in doing things with language—that is, that they use language for a variety of purposes in all phases of learning." Savignon further explains that CLT works to tie together process and outcomes, focuses on meaningful language use, and that "terms sometimes used to refer to features of CLT are 'task-based'…, 'content-based,' 'process-oriented,' 'interactive,' 'inductive,' and 'discovery-oriented.'" This guiding set of principles is attractive to the world language teacher, as it maintains instructional focus while recognizing and valuing the distinct characteristics of each class, and, indeed, of each learner.

Interaction is the key to CLT. Mackey and Abbuhl (2005) write that "there is evidence that interactionally-modified input may be more effective than simple input modifications." "Simple input modifications" here refers to modifications made by the teacher prior to instruction or an activity in order for less advanced learners to comprehend material in the target language. Thus, learners who use language in interactions with other speakers to negotiate meaning get more out of those interactions than learners who only receive simplified input. This

supports the use of native-level texts and materials, instructional conversations, and task-based learning—all of which fit nicely into Content-Based Instruction, discussed below. Interactions in CLT are themselves examples of task-based learning, which give learners the opportunity to receive input in their target language, produce their own work in the target language, pay attention to linguistic form when there is a problem or misunderstanding, and allows learners to receive feedback (Mackey & Abbuhl, 2005). This focus on making meaning, interaction, and an emphasis on task-based learning leads teachers to create real-world tasks that engage students and forge connections among disparate subjects, while presenting authentic materials in the target language.

Content-Based Instruction

Content-Based Instruction is instruction anchored in content. It advocates cooperative learning, development of strategic learners (rather than teaching strategies explicitly), extensive reading in the target language, presenting meaningful information, creating emotional and affective connections, and providing visual and verbal representations of information (Grabe & Stoller, 1997). Eskey (1992) notes that CBI "consciously rejects the common sense notion that the content of a language course should be language. A basic premise of CBI is that people do not learn languages, then use them, but that people learn languages *by* using them." Teaching content in a language classroom is a departure from traditional language teaching methods, such as the Grammar Translation Method, which focuses almost entirely on form over meaning. The role of the language teacher has changed, however. Language teachers now play a crucial role "as practitioners between academic disciplines;" language teachers are mediators who "are called upon to apply their theoretical knowledge to mediate between languages, and between learners and institutions. As experts, they are to be linguistic/cultural mediators, methodological

mediators and professional mediators" (Kramsch 2004). The language teacher cannot be solely a purveyor of grammar, but also of content and context surrounding the language.

Grabe and Stoller (1997) write glowingly of CBI, noting that it is on the rise and rife with context. In addition to its focus on context, Savignon (2002) continues with the theme of using tasks to guide learning. She writes, "task-based curricula are designed to provide learners with the most opportunity to use language for a purpose." Indeed, "purpose" and "context" are two common terms that appear repeatedly in the literature about CBI. By teaching language through content rather than teaching language structures alone, learners have a directed purpose in their learning, context for the language they learn, and opportunities to interact with authentic, native-level materials, using strategic processes. Grabe and Stoller also note the importance of "flow:" "the state of optimal experiences (happiness) brought about when personal skills are matched by high challenge, leading to a narrowed focus of attention, a total absorption in the activity, a sense of timelessness, and a temporary lack of awareness of personal problems. Such optimal experiences lead to increased learning." In the language classroom, flow can be achieved through real-world tasks that require students to make connections between past learning and new input to work toward a specified purpose. The repeated emphasis on purpose, context, and experiences in CBI lends itself well to the implementation of experiential learning.

Experiential Learning

For the purposes of this paper, I refer to experiential learning in which the teacher is learner, as this was my own experience and the catalyst for the classroom practice discussed below. This is not the only kind of experiential learning; the potential combinations of participants and purposes are nearly inexhaustible.

Experiential learning comprises purpose, content, context, interaction, and collaboration in one holistic process. In fact, "process" is the focus of experiential learning, rather than the outcomes of the process, and it is this view of learning as a process that distinguishes it from other approaches to learning (Kolb, 1984). Kolb offers a model for experiential learning that suggests a cycle of concrete experience, observations and reflections, formation of abstract concepts and generalizations, and testing implications of concepts in new situations—which creates new concrete experiences, initiating a new learning cycle. This was my experience in Belize: concrete experiences in the natural environment lead to observations and reflections on ways I could apply those experiences in my new curriculum. I then formed abstract concepts and made generalizations about what I had learned and how I wanted to apply it, and tested those ideas with my colleagues in the natural environment, leading to a new cycle of ideas and experiences.

