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Forty years after Savignon, How far have(n't) we come? Students' perspectives about communicative language teaching in the 21st century

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Abstract

This paper expands on Burke's (2012, 2013) research with four high school Spanish teachers who participated in a 10-week experiential professional development course (EPD) at their school in order to understand and experience communicative language teaching (CLT) methods. During EPD, and the three weeks immediately following EPD, 483 students were observed in classes. Twenty-eight of these students also attended two after-school meetings and answered an open-ended written questionnaire. Two hundred sixteen students were observed in classes post-EPD, 23-25 weeks after the EPD course concluded. In order to understand students' beliefs and attitudes about CLT, data from classroom observations and artifacts, the student questionnaire, field notes, and the researcher's journal were compared and contrasted. As Savignon (1972) found over 40 years ago, students appreciated being trained in communicative activities, liked being encouraged to use the target language, and gained confidence in speaking. Concluding remarks suggest that teachers engage in discussions with their students about the distinct process and importance of learning world language with communicative methods. Furthermore, in order for practice to meet theory, and conceivably, to "unlock the gateway to communication"; researchers need to provide teachers with practical ways to implement CLT and collaborate on-site *with* teachers and students to create communicative classrooms.

I n May 2010, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) published a position statement encouraging teachers to use the target language at least 90% of the time in classroom instruction (ACTFL, 2010). Over 40 years after Savignon's (1972) significant university-level study was published, in which she found that students benefitted from and enjoyed experiencing communicative methods, and more than a decade after the National Standards (1999) were published, why did ACTFL feel the need to specify that teachers needed to maximize target language use during classroom instruction? Simply stated, in the 21ˢᵗ century, the problem persists: World language teachers still are not using communicative methods on a regular basis, if at all. Even though the profession has made many attempts to improve world language education, the same issues that were visible 40 years ago are ever-present in classrooms today. Students continue to spend multiple hours in classrooms, only to leave with limited proficiency in their world language, and often teachers continue to teach as they were taught, focusing on grammar and using translation when teaching.

Goodlad (1974, 2004) and Lortie (1975, 2002) have found that teachers often use the same methods in their classrooms that they, themselves, experienced from elementary school through college, regardless if they were best practices or not. Lortie (2002) named this issue in educational training of teachers the "apprenticeship of observation" (p. 61). He explained that students, for many years, implicitly serve as apprentices of teaching as they observe their teachers teach year after year. Goodlad and Lortie point out that even if pre-service and in-service teachers are taught about more effective methods than what their teachers may have used with them, they will rely more on their past experiences as students. They will teach as they were taught, which is problematic if certain methods they use have been found to be less effective. In world language classrooms, this means that if teachers mainly experienced grammar-translation methods, they likely will use grammar-translation methods even if they were trained to use communicative methods. Gallagher (2011) found that both novice and veteran world language teachers were open to using communicative methods, but because of barriers, such as their apprenticeship of observation, as well as a lack of outside support and experience with CLT, changing their methods to be more communicative was challenging.

Since ACTFL's position statement was released, the researcher has witnessed many teachers at language teaching conventions and conferences, as well as on ACTFL's Language Educator blog, showing interest about how to make their classrooms more communicative. Teachers are reflecting critically about their beliefs, experiences, and values concerning what methods they should use with their students and why. They appear to want to change, but question their ability to do it alone. Additionally, absent from these discussions at conferences, and present literature, are *student* voices, especially at the secondary level. Clearly, students' beliefs about world language pedagogy can be influenced by their teachers' beliefs and methods because of what they experience and learn in their world language classes (Goodlad, 1974, 2004; Lortie, 1975, 2002). But, can students' beliefs and experiences with CLT affect their teachers' methods? In this study, high school

Spanish students were asked to share what they thought about CLT with their teachers after experiencing it. By including students in their teachers' professional development activities, the researcher hoped that the students could have a voice, and teachers could hear firsthand that students enjoyed, understood, and valued the benefits of CLT. As a result, teachers would gain the confidence they needed to use CLT methods on a more consistent basis by working with their students.

