Artículo Original

Theoretical perspectives on the teaching of World Languages in the United States

Perspectivas teóricas sobre la enseñanza de las lenguas del mundo en Estados Unidos

Allison Tarwater-Reeves[1*], Nhora S. Gómez-Saxon[2], Aida C. Durán[3]

[1*]*Master of Arts; allison.tarwater@gmail.com; ORCID:0000-0001-7179-2453, UMECIT, Panamá*
[2]*Master en Enseñanza y aprendizaje del idioma español y su cultura; Gomezsaxon@gmail.com; ORCID:0000-0002-1943-0049, UMECIT, Panamá*
[3]*Master en Enseñanza y aprendizaje del idioma español y su cultura, aidacduran@gmail.com; ORCID:0000-0002-4010-4803; UMECIT, Panamá*

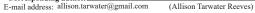|	**ABSTRACT**
Key Words: Play Based Learning, Project Based Learning, bilingualism, United States.	The importance of bilingualism as a result of globalization, in both the adoption of international education policies and in the skills required of the 21st century citizen, demands that second language teachers constantly reflect on their most effective teaching practices to best serve the needs of the post pandemic students. What are the most effective methods for teaching World Languages? How does one transition from passive learning -which lacks communicative results- to active learning, with a communicative approach, and based on real world situations? The answers point to student-centered instruction, study plans relevant to the environment, systematic use of ICT, and active pedagogies that develop the skills of knowing how to be, do, learn and live together. The objective of this article is to reflect on second language education methodologies as well as the need to include playful and project-based learning, two cooperative teaching methodologies that become relevant in the post-pandemic, as part of students' social-emotional support within the language classroom.
	RESUMEN
Palabras Claves: Aprendizaje basado en actividades lúdicas, aprendizaje basado en proyectos, bilingüismo, Estados Unidos.	La importancia del bilingüismo en la globalización, en la adopción de políticas internacionales de educación y en las habilidades exigidas al ciudadano del siglo XXI, demanda que los profesores de segundas lenguas constantemente reflexionen sobre las prácticas más efectivas para atender las necesidades de los estudiantes pos-pandemia. ¿Cuáles son los métodos más efectivos para la enseñanza de los idiomas del mundo? ¿Cómo evolucionar del aprendizaje pasivo -que no ha dado resultados comunicativos- a un aprendizaje activo con un enfoque comunicativo y basado en situaciones reales? Las respuestas apuntan a la instrucción centrada en el estudiante, planes de estudio relevantes al entorno, uso sistemático de las TIC, y pedagogías activas que desarrollen las competencias del saber ser, hacer, aprender y convivir. Este artículo tiene como objetivo reflexionar sobre las metodologías de educación de las segundas lenguas; y la necesidad de incluir la lúdica y el aprendizaje basado en proyectos, dos metodologías de enseñanzas cooperativas que adquieren relevancia en la pos-pandemia como parte del apoyo social emocional de los estudiantes.

Introduction

In the United States, bilingualism in the 21st Century is not only valuable, but is also increasingly crucial for success. The globalization of today's economy, along with current technology, is uniting diverse cultures and people into more commonplace contact. However, the United States cannot sustain a growing economy unless it continues to extend beyond its borders to reach the 95% of the world's population that resides outside the United States (U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 2021). According to The American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL, 2021), "learning another language also provides many other benefits including greater academic achievement, greater cognitive development, and more positive attitudes towards other languages and cultures."

In the United States, students are required to have at least two consecutive years of the same language to enter a four-year university from high school (Grove, 2019). Language instruction and learning in educational programs in the United States dates to the 17th century. Language teachers are faced with the need to use new pedagogy and teaching methodologies to awaken intellectual curiosity in students and obtain better results of language acquisition.