While I write of experiential learning as a participant, it is important to note that it has limitless applications in the language classroom. Experiential learning is not exclusive to a language learning environment, but it works well as a model for creating highly contextualized, interactive, and authentic learning experiences. Experiential learning may well serve as a means of incorporating the interactional goals of Communicative Language Teaching with the content- and context-heavy goals of Content-Based Instruction, in meaningful, purposeful activities that engage students and work to create flow. The focus on process over outcomes in experiential learning creates the expectation that learning is an adaptive process, and that it is continuous and life-long. This is precisely the hope that educators have for their students: that their engagement and learning carry on outside of the classroom and outside of the school, promoting new knowledge and experiences throughout their lifetime.

By focusing on learning as a process instead of a set of outcomes, we assume that learners change and adapt their ideas through experience. In fact, Kolb writes, "the failure to modify ideas and habits as a result of experience is maladaptive." Experiential learning is not confined to a classroom, either; it assumes interaction between the person and the environment, and it assumes collaboration. Swain (2000) writes that "it is dialogue that constructs linguistic knowledge" and "collaborative dialogue is dialogue in which speakers are engaged in problem solving and knowledge building." Engagement with the environment, with fellow learners, with advanced speakers, and with tasks and problems gives learners the opportunities they need to build new knowledge through collaborative dialogue. It gives learners the opportunity to modify and adapt their prior knowledge as they create new experiences. It is an open-ended, malleable concept that gives teachers freedom to craft activities and projects to fit their learners' needs while guiding practice and ensuring reflection.

My own experiential learning, in which my role was teacher-as-learner, has given me a new perspective on my students' classroom experiences. It has inspired a new curriculum, discussed in more detail below, and it gave me the confidence I needed as a catalyst for change in my classroom.

Implications for practice

Every classroom must, by necessity, be different in its approach to language instruction. The appropriateness of any approach is dependent on the teacher, her background and strengths, the students, and their individual needs in a language-learning setting. In my own classroom, the ideas of content-based instruction, communicative language teaching, and experiential learning are relatively new. Trying new methods as an established teacher is, at best, unnerving, but

reflective teaching practice demands it of us (cf. The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2010). By slowly incorporating new ideas, by selecting the methods best suited to my students' needs and my own instructional goals, and by building on my own experiential learning, I have created an introductory Spanish curriculum for sixth graders that is at once rigorous, engaging, and authentic.

Curriculum Design

Much of my curriculum design began while I participated in the International Teachers' Workshop in Belize with PaxWorks. Participants were expected to reflect on our experiences and work collaboratively with other educators in our group to maximize our experience and offer support to others. This practice is supported by Kolb and Yeganeh (2012), who write that Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory is "an idealized learning cycle or spiral where the learner 'touches all the bases'—experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting—in a recursive process that is responsive to the learning situation and what is being learned." The idea of a spiral is mirrored in the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, which uses "The Architecture of Accomplished Teaching" as a model for good teaching practice, and includes in its Five Core Propositions "Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience" (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2010). Clearly, experiential learning is a beneficial practice for teachers.

With the support of my colleagues in our Belize workshop, I created an outline for a nine-week course for sixth-grade students in my school. I knew that I wanted to include extensive reading in the target language, which leads to both increased content knowledge and improved language abilities (Grabe & Stoller, 1997). I knew that I wanted to make

environmental issues the content of my curriculum, and I narrowed the content to conservation and natural resources to make concepts more manageable for students.

I also knew that I wanted to include as many elements of Communicative Language Teaching as possible, so I made nearly all projects and activities partner- and small-group-based. This decision was based in principles of interaction (Mackey & Abbuhl, 2005; Gass & Mackey, 2007), as well as Cohen's work on groupwork, which posits that "children learn by talking and working together" and that such opportunities to learn group skills are rare in American culture (1994). I chose to incorporate explicit instruction in dictionary use, model reading strategies with native-level texts about conservation, and finish the course with a student-directed research project.

In doing this, I consulted the 21st Century Foreign Language Content Standards and Objectives for West Virginia Schools (2007) as well as the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages (2015), and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards for World Languages (2010) to ensure a broader basis for my practice. Both the West Virginia Foreign Language Standards and the World-Readiness Standards contain elements of communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards adds elements of reflective practice and experiences, focusing on teacher performance. All of these facets can be addressed through a curriculum rooted in content-based instruction and communicative language teaching.