Some studies have investigated teachers' and students' beliefs and attitudes about target language use and grammar teaching (Brown, 2009; Dickson, 1996; Levine, 2003, 2011; Macaro, 2001; Viakinnou-Brinson, Herron, Cole, & Haight, 2012). Most of these studies have occurred at the university level and have not focused on students' beliefs and opinions about CLT specifically. In order to find out how high school students viewed CLT, the investigator designed and implemented a 10-week experiential professional development course (EPD) with four high school Spanish teachers and their students ranging from Spanish I to Advanced Placement Spanish. The teachers enrolled in EPD in order to understand CLT and learn how to design and implement communicative activities into lessons with support from a researcher-consultant. As a former high school French teacher, who used CLT methods, and experienced and researched its positive effects on student attitudes and acquisition, the author believed that by engaging in participatory action research with teachers and students in their classrooms, she could instigate change in the four secondary Spanish teachers' classrooms. The researcher observed the students during their Spanish classes (during and post-EPD) and at two after-school EPD meetings. At the after-school meetings, open-ended questionnaire data were collected in paper format from 28 of the students enrolled in Spanish I to Advanced Placement Spanish courses.

To understand what the students thought about CLT and EPD, the following research questions were asked: 1) How did students describe communicative activities? 2) What did students think about communicative activities? 3) What communicative activities did the students enjoy? 4) How did students react to participating in EPD meetings?

In what follows, a review of literature is provided focusing on research about CLT, teachers', students', and researchers' beliefs about CLT, and strategies for teachers to use when integrating CLT. Then, the methodology is described and results are presented and discussed. Concluding remarks suggest that teachers engage in discussions with their students about the process of learning world language using communicative methods. Furthermore, in order for practice to meet theory, and conceivably, to "unlock the gateway to communication"; researchers need to provide teachers with practical ways to implement CLT and collaborate on-site *with* teachers and students to create communicative classrooms. As a dedication to Sandra J. Savignon, more than 40 years after her study was published, here the author focuses on 21st century secondary learner's perspectives about CLT with readers.

Review of Literature

CLT 40 Years Ago

Over forty years ago, Savignon (1972) conducted a groundbreaking study with 42 students enrolled in beginning college French at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. At that time, instructors were heavily influenced by the audio-lingual method, emphasizing dialogue memorization and pronunciation drills. For her experiment, Savignon divided the students into three groups. All groups met for four 50-minute periods a week and followed the same syllabus. Each group, E_1, E_2 and C also met an additional 50 minutes a week. During these additional 50 minutes, Group E_1 (Experimental group 1, n= 12) was trained in communicative acts with students learning greetings, asking for directions, making plans, and discussing current events. The emphasis was on meaning, and students were encouraged to use as much French as possible when communicating. Group E_2 (Experimental group 2, n=15) discussed French culture in English. They learned about all things French—politics, current events, films, and cuisine. Group C (Control group, n=15) spent their additional time in the language laboratory on campus practicing basic material they were studying in the French 101 course.

In order to understand the effects of the various methods used for teaching language, linguistic and communicative competence tests were given to the students at the end of the semester (Savignon, 1972). Savignon (1972) used standardized proficiency tests in reading and listening to measure students' linguistic competence. Teacher assessment of oral skills and course grades also were used. Communicative competence was evaluated during four tasks: 1) a discussion with a native French speaker, 2) an interview with a French native speaker, 3) a report of facts about oneself or one's recent activities, and 4) a description of ongoing activities (for actual tests see Savignon, 1972). Savignon found that the group trained in communicative skills (E_1) performed significantly better than the other two groups on the communicative skill tests and on the teachers' evaluation of students' oral skills. For the study, Savignon also asked students to evaluate their language courses. Students who were in Groups E_1 and E_2 evaluated their course experiences significantly higher than Group C. Savignon's study indicated that language students appreciated learning to communicate in the target language and enjoyed learning about culture. She concluded that language teachers needed to consider teaching their students to function *in* the language instead of only teaching them *about* it. This would require that teachers speak less *to* students and more *with* them in the target language. Over 40 years later, while ACTFL's official statement is that the target language should be used at least 90% of the time (2010), in too many classrooms, teachers are not using the target language enough and are not providing opportunities for students to negotiate, interpret, and express themselves to the teacher and their classmates in the target language.