Timid results have been obtained under the methods traditionally used in US language classes including, but not limited to vocabulary memorization, grammar conjugations and rules, and direct translations. The main disadvantage of traditional teaching is that it is the teacher who has, imparts, leads, and controls the knowledge. While the student takes a passive role, reduced to drills and regurgitation, leaving no room for spontaneity in the learning process and little use of real-life language skills (Muñoz-Repiso & Gómez-Pablos, 2017). The authors of this article, with combined experience of over 53 years teaching World Languages in grades 9-12, know that education is most valuable and effective when the learner has more control, takes an active role, is challenged with novelty, and given constructive and timely feedback. As an accomplished teacher, one must foster rich cognitive development at all levels, planning learner-centered lessons that incorporate "concrete and abstract levels of thought—recognizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating" (National Board, 2010). In this article, the authors focus on two effective teaching methodologies that have influenced how language and bilingualism are taught in k-12 classrooms across the United States: Project Based Learning and Play Based Learning.

Project Based Learning

Project Based Learning (PBL) methodology is supported by the constructivism of famous educators and psychologists such as Piaget, Vygotsky, Dewey, and Kirlpatrick (Galeana, 2016). However, it can be affirmed that the principles of PBL are not new concepts and are found in the teachings of Confucius (551 BC), as well as in those of Socrates and Aristotle; which can be summarized as "learning by doing". The constructivist theory is based on the fact that people are active learners and therefore contribute to the learning process based on their experiences; to learn they must experiment. Constructivism does not propose principles of learning that can be stated and tested, but rather presents general predictions that can be tested.

According to Fleming (2000), author of "A Teacher's Guide to Project-Based Learning," PBL is an instructional technique that has proven effective as it allows students to play an active role in their own learning process. It allows for interdisciplinary instruction, emphasizing three points: clarity of purpose regarding the curricular standards to be met, relevant context for students, and evidence of learning through a product. Fleming's proposed project approaches include community study, technology use, environmental inquiry, expeditionary learning, field study, the Foxfire approach, micro-society, problem-based learning, and learning through work (Fleming, 2000). The author emphasizes the importance of the teacher asking reflective questions at the end of each project that involves the students and the use of three questions: "What worked well? What did not work? What can I do differently next time?" (Fleming, 2000). For Fernando Trujillo (2015), PBL "is an educational proposal with a long tradition both in pedagogical literature and in research, and especially in classroom practices." The author presents various pedagogical principles and methodologies of the new millennium: fundamental pillars and problem-based learning which, similar to Fleming, are accompanied by reflection on direct teaching and PBL.

The use of PBL in language classes allows the student to have active participation in their own learning and to develop the skills cataloged

as essential for a 21st century citizen: personal and social responsibility, critical thinking, reasoning and creativity, and strong communication skills. In the world language classroom, PBL steers the learning process into one that is meaningful and that includes authentic communication. The role of the student changes from one of passive-parrot-like repetition with textbook bound vocabulary and grammar into the creator of the language in meaningful situations. This role shift increases student motivation and buy-in (Bender, 2012). The basis of PBL is involving the learner by creating authentic learning situations, such as being a tourist or an exchange student in a foreign country. It gives flexibility to the learner as they choose linguistic resources, they deem relevant and purposeful for using the language rather than those focused on the teacher.

Students develop communication skills, both interpersonal and presentational, they expand their intercultural understanding and visualization as well as enhance their decision-making abilities. Knowing how and when to use technology and choosing the most appropriate tool for the task also strengthens the use of ICT for educational purposes (Bogler, 2018).

Through authentic tasks that solve real-world problems, educators promote a positive attitude towards learning, respect the autonomy of the student, while students practice problem solving skills as they learn and do. When preparing for PBL, it is important that the teacher keep in mind the importance of culture. Through PBL, the teacher provokes the students to solve a real or imaginary problem, which they can resolve through research and creation of a product as is done in the world of work. For example, what artists would you include in the opening of a Latin American art gallery in your city? Through the PBL process, students might elaborate an audio-reading biography of Picasso and Kahlo; lead a virtual visit to the Botero Museum; or create a seminar with experts in tattoo and street art in Tegucigalpa. The teacher's role during PBL is to support the students' learning, through scaffolding the necessary grammatical expressions and vocabulary to meet students where they are and catapult them into taking ownership of their own learning.