Classroom Practice

Translating theory to practice is always the challenge in education, and particularly in language education. Knowing how students acquire language and actually finding age-

appropriate practices that reflect that knowledge are entirely different. Moving from my selected approaches to classroom practice was initially clunky and awkward, but with some adjustments, each successive nine-week course has moved more smoothly and my own comfort level with the content and methods I have chosen has increased dramatically. If at first you don't succeed, tweak your plans and try again.

Pre- and Post-Test Results

I chose to reflect on my new curriculum through a class of 23 sixth grade students in the second quarter of the 2015-2016 school year. In a written pre-test prior to formal instruction, no student was able to define "conservation" in either English or Spanish. In an informal conversation, students said they had studied some environmental science concepts in their science class, but they struggled to give specific examples of what they had learned. Some students were able to offer examples of content-specific language in English, such as "ecosystem," but none was able to define content-specific terms.

Following formal content instruction in Spanish, students completed an 11-point quiz in Spanish about conservation. This formal, summative assessment included questions about the "Three Rs" (reduce, reuse, recycle), the definition of conservation, and asked students to give reasons why conservation is important. The average score for the class of twenty-three students was a 79%.

Examples of Activities Used

To better illustrate the concepts discussed, I offer concrete examples of activities I have conducted in class with sixth-grade students during a nine-week course following my new content-based and communicative language-based curriculum. Since my focus is on students

using language to understand new concepts, I include explicit instruction in dictionary skills. Students then use those skills, along with reading strategies, to work with native-level texts that provided background on topics in conservation. Finally, the course concludes with student-directed research that requires learners to use the information they gleaned from those native-level texts to explore a topic and apply their research to real-world problems in the school environment.

Dictionary skills

By explicitly teaching dictionary skills, students have a fundamental skill that opens up thousands of new words in the target language. They discover through practice that not every word is in the dictionary. For example, conjugated verb forms are not included in Spanish dictionaries; this opens an organic discussion of how verbs change to show who does the action. Students identify all the verb forms they can find in their text, then use inductive reasoning to determine how verbs interact with their subjects. This emphasizes the importance of pattern recognition in language, and while students may not see an example for every possible subject, and they certainly cannot conjugate every verb correctly, they understand the basic concept of verb conjugation in a way that simple rote memorization does not allow. Dictionary use also creates organic conversation about the gender of nouns, how to make nouns plural, multiple word meanings in both languages, root words, spelling changes, syntax, and a host of other linguistic concepts that students identify in context. This means that students learn concepts as they need them, not as a textbook dictates, and students are more likely to form connections among these concepts as they encounter new words in conjunction with known words and forms. See Appendix A for an example of a simple dictionary skills exercise I use with my students.

Native-level texts

Text and non-text materials made for native speakers of the target language are ideal as the basis for a content-based curriculum. I have used PowerPoints, SlideShare presentations, Cloze paragraphs, and, most recently, environmental policy documents from various countries in Latin America as native-level texts that provide background information for my students. Initially, using native-level texts feels like failure—students are frustrated, the teacher becomes frustrated, and the language barrier feels insurmountable. However, with patient referencing back to the dictionary skills and reading strategies already discussed, and with constant teacher modeling of those skills and strategies, students gain confidence and are able to find meaning in even the most complex texts. They do not, of course, understand detail or nuance; this is something that the teacher must learn to overlook in order to achieve the goals of interaction with text and interaction with peers.

The example offered in Appendix B is a text that I wrote for my students. I did not simplify my language, but I did organize the text to make concepts as obvious as possible, and as easy to find as possible. The text in Appendix B is the key for a Cloze paragraph. There are four versions of the text, each with different words and phrases missing. Students must first work together in small groups to fill in the missing phrases before they can read the text and answer the comprehension questions. This exercise, filling in missing words, requires learners to focus in on specific words and phrases, to identify where those words belong in a text, and to transfer them to the same text on a different paper. They must recognize words and their position in the sentence in order to be successful, and they must work with their peers to complete the task. In order to read the text in its entirety, they must call on prior knowledge of words learned in a previous activity, and they must use their dictionary skills and work with partners to understand

the text. They must create meaning together to answer the comprehension questions, as the final two questions require inductive reasoning (i.e., "Why do we need to conserve natural resources?" and "How can we conserve natural resources?," neither of which has an answer that can be directly pulled from the text). This reading and comprehension activity takes several days of class time, and as partners and small groups finish, I sit with them and ask them about their work in Spanish, which supports their listening and speaking domains.