Defining the CLT Teacher and Communicative Activities

Even though Savignon's (1972) study highlighted the need for world language teachers to use more communicative methods such as training students in

communicative tasks, teachers in the 21st century still continue to struggle to be a CLT teacher, this "teacher of extraordinary abilities: a multi-dimensional, high-tech, Wizard-of-Oz like superperson" (Medgyes, 1986, p. 107). Burke (2006) defined a CLT teacher as someone who promotes student-to-student communication in the world language to facilitate students' development of communicative competence. CLT teachers use immersion, contextualized lessons, and student-centered instruction. They believe students can learn grammar implicitly while using language in context, but, when necessary, they teach explicit grammar lessons so students can enhance their communication (Burke, 2006). Culture is taught using the target language to encourage communication and to improve students' communicative competence (Burke, 2006).

Burke (2006) explained, "CLT teachers believe that the world language should be used as the medium of instruction" and "…create opportunities for students to use the world language during communicative activities" (p. 159). She described communicative activities as student-centered activities that are meaningful and engage students in an exchange of information and/or ideas. She specified that during communicative activities the target language is used and English is avoided. By asking students to stay in the target language, they must use strategies to negotiate, express, and interpret in order to develop their strategic competence, a crucial component of communicative competence (Burke, 2006, 2010; Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980; Savignon, 1997). Burke (2006, p. 150) and Ellis (1982, 1997) believe that these tasks or activities must have the following characteristics:

1. There must be a communication purpose.
2. There must be a primary focus on message rather than on linguistic code, although participants may need to attend to form from time to time.
3. There must be some kind of gap (information or opinion).
4. There must be opportunity for meaning negotiation when performing the task.
5. The participants choose the resources, verbal and non-verbal required for performing the task (i.e. they are not supplied with the means for performing it).

Long (2000) and Pica (2002) assert that communicative activities must focus on negotiation, expression, and interpretation of meaning and encourage socialization between students in the world language. Shrum and Glisan (2010) pointed out that this negotiation of meaning might be difficult to achieve in classroom settings because "students are often hesitant to question or counter-question the teacher" (p. 21). They advised teachers to go beyond providing comprehensible input and integrate communicative activities into their lessons where students interact with one another and negotiate the world language to learn.

In Burke's (2006) study of pre-service teachers, even after being trained in CLT methods, only a minority of students focused predominantly on communication in lessons they implemented during their secondary methods field experience. Most students were classified as "hybrid teachers" who used a mixture of CLT and

grammar-translation methods; however, a minority of pre-service teachers were classified as CLT teachers (Burke, 2006, p. 153).

Teachers', Students', and Researchers' Beliefs about CLT

To date, very little empirical classroom research has been conducted to examine teachers' and students' beliefs and attitudes about CLT methods at the secondary level. Most studies focus on teachers' beliefs and occur in university classrooms (Brooks & Donato, 1994; Dickson, 1996; Levine, 2003; Macaro, 2001). Dickson (1996) surveyed 508 secondary world language teachers in England and Wales. Even though 89% of these teachers were in favor of maximizing target language use, Dickson found that most teachers reported using the target language 50-75% of the time. Only 30% of teachers estimated that their students used the target language 50% or more of the time. Teachers blamed factors such as student ability and behavior as to why they felt they could not expect students to use the world language more often. They also feared not being able to maintain student interest and build rapport with students if they used the world language more often. When teaching grammar, teachers felt that using the first language (L1) saved time. Teachers reported that they engaged students in question-answer activities and role-play, but that it was difficult to allow students to use the target language in meaningful and informal ways (Dickson, 1996).