There are various steps in creating and facilitating PBL in the language class. While the teacher does not have the central role, there is still work to be done. To begin, the educator should select a theme that is not only relevant to the content, but also to the lives of the students. Then an open "guiding question" is proposed that helps students reflect on their previous knowledge of the topic and invites them to brainstorm what they should investigate and what strategies they should put in place to complete the project. While some projects can be done individually, students working cooperatively together is another wonderful advantage of PBL. According to Rutgers University (2020), group work gives students "the opportunity to engage in process skills critical for processing information, and evaluating and solving problems, as well as management skills through the use of roles within groups, and assessment skills involved in assessing options to make decisions about their group's final answer." The teacher should organize groups so that there are varying levels of ability or strengths as well as a role for each member of the group.

An important part of the process for PBL is defining the product based on the competences that the students are developing. It can have different formats: a brochure, a campaign, a presentation, a scientific investigation, a model, etc. It is recommended by experts of PBL to provide students with a rubric containing the cognitive and competence objectives that they must achieve, and the criteria to evaluate them. Buck Institute for Education (2021), provides research-based rubrics created in collaboration with the National Center for Improvement of Educational Assessment (Center for Assessment), based on a comprehensive review of the literature about Collaboration. Buck Institute states that "provide useful, formative information

that teachers can use to guide instruction and provide feedback to students on their overall performance" (Buck Institute for Education, 2021). Rubrics also provide students with concrete ideas for self-reflection. As the students proceed in completing their PBL task, they should move through various phases such as planning, investigating, analyzing and then developing their product.

The final part of PBL is two-fold. It begins by having the students use their product to explain to their classmates what they have learned and show how they have responded to the initial guiding question. The second part of this is the evaluation of the work by the teacher using the rubric as well as a self-evaluation of the students. These final steps are important as they support the development of a spirit of self-criticism and the ability of the student to reflect on their successes and mistakes. For PBL to be fully successful, to connect to learning targets and goals and for there to be a transfer of skills, there must be a reflection (AVID, 2022).

One effective way to have students reflect, and for the teacher to reflect, is by describing WHAT happened, So what, and NOW what. Reflection can take the form of many things and can be done throughout the PBL unit. Some of the most common ways to have students reflect are through exit tickets, gallery walks, sketchnoting, journals, and blogging. A quick search online will provide some wonderful ideas for PBL reflection and is a smart place to start if beginning PBL in the classroom for the first time.

Play Based Learning

The No Child Left Behind movement in the United States, which began in 2001, seemed to discount the importance of play-based learning in favor of more explicit instruction and testing in School. But researchers and these authors agree that play is a critical part of learning that should not be sidelined. From the time of birth, learning is treated like a game, babies' senses develop in contact with their environment. This methodology is followed in elementary school to support cognitive development; however, it does not continue in high school. In learning and cognitive development theories, playful games are of vital importance from childhood to adolescence, that is, high school students up to 17 years of age (CDC, 2019). However, in almost all high school classrooms in the US, games are not part of daily educational strategies. Playful learning has been replaced by readings, reports, projects, and discussions. These all have an important place in education, but they do not motivate students and do not take cognitive development into account. As Sánchez (2007) has said, "For most teachers, studying and imparting knowledge is something reflective, argumentative and constructive; for a large number of students, on the other hand, it is synonymous with indolence, carelessness, annoyance and disinterest" (pp. 1-2).

Ludic activities, or play-based activities, have been considered an essential part of the mental, physical, social and cultural development of individuals. Playfulness opens a path for learning that looks towards the joy of knowing and towards everyday experiences as a source of being and learning, which leads the imagination to generate new articulations of concepts and why not, new realities that generate new paradigms. The words play and learn are related, in both actions it is necessary to overcome difficulties, discover the way, entertain oneself, deduce, conceive and achieve victory. All this with an intent of having fun, of advancing, improving and creating positive relationships with students. According to Smilansky and Shefatya (1990), through play there is growth in speech, vocabulary, language comprehension, attention, imagination, concentration, impulse control, curiosity, and strategies for solving problems.