Working with native-level texts unexpectedly lead to discussions about translation. I want students to understand the text, which is different from translating. Students frequently assume that I want them to write out the English meaning of the text as they find the words they need. This provides an opportunity to talk about the difference between reading comprehension and translation, and it leads to discussions of translation versus interpreting, professional translation, and professions that require language fluency—this fits nicely in the West Virginia state language standards, as well as the National Board standards for world language teaching (West Virginia Department of Education, 2007; National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2010).

Student-directed research

Every quarter, this research project seems to take on a life of its own. I have ideas for projects that I share with students, I encourage student input and student choice, and the class decides the general direction of their work. Once the class has elected a project to work on as a whole group, I create a set of guidelines and a rubric to help them focus their work. From that point until the deadline, I stand back and the students take on the work of learning. In the last course section I taught, a class of 28 students chose to conduct a plastics use survey entirely in

Spanish. They collected plastic bottles every day during all school lunch periods for a week. They cleaned and sorted the bottles, weighed them, recorded their data, and at the end of the week they compiled their data. They found that our school used 42.8 pounds of plastic in one week, just at lunchtime, and they extrapolated the data and estimated that the school uses about 1,500 pounds of plastic in a year. From this information, students created a display in the front lobby of the school, an informational pamphlet that they handed out during Open House, posters promoting recycling for the hallways, and they wrote two news articles and an interview for the school newspaper about the project. Everything except the articles for the school newspaper was completed entirely in Spanish.

I am currently teaching a new section of students using this same curriculum. My current group of sixth-grade students has elected to do a comparative study of environmental policy in Latin America (see Appendix C: Student-Directed Research). They created three groups to study different countries. I provided them with copies of public policy or environmental reports from Mexico (Galán, et al., 2012), Costa Rica (Ulate Chacón, 2011), and Peru (Ministerio del Ambiente, 2009). I annotated the policies as a modification for students, as each one is at least 45 pages long and in native-level Spanish. The small groups will answer questions about their policy that will lead to a directed class discussion in Spanish. Once each group has shared information about the environmental policy of their country, the class as a whole will design an environmental policy for our school. On the first day they worked in groups, students were so absorbed in the organization of their tasks that they were completely surprised when the bell rang. This is exactly what Grabe and Stoller intended when they discussed the "flow" of a learning activity (1997). Students interact with native-level texts and with each other to make and negotiate meaning, while forging deep personal connections to the content at hand.

Student Response to Practice

The overall student response to the change in curriculum has been positive. In observing students while they work on the activities and projects described above, I have witnessed complex, organic learning conversations. My learners have been engaged with native-level texts and material for entire class periods, checking and double-checking their work before sharing it with their classmates, who then make their own connections to the language and the information with little prompting from me. I have rarely seen such dedication and conscientious work from individual students, much less from an entire class.

In addition to gathering information through observation, I ask students to complete a survey at the mid-point of the course and at the end of the course, providing me with their opinions about the course material, activities, and suggestions for future practice. This is part of the reflective process, and it provides me with candid feedback. I take their ideas and opinions very seriously, and I have made changes and continue to make changes to my teaching that are inspired by student ideas. For example, "Verónica" answered "What suggestions do you have to make the class better?" with "Involve the students in teaching the other students about more Spanish." Her suggestion prompted me to think about ways to create student-led round-table discussions of grammatical structures and word families they discover as they work. I started thinking more seriously about ways to encourage students to recognize patterns, posit their own rules for how grammar works, and resolve issues in peer-to-peer discussions that negotiate and construct meaning. This is my next step in refining my curriculum—thanks to a suggestion from a sixth grader.

Students who were in Spanish in their fifth-grade year were able to make comparisons between the science-based curriculum and a fifth-grade curriculum that focused on descriptions of the self and expressing simple opinions. "María" wrote, "This class challenged me more than last year," and "Graciela" echoed the sentiment with "I have learned a lot. It is a huge difference from last year." These and other comments are both affirming and eye-opening: clearly, I need to implement similar methods in my fifth-grade curriculum next.