In Brown's (2009) quantitative study at a U.S. university, although the world language teachers valued CLT, their students preferred a grammar-based approach. Additionally, Viakinnou-Brinson, Herron, Cole, and Haight (2012) discovered that when students learned grammar, they preferred being taught in French and English even though grammar tests scores were significantly higher when they had been taught in French only. One student in their study asserted,

> In my opinion, the things I learned or did not learn using French only could have been taught to me much easier [sic] and much more efficiently than using English instead of using hand motions and pictures. I think it would have been more useful to just tell me what the word means in English. There are still many words and grammar functions that I have been taught but really don't understand. (p. 83)

Many students who planned to teach French in the future stated they would only use English when explaining grammar, otherwise they would use 'mostly French' (Viakinnou-Brinson et al., 2012, p. 84).

In the last several years, researchers have addressed the use of CLT methods in classrooms, particularly related to target language use (Antón & DiCamilla, 1998; Cook, 2001; Levine, 2003, 2011; Littlewood, W. & Yu, B., 2011; Pan, Y. & Pan, Y., 2010; Turnbull, 2001; Turnbull & Dailey-O'Cain, 2009). Cook (2001) criticized language educators who ban the L1 from the classroom. He cited studies by Antón and DiCamilla (1998) and Brooks and Donato (1994) to support his rationale to maximize target language use while treating the L1 as a useful classroom resource. Grounded in socio-cultural theory, these studies make claims in favor of code switching (mixed use of L1 and the target language) to benefit learning. Cook

suggested teachers maximize their use of the target language instead of placing emphasis on minimizing use of the L1, claiming, "there is no logical necessity that communicative tasks should avoid the L1" (p. 405). Cook critiqued the communicative approach, highlighting the benefits of translation as a teaching technique. He claimed when teachers shun the L1, learners are asked to "put languages in separate compartments" (p. 407). Cook left readers with the thought that "imitation natives", or proficient and competent students, was an impossible feat, and that teachers should "produce students who are able to operate with two language systems as genuine L2 users" (p. 419).

Like Cook (2001), Turnbull (2001) agreed that world language teachers should maximize their target language use, but he also argued that the more teachers use the world language, the higher the students' proficiency will be. Turnbull (2001) described how he taught students French in different Canadian contexts, using it as much as possible.

> Although my students may have been resistant to my use of the target language at first, they quickly adjusted and often thanked me at the end of the school year for teaching them in French. They told me they learned so much because I spoke to them in French most of the time, whether we were analyzing a grammar point, debating a controversial topic, or talking about social activities outside of class; they said that they could never 'tune out' or ignore what I was saying to them. My students often told me that they realized that French could actually be used for real-life communication; English was not necessary to survive. (p. 533)

Turnbull (2001) understood teachers' claim that using the L1 could save time. However, he emphasized that in the context where students learn the world language for short periods of time on a daily basis, teachers needed to use the world language as much as possible if students were going to stay motivated and learn it.

In his questionnaire study of 163 college-level WL teachers and 600 WL students, Levine (2003) found that teachers believed that using the target language caused students to feel more anxious than they really did. Students who reported higher target language use also reported lower anxiety about using the target language. Approximately 63% of teachers and 63% of students strongly agreed or agreed that using the target language was challenging, rewarding, worthwhile, and appreciated being required to speak the target language during their class (Levine, 2003, p. 351). Levine discovered that if teachers expected their students to use the target language, they adapted to communicating in it. Even though the data was in favor of encouraging teachers to use and expect more target language use with students, Levine (2013) supported the socio-cultural perspective that the world language classroom should be a multilingual context.