These authors have concluded that when people play, they are engaged, relaxed and challenged - states of mind that are very conducive to learning. Through play, children and adults test ideas and

theories, experiment with symbol systems, explore social relationships, take risks, and reinvent the world. They develop empathy and imagination. They learn to deal with uncertainty. As teachers, the authors know that while not all learning has to be playful, nor does every moment of fun involve meaningful learning; play and joy reveal many emotional, social, and cognitive characteristics that can powerfully stimulate learning. Sometimes these characteristics help make learning fun and enjoyable; sometimes they cause learning to unfold in more engaging and exploratory ways. Encouraging playful learning involves navigating a set of paradoxes (two true statements that are apparently contradictory) between the nature of the game and the nature of the school, for example, the game is timeless, the school has a schedule; the game can be chaotic, messy and noisy; schools are places of order; play involves risks, at school, children must be safe; at play, children are in charge, at school, the agenda is usually set by adults.

A playful element used in the classroom can be a source of strategic resources as it offers numerous advantages in the teaching-learning process. Games are natural, free and spontaneous activities. Playful experiences in the classroom, then, can be opportunities to enter the world of knowledge by turning the student into an active learner. Play promotes psychological health and stimulates participation; and other aspects such as concentration, the establishment of specific knowledge, cognitive development, the ability to associate and mental agility, the acceptance of rules and problem solving. Another strength it has is that it encourages team play and autonomy and offers the same opportunities to all players regardless of their skill level (Government of Northwest Territories, 2017).

The well-known child development expert at Temple University, Kathryn Hirsh-Pasek, asserts that adolescents learn best when one of the following pillars are present: individuals are taking an active role in the learning environment, they are engaged, information is meaningful, and learners interact in a social context (Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2015). This indicates that students learn best when they are mentally active, involved, social, and can make purposeful connections to their lives, which are all attributes of play. Another study from SAGE Journals (2016), concluded that "in addition to improving play skills and narrative language ability," a play-based curriculum could also have "a positive influence on the acquisition of grammar (Stagnitti et al., 2016). Neuroscientists have established that play triggers and engages the brain in purposeful ways that rote memorization, tests, worksheets, and traditional classroom methodology do not. Clair Mellenthin (2018), declares that "when you are engaging in play, which in and of itself is a symbolic metaphor in its truest form, whole parts of your brain are engaged, developing crucial connections that lead to a positive development."

Introducing play-based learning into lesson plans provides a constructivist classroom environment where students and their learning are at the center. "Learning through performance requires active discovery, analysis, interpretation, problem-solving, memory, and physical activity and extensive cognitive processing" (Foreman, 2003, 16). For play-based learning to be done successfully, and not just play for the sake of play, it is the teacher's responsibility to assign a clear learning objective and purpose. According to Plass, Homer, Kinzer (2015) as well as other authors, agree that there are some common characteristics of play-based learning. The game or play must relate to a learning objective, as mentioned before, this allows the teacher a direction when selecting the format, skills involved, and material covered for the activity. Another commonality is that the games must be pleasurable and interesting. Engaging in an enjoyable activity lowers the affective filter and in turn facilitates language production and acquisition (Collaborative Classroom, 2017). One more shared trait of play-based learning is the ability of every

student to participate. Including the entire class facilitates and promotes good communication, social interaction, and builds a sense of class community.

Benefits

Both Project Based Learning and Play Based Learning, according to the authors of this article, have many benefits that lend themselves to the World Language classroom including, but not limited to the following:

Students leading their own learning

Taking projects and playful learning seriously means tipping the balance of responsibility for learning towards the learner. These learners are intrinsically motivated to reshape the world and test the limits of their abilities without fear of failure. Based on a study by Hanover Research, "Student choice makes students active participants in their education, thereby increasing levels of engagement. Notably, researchers highlight the fact that such autonomy is generally associated with greater personal well-being and satisfaction in educational environments as well as in terms of academic performance" (cited in Pandolpho, 2018).

Experience the choice, the wonder, and the delight

Students experience choice, wonder, and delight when they learn by playing and interacting with people, ideas, materials, or spaces. According to Usher from the George Lucas Educational Foundation, "Giving students a choice allows them to take ownership of their learning as well as create a product that feels authentic to them" (Usher, 2019).