Responses to questions about how students felt about learning science in a language class were nearly all positive, including "It made me think harder," "I grew by learning more Spanish words for science," "I learned as much as I did in my actual science class," "I wish we had longer class periods," and "it made learning Spanish easier." Several students wrote that learning about science in Spanish class "prepares you for the 'outside world'." Others commented that "I like it because it is a challenge for me and I always like a challenge," and "I feel it will be helpful in the future for both subjects." "Alberto" commented "I really like learning about science in Spanish class because it's like a mystery, and you have to work with someone to complete it." I can think of no better endorsement for task-based communicative language activities.

Conclusion

It is worth saying again that, while I might have ventured into the world of content-based instruction and communicative language teaching on my own, it was the experiential learning through PaxWorks that has served as the catalyst for my current practice. I am grateful for the opportunities and experiences that PaxWorks has given me, and for the personal and professional support that my newfound colleagues have given me through our shared experiences in that organization. The brief time that I spent conducting hands-on research in environmental

education will have effects for many years on my practice and on my students' ideas of language, the environment, and connections beyond the classroom.

Reflections on Practice

As noted, my next big change will be to create student-led discussions of linguistic structures in the native-level texts they work with in class. This will encourage and model pattern recognition as well as create an environment open to learning conversations about language. In addition, I would like to give more time to student-directed research. In the last two quarters, I have allotted seven to ten class days for the project. In working with students and observing their practice, I believe it would be worthwhile to extend the time given for the project and add more critical thinking elements that require a deeper interaction with the topic. I have found that students engage with the topics they explore on a deeply personal level, and they often comment that the project seemed to take no time at all, even though it accounts for as much as a fifth of the class time in a nine-week course.

I would also like to work more closely with other teachers in my building and perhaps around the world. I have noticed students referring to things in Spanish in the halls, and I have heard stories of students in other classes saying, "We learned about that in Spanish class!" I am confident that a content- and communicative-language-based curriculum has strengthened student and adult support for the Spanish program in my school, and will continue to reinforce the importance of language learning for cognitive development and students' future career objectives.

Implications for Others' Practice

Making the transition to a content-based curriculum from a language-based curriculum has had its challenges, but the benefits far outweigh the difficulties in implementation. I have experienced some pushback from students accustomed to a more traditional language curriculum, as well as skepticism from colleagues who are also accustomed to a more traditional language curriculum. Overall, however, the attitudes of students and teachers who have experienced the new curriculum in action has been positive and encouraging, and the work my students have done in this new model has been outstanding, beyond my expectations.

In considering your own implementation of a content-based, communicative language approach that incorporates elements of experiential learning, it is key to keep in mind the needs of your students, the resources you have available, and your own personal experiences that can lend depth and expertise to the content you choose. You, the language teacher, are the expert—select the best possible sources and learning experiences for your students, collaborate with other teachers in your school or state who support CBI and CLT, and engage in reflective practice.

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APPENDIX A: Dictionary Skills

Nombre: ____ Clase: ______________________

Destrezas de diccionario: Dictionary Skills

Información

Bilingual dictionaries have two halves. One will be English words with their Spanish equivalents and the other will have Spanish words with their English equivalents. Each side is in alphabetical order. Remember that Spanish has letters that English does not, so you'll see a section for ñ. Some older dictionaries might have separate sections for *ll*, *rr*, or *ch*. If you're looking for a word but can't find it, check to be sure you're in the right side for the language you're looking for.

At the top of the page in your dictionary are the first and last words on the two pages – the catchwords or guidewords. They help you find words faster.

Dictionaries use abbreviations to give you information about words.

f., fem., nf. – feminine pl. – plural adj. – adjective
m., masc., nm. – masculine adv. - adverb
nmf. – the noun can be both masculine and feminine

Dictionaries also provide more than one meaning for many words. You'll need to read all the meanings to decide which one is most appropriate for your situation. Don't assume that the first definition is the right one.

Práctica

Look up these words in your dictionary. Write them in alphabetical order in Spanish, and note whether each is masculine (m.) or feminine (f.).

1. _______*ciudad*_______________ __*f.*__ world
2. ________________________________ ______ equator
3. ________________________________ ______ country
4. ________________________________ ______ city
5. ________________________________ ______ continent
6. ________________________________ ______ ocean

Sometimes words have more than one meaning. You'll have to read all the definitions to pick the best one. You may have to cross-check the word you find to be sure it's the right one. Give the best word for each situation.