Strategies for Teachers to Use CLT

In order to help students understand the benefits of CLT, as Savignon (1972) had found in her study, Levine (2011), Brown (2009), and Viakinnou-Brinson

et al. (2012) have suggested training students to understand CLT. They advise teachers to engage students in brief discussions about second language acquisition and effective world language teaching practices. They emphasize the importance of discussing the process of learning, acquisition, and teaching with students.

When ACTFL announced its position on target language use, Burke (2010) described 10 practical ways teachers could promote more student communication in the target language including integrating communicative activities, engaging students in strategy talks, evaluating participation, and teaching explicit grammar lessons in the target language. Burke (2010) advised students and teachers to take responsibility to improve WL education. She pointed out that if students were going to develop global awareness and understanding, while also improving their proficiency, teachers needed to do more than teach about the language through teaching grammar rules and asking students to do isolated textbook and workbook activities. Teachers needed to engage students in meaningful communication in the target language and to avoid speaking too much English (Burke, 2010).

Ceo-DiFrancesco (2013) also has provided strategies for instructors and students to help maximize target language use. In order for teachers to help students understand them when they are speaking in the target language, Ceo-DiFrancesco recommended use of Total Physical Response techniques, modeling, gestures, graphic organizers, and use of visual aids. She also addressed classroom management, stating that teachers needed to teach students what the appropriate and acceptable norms of behavior were for a communicative classroom. For students, Ceo-DiFrancesco promoted the teaching of metacognitive, cognitive, and coping strategies. She believed students needed to learn how to be effective language learners.

Additionally, Moeller and Roberts (2013) wrote several guidelines for how language educators could create and sustain a learning environment where authentic, engaging, meaningful communication occurred in the target language and was standard. They stressed the importance of building a communicative curriculum grounded in second language acquisition theory and the National Standards (1999). They understood that if students were going to be risk-takers, they needed to feel safe by agreeing on classroom rules. Moeller and Roberts (2013) also recommended that through technology integration, students could become users of language and maximize their target language use.

Methodology

Participatory Action Research and The EPD Course

When the author offered EPD to the world language department at Mountain Valley High School (MVHS), she had a clear agenda to instigate change in world language high school classrooms and to promote and support teachers to integrate CLT methods into their classrooms while their students were present. Participatory action research (Denzin & Lincoln 1998; Merriam, 2002; Richards, 2003) was the necessary approach to work with and for teachers and students in order for them to become more knowledgeable about CLT through experience and

reflection. In participatory action research, the participants aid the researcher in determining what collective action is necessary to bring about change (Merriam, 2002). In preliminary observations prior to offering EPD to the school district, the teachers were not using CLT methods on a daily basis, if at all (Burke, 2013). Thus, the four Spanish teacher-participants enrolled in the course to improve their own practice (Burke, 2012, 2013). They particularly wanted guidance on how to implement instruction that focused on communication to increase their students' proficiency, and they envisioned working with other teachers when planning (Burke, 2012, 2013). Together the teachers and their students repeatedly planned, acted, observed, and reflected with guidance from the researcher-consultant. In Burke (2012, 2013) the focus was on the teachers' experience, and here the student data is reported and discussed. In the author's role as qualitative researcher, the author was interested in understanding the interpretations and experiences of the participants during and after EPD. The author was the main interpreter of how the students and teachers experienced and interacted during and post-EPD, and had to determine what meaning it had for them (Merriam, 2002). Even though this paper focuses on the student data from the study conducted, it seems relevant to describe the four high school Spanish teachers who agreed to enroll in the EPD course and participated in the larger study. Three of the four teachers were working on their master's degree and earned three graduate credits for participating in EPD; one earned the credits to satisfy mandatory state professional development hours. The teachers were very diverse in terms of age and years of teaching experience. Teachers were not native speakers and possessed varying levels of confidence about their proficiency in Spanish. Sophia was a first-year teacher who taught beginning levels of Spanish (Spanish I and Spanish II). Sergio was a second-year teacher who also taught beginning Spanish (Spanish II). Daniella had been teaching for eight years, and she taught beginning and advanced Spanish (Spanish II and Advanced Placement Spanish). Raquel was a twenty-three year veteran and taught beginning Spanish (Spanish I).