Connecting life inside and outside the classroom

Playful learning along with Project Based Learning often invites the transfer of knowledge and experiences inside and outside the classroom. There are many students whose reality outside of the school is different (not better or worse) than that inside the school. According to Jenson and Kimmons (2021), "finding ways to connect curricular content to the lives of all students will help to make lessons meaningful in their lives, increase the worth they perceive in school learning, and increase their interest in the subject matter".

Students reflecting on their learning experiences

Students should reflect on their learning in order to best learn through play and projects. This can happen before, during, or after a learning experience. Reflecting, "allows students to see the importance of their own learning process" (Alrubail, 2015). Teaching "how" to learn and how to grow to be life-long learners is one of the most important jobs of the teacher. Memorizing and regurgitating content does not create critical thinkers. Critical thinking comes from "pausing, reflecting, and knowing "how" and "why" learning should be happening at that moment" (Alrubail, 2015).

Use of Information and Communication Technology

ICT is a wonderful asset to both projects and games. It is intrinsically characterized as being both innovative and creative. According to a study by Procedia Computer Science (2016), teaching language with ICT together with projects and games, language acquisition and awareness was significantly improved. Furthermore, the study showed that technology assisted learning also minimizes distraction and boosts the learning curve (Kayımbaşıoğlu et al., 2016).

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the ongoing post pandemic recovery, present teachers with the opportunity to transform their pedagogical

practice in the face of the real needs of 21st century learners. School closures, remote learning, and gaps in education have all been the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic and have changed the conversation in the realm of education. These authors believe that now is the perfect time to reflect on current teaching trends by incorporating a more systematic and intentional use of TICs and adopting proven successful methods like Project Based Learning and Play Based Learning to promote language acquisition and student engagement. It is more important than ever to make sure that students are engaged, prepared, and competent 21st century graduates. Teachers and students must explore a less academically traditional learning approach, to immerse themselves in a more "eclectic and active" classroom where real situations can be engaging projects, and learners lead their own language experience with wonder and delight.

During adolescence, projects, games, and reflective writing in the classroom are tools that sanction students to express themselves, live pleasant experiences, handle emotional states, deficiencies and frustrations. Through collaborative activities, adolescents communicate and relate to their environment and the formation of the group is facilitated, the project, game or writing allows them to relate, explore, negotiate meaning, and manipulate situations to give meaning and intentionality when engaging with the language, it allows students to become familiar with the environment and relate it to their reality.

Learning takes place in community. Both Project Based Learning and Play Based Learning empower students to be active members of the learning community by putting them at the center of instruction. They enable the creation of learning spaces and allow for social interactions that are needed to establish and build community. Now is the time to unite and improve teaching methodologies in addition to the classroom experience with the goal of creating a more learner-friendly community characterized by engagement.

References

Book:

Bender, W. (2012). Project-based learning: differentiating instruction for the 21st century. Corwin Press. p. 23

Fleming, D. S. (2000). A Teacher's Guide to Project-Based Learning. Scarecrow Education, Attn: Sales Department, 15200 NBN Way, PO Box 191, Blue Ridge Summit, PA 17214.

Foreman, Joel. (2003). "Next Generation Educational Technology Versus the Lecture," Educause Review. pp. 12-22.

Mellenthin, C. (2018). Engaging & Powerful Techniques for the Treatment of Childhood. PESI.

Smilansky, S., & Shefatya, L. (1990) Facilitating play: A medium for promoting cognitive, socioemotional, and academic development in young children. Gaithersburg, MD: Psychosocial & Educational Publications.

Trujillo, F. (2015). Aprendizaje basado en proyectos. Infantil, Primaria y Secundaria. Ministerio de Educación.

Sanuy, C. (1998) Enseñar a jugar. España: Marsiega.