1. I sat down on the *banco*. ____

2. My cousin is at college, studying *derecho*. ___________________________________

3. There are fifteen people in this *cola*. I'm going to have to *esperar* a while. ________________ ________________

4. Fall is my favorite *estación*. _______________________________

5. I need three *hojas* of paper. _________________________________

6. It's time to go. Are you *listo*? __________________________________

APPENDIX B: Example of a Native-Level Text and Comprehension Activity

Nombre: ____ Fecha: ________________

Los Recursos Naturales

Read the following information in your number group. Make sure you understand it. Then, find other students with the information you need to fill in the blanks on your paper. There are many different papers. Some of them will need *your* information!

Un recurso natural es un bien o servicio proporcionado por la naturaleza sin alteraciones por parte del ser humano. Los recursos naturales son valiosos para las sociedades humanas por contribuir a su bienestar y a su desarrollo. Usar recursos naturales tiene un impacto en el medio ambiente.

Tipos de Recursos Naturales

a) **Recursos continuos o inagotables**: fuentes de energía que son inagotables y que no son afectadas por la actividad humana. Por ejemplo: Radiación solar, viento, mareas, energía geotérmica (calor en el interior de la Tierra).

b) **Recursos renovables**: Son los recursos que pueden regenerarse través procesos naturales, de manera que aunque sean utilizados, pueden seguir existiendo siempre que no se sobrepase su capacidad de regeneración. Por ejemplo: los árboles, los especies de animales/insectos/plantas, agua dulce, biomasa (productos de la agricultura).

c) **Recursos no renovables o irrenovables**: una vez consumidos, no pueden regenerarse de forma natural en una escala de tiempo humana. Generan contaminación ambiental. Por ejemplo: combustibles fósiles, el carbón, el petróleo, gas natural, minerales (oro, plata, cobre, hierro).

Usos de Recursos Naturales

Usar los recursos no solo tiene efecto en el lugar donde se usa, pero en todo el mundo. El mundo es un sistema conectado. Cuando usamos un recurso irrenovable, no hay más. Termina. Cuando usamos demasiados recursos renovables, se extinguen. Terminan. Usar los recursos inagotables también tiene efecto; construir turbinas eólicas (de viento) tiene un impacto en el medio ambiente, altera el paisaje, la flora, y la fauna. Es necesario usar los recursos con responsabilidad y con una visión del futuro.

¿Cómo podemos conservar los recursos?

Los Recursos Naturales: Preguntas

After reading about natural resources, answer these questions. Use evidence from the text you read. Answer in Spanish, of course, as completely as possible and with as much detail as possible.

1. ¿Qué tipos de recursos naturales hay? Da ejemplos de cada uno.

2. ¿Por qué son importantes los recursos naturales?

3. ¿Por qué necesitamos conservar los recursos naturales?

4. ¿Cómo podemos conservar los recursos naturales?

APPENDIX C: Student-directed research

Nombre: ____ Fecha: _____________________

Política Ambiental: Environmental Policy

Your group will receive a government document from a country in Latin America. You will read that document (focusing on the sections your teacher has highlighted or made notes on), and you will use the information you find to answer the following questions. Please answer the questions IN SPANISH. You may use the language of your document to help you. You will be sharing your information with the class, so be thorough.

1. ¿De cuál país es la política? _
2. ¿Cuáles son las fortalezas del país en relación con el medio ambiente?
3. ¿Cuáles son los problemas más grandes en tu país en relación con el medio ambiente?
4. ¿Cuáles recursos naturales tiene el país?
5. ¿Habla la política del calentamiento global? ¿Qué dice?
6. Habla de la biodiversidad del país—plantas, animales, especies, etc. ¿Qué hay?
7. ¿Estás tú de acuerdo con la política ambiental del país? ¿Por qué?
8. ¿Cómo es el país similar a los países de los otros grupos? (¿Qué tienen en común?)
9. ¿Cómo son diferentes los países en su política ambiental?
10. ¿Los países deben formar su política ambiental juntos, o es mejor hacer la política individualmente? ¿Por qué?

Nombre: ____________________________________ Fecha: _____________________

La Política Ambiental de OGMS

Now that you've read about environmental policy from several countries, let's think about environmental policy here at home—at Oak Glen Middle School.

1. ¿Tiene OGMS una política ambiental?
2. ¿Debe OGMS tener una política ambiental? ¿Por qué?
3. ¿Cuáles son los retos ambientales de OGMS? ¿Cuáles problemas hay en la escuela en relación con el medio ambiente?
4. ¿Qué debe incluir la política ambiental de OGMS?

Now, in your small groups, use what you know about environmental policy to write a set of guidelines for Oak Glen Middle School. This can be a rough draft for now, but please write entirely in Spanish.