During the 10-week EPD course, the four teachers attended a breakfast meeting, implemented communicative activities during their classes with their students, engaged in peer observations, and met with peers and the consultant to plan and reflect on communicative activities (see Appendix A for detailed timeline). The researcher decided to start small with the teachers and only required implementation of communicative activities for the EPD course. In preliminary observations, they had not used any CLT methods beyond using the target language to teach explicit grammar lessons, so it seemed realistic to first encourage the teachers to plan shorter activities or lessons that promoted student communication in Spanish. Requiring the teachers to "dive into the deep end" at the beginning of EPD and use CLT methods all the time with their students would have been an impractical and intimidating goal.

At the first after-school meeting during Week 3, the researcher-consultant modeled three communicative activities in French with ten of Sergio's students. Then, teachers were required to implement three communicative activities during Weeks 5-8 during their classes. All teachers implemented many more

communicative activities (interviewing activities such as *busquedas* and *entrevistas*, Immersion Day, writing activities such as *cuentos* and *carteles*) than the minimum requirement, and they began implementation before the fifth week (Burke, 2012). They were able to choose the types of communicative activities they designed, implemented, and reflected on in their written work for the course. At the follow-up meeting during Week 9, Daniella and Sophia both modeled communicative activities in Spanish to a small group of their own students. They had implemented similar activities in their classes for EPD during Weeks 5-8.

Since EPD was first implemented, the researcher-consultant has continued working with two of the four teachers, although no formal follow-up research has been conducted. Raquel retired a few years after EPD ended due to health issues, and Sophia moved away from Mountain Valley. The author has visited Sergio and Daniella periodically in their classrooms, and they have continued to implement communicative methods. They also have made several presentations with the researcher, as well as independently, about the collaboration and their teaching at regional, national, and international conferences, most recently at the ACTFL convention in November 2013. Daniella earned her Ph.D. in Instructional Systems in August 2013, and her dissertation focused on the importance of technology to promote collaborative, reflective dialogue among world language pre-service teachers during their teacher-training program.

Context and Participants

EPD was implemented at MVHS because of its relatively diverse student population, large faculty, and proximity to the researcher's university. MVHS can be classified as a typical middle to upper-class U.S. public high school. The high school draws its students from a 150 square mile attendance area encompassing the Borough of Mountain Valley and its surrounding townships totaling an enrollment of approximately 2,500. The proximity of the university campus accounts for much of the diversity in the student population. It also offers high school students the advantage of enrolling in college-level courses as part-time non-degree seeking students. Many collaborative projects occur between the university and the Mountain Valley school district.

During EPD, and in immediate post-EPD observations (the three weeks following EPD), 483 students were observed in classes, including 237 Spanish I students, 223 Spanish II students, and 23 Advanced Placement Spanish students. Twenty-eight of these students also attended the two after-school meetings and answered an open-ended written questionnaire. Students who participated in the meetings and completed the questionnaires signed consent forms prior to participating in the after-school meetings. Students under the age of 18 received letters to be taken to their parents, who also signed their consent forms. Ten students from Sergio's Spanish II classes attended the first meeting in February and answered the student questionnaire (Appendix B). Eighteen students from Daniella's Advanced Placement (AP) and Spanish II classes and Sophia's Spanish I and Spanish II classes were present at the follow-up meeting in March and answered the questionnaire (Appendix B). During post-EPD visits in September

(23-25 weeks after EPD course), 216 students were observed in classes including 56 Spanish I students, 137 Spanish II students, and 23 Advanced Placement Spanish students. Some of Raquel's and Sophia's Spanish I students who had participated in lessons during EPD were observed in Daniella's, Sophia's, and Sergio's Spanish II classes post-EPD in September.

Data Collection

During and post-EPD, as the researcher-consultant conducted numerous observations of the students during their teachers' classes using an observational data sheet (Appendix C). She also collected various artifacts such as handouts, worksheets, assessment, and student work. Field notes from observations recorded teacher and student interaction, student to student interaction, teacher explanations of topics and assignments, student reactions to implementation of CLT methods, and other interesting phenomena that occurred during various lessons. A researcher journal was utilized and in-depth reflections from student observations during after-school meetings were written (Glesne, 2006). During and after the course, observations of students during classes and meetings totaled approximately 307 hours.

In order to gain insight into the experiences and understandings of the students who were in the four teachers' classrooms during EPD, the 28 students who attended the two after-school meetings were asked to complete a questionnaire (Appendix B). They were given a paper copy, answered the questions in handwritten format, and returned the questionnaire to the researcher-consultant at school. The questionnaires documented students' perceptions of CLT and EPD during Week 3 and 9.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed qualitatively through inductive analysis (Johnson, 2012; Thomas, 2006). Similarities and differences that were found from one participant were compared and contrasted with other participants, and themes were identified (Glesne, 2006; Richards, 2003). Student responses were organized into eight categories with multiple subcategories under each category. When placing data under certain categories and subcategories, it was compared, contrasted, coded, and then filed. Glaser and Strauss (1999) call this the constant comparison method of qualitative analysis. Using analytic induction, data were re-checked to see if the various cases were related and justified (Richards, 2003; Silverman, 2001). The researcher wanted to be certain that original claims made about the data were warranted. Credibility, a qualitative research term that is analogous to internal validity in quantitative research, was established through triangulation by analyzing questionnaire data from multiple participants from various levels of Spanish and comparing and contrasting it with the researcher's observational data and field notes (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2002). When students made comments about certain activities in the written

questionnaire, the researcher was able to consult observational data and field notes taken during classroom observations.

Limitations

By taking a qualitative approach to research, the author aimed to understand students' perceptions about their experiences with CLT as they participated in communicative activities during and post-EPD. Data collection for this study occurred in 2004, and due to personal circumstances, the student story could not be shared with readers until now. It is my hope that readers still find the students' experiences and voices valuable in pursuit of providing improved world language education for students. In order to make the qualitative analysis more manageable, only 28 of the 483 students who were present in teachers' classrooms during EPD participated in the two after-school meetings and answered the student questionnaire. Even though Raquel's students were asked to participate in after-school meetings, none were either willing or able to stay after school. Most of her students were ninth graders, while students who participated from Daniella, Sergio, and Sophia's classes were in grades 9-12.

The effects of EPD cannot be generalized beyond what the participants of the study experienced in the particular context of this study (Merriam, 2002). Individual and shared experiences that occurred during this EPD may or may not be replicated if implemented again with different teachers, students, and administrators in a different context, and by a different consultant-researcher. However, in the context where the author is now situated, which is more diverse demographically than the Mountain Valley area, the author believes that similar findings would result. The author strongly believes that professional development that catalyzes collaboration between teachers, students, and researchers allows for the possibility of more viable change in world language education.

Results

The most relevant findings from the student data were associated with students' definitions of communicative activities, their opinions about communicative activities, the types of communicative activities they enjoyed, and their thoughts about being included in EPD after-school meetings.

Describing Communicative Activities

Students were able to describe communicative activities in their student questionnaire responses more appropriately at the follow-up meeting during Week 9 than they had at the first EPD meeting during Week 3.

Early definitions and misconceptions. Students from Sergio's classes who participated in the first after-school EPD meeting were asked to describe communicative activities they enjoyed in their classes. Certain students accurately described communicative activities while others wrote about grammar-translation activities. Two students noted that they did not like any communicative activities,

while the rest of the students named activities such as the Fly Swatter Game, the Shouting Game, Bingo, Battleship, "the A and B person thing."

Students believed that certain translation games were communicative in nature. One student identified the Fly Swatter Game as communicative, "The one [where] we go up to the board with fly swatters. Mr. S says a word in English, then we have to hit the [Spanish] word with the fly swatter." Another student believed the Shouting Game was communicative:

> The Shouting Game. It is where the teacher gives us cards with our vocab words. Then he gives a random number to everyone on the same team. Then he will call out the English word and we have to hold up the card with the right Spanish word and then pronounce the word correctly before the other team.

Certain students, however, were able to identify communicative activities correctly, making reference to doing dialogues, noting they were interesting. One student described an information-gap activity, explaining it as the "A and B person thing" and that "each person has a different paper, either A or B and you ask things according to those papers."

Subsequent definitions. At the follow-up meeting during Week 9, Sophia and Daniella's students explained communicative activities more intuitively than Sergio's students had during Week 3. The most salient category in the data involved students noting that communicative activities involved oral communication in Spanish. They believed talking, speaking, and/or conversation was involved with students interacting, negotiating, expressing, interpreting language, and asking questions. Many students mentioned communication was all in Spanish, with students talking to one another and sometimes the teacher. Students wrote: "One where you try to get someone else to understand an idea you have, in this case, by using Spanish."… "Learning by getting everyone in the class involved into something different that will help the thing that we are taught stick into our brains."… "Speaking Spanish with other students to help learn the language." Students understood that the activities were student-centered and that there was an exchange of information or ideas taking place in Spanish.

Students' Opinions About Communicative Activities

Data from the student questionnaires, observations, field notes, and researcher's journal showed students were positive about communicative activities they experienced during EPD and post-EPD (three weeks immediately following EPD, and then 23-25 weeks after EPD had ended), with only certain complaints.

Positive sentiments. Students felt they learned Spanish as a result of engaging in communicative activities because they were asked to speak in the target language, which they enjoyed. One student commented about the French communicative lesson he experienced at the first after-school meeting, "I found it easy to learn the language when only the language was spoken. It made me think about what [she] was saying, and that made it stick in my mind." Students at the follow-up after-school meeting noted they liked being able to have conversations in Spanish with

their peers where they were asked to negotiate, express, and interpret language. Some students from both meetings believed they learned certain forms and vocabulary, and "to speak it correctly if not better" as a result of participating in communicative activities.

During Week 8 of EPD, Sophia's Spanish I classes experienced "Immersion Day" where the students and teacher only communicated in Spanish during the entire class. After class, Sophia interviewed her students about their feelings about the class and she informed the researcher-consultant:

After speaking to several students, they reflected that speaking only in Spanish wasn't too difficult, and that doing activities they already were familiar with made it easier. One student liked that I called on individual students to make sure everyone was not only speaking with a partner but in front of the class. Two girls I surveyed stated that the "immersion" experience is not that hard, but people don't want to put forth the effort for the class. They also told me that it was neat to have me stay in Spanish for the entire class period. Another student said, "It gets easier and easier to do these lessons."

Post-EPD, 24 weeks after EPD had ended, Sophia's Spanish II students were observed participating in an *encuesta*, during which students interviewed one another about what they did outside of school. Before students began the activity, Sophia chose two student "experts" who had been in her Spanish I class the previous year to help her lead the activity. She discussed certain strategies students could use when they did not know words. Sophia told students they would lose points if they spoke English. Students who had been in her class the year before suggested to the class that if they did not know or understand a word, they could spell it, use gestures, or act it out. After the activity, Sophia continued speaking Spanish and asked students how they liked the activity. One student remarked, "*divertido*" (It was fun). She asked in English what they thought was the hardest part of the activity, and a student said, "staying in Spanish." Sophia praised this particular student for drawing in order to communicate at one point during the activity.

In the student questionnaire data, students expressed that by participating in communicative activities, they became more confident in their ability to speak Spanish, which lowered their stress level about being asked to use it in the classroom. One of Daniella's