Magazines:

García-Valcárcel Muñoz-Repiso, A., & Basilotta Gómez-Pablos, V. (2017). Aprendizaje Basado en Proyectos (ABP): evaluación desde la perspectiva de alumnos de Educación Primaria. *Revista de Investigación Educativa*, 35(1), 113–131. https://doi.org/10.6018/rie.35.1.246811

Sánchez Cabrera, F. A. (2007). El docente frente al reto de motivar al alumno. Revista Iberoamericana Producción Académica y Gestión Educativa.

https://doi.org/ISSN

Thesis:

Galeana, L. (2016). Aprendizaje basado en proyectos. Dra. Lourdes Galeana de la O. Universidad de Colima.https://bit.ly/31G1FEJ

Web pages:

Alrubail, R. (2015, January 4). Scaffolding Student Reflections + Sample Questions. Edutopia.

George Lucas Educational Foundation. https://edut.to/3dqLopK

American Council of the Teaching of Foreign Language. (2021). Benefits of Language Learning ACTFL. Www.actfl.org. https://bit.ly/3NmeSFN

AVID. (2022). Support Student Reflection, Critique, and Revision in Project-Based Learning. AVID Open Access. https://bit.ly/3LjGhXf

Bogler, M. (2018). How do you teach 21st Century Skills? A Project Based Learning (PBL) Approach.https://bit.ly/3EsxdMv

Buck Institute for Education. (2021) "Collaboration Rubrics." PBL Works.my.pblworks.org/node/11282.

CDC. (2019, February 20). Adolescence (15-17 years old). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.https://bit.ly/3xUwbXe

Collaborative Classroom. (2017). Lowering the Affective Filter for English Language Learners Facilitates Successful Language Acquisition. Center for the Collaborative Classroom.https://bit.ly/3uth4CX

Government of Northwest Territories. (2017). WHAT IS PLAY-BASED LEARNING? https://bit.ly/3NwXxu2

Grove, A. (2019). What Colleges Say About Their Second Language Requirements. ThoughtCo. https://bit.ly/3Iu4ckZ

Hirsh-Pasek, K., Zosh, J. M., Golinkoff, R. M., Gray, J. H., Robb, M. B., & Kaufman, J. (2015). Putting Education in "Educational" Apps. Psychological Science in the Public Interest, 16(1), 3–34.https://doi.org/10.1177/1529100615569721

Jensen, B., & Kimmons, R. (2021). Making Meaning in My Classroom. In edtechbooks.org. EdTech Books. https://edtechbooks.org/equitable_teaching

Kayımbaşıoğlu, D., Oktekin, B., & Hacı, H. (2016). Integration of Gamification Technology in Education. Procedia Computer Science, 102, pp. 668-676. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.procs.2016.09.460

National Board. (2010). World Languages Standards Second Edition for Teachers of Students Ages 3-18+. https://www.nbpts.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/ECYA-WL.pdf

Pandolpho, B. (2018). Putting Students in Charge of Their Learning. Edutopia; George Lucas Educational Foundation. https://edut.to/3owb5vo

Parker, J. L. (2020). Students' Attitudes toward Project-Based Learning in an Intermediate Spanish Course. International Journal of Curriculum and Instruction, 12(1), 80–97. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1249547

Pham, V. P. H. (2021). The Effects of Collaborative Writing on Students' Writing Fluency: An Efficient Framework for Collaborative Writing. SAGE Open, 11(1), 215824402199836. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244021998363

Plass, J. L., Homer, B. D., & Kinzer, C. K. (2015). Foundations of Game-Based Learning. Educational Psychologist, 50(4), 258–283. https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2015.1122533

Rutgers University. (2020). "How Does Group Work Benefit Me? | Learning Centers." Rlc.rutgers.edu rlc.rutgers.edu/node/469

Stagnitti, K., Bailey, A., Hudspeth Stevenson, E., Reynolds, E., & Kidd, E. (2016). An investigation into the effect of play-based instruction on the development of play skills and oral language. Journal of Early Childhood Research, 14(4), 389–406. https://doi.org/10.1177/1476718x15579741

U.S. Chamber of Commerce. (2021, January 15). The Benefits of International Trade. US Chamber. https://bit.ly/3tBoxAI

Usher, K. (2019, April 10). Differentiating by Offering Choices. Edutopia; George Lucas Educational Foundation. https://edut.to/3ItLn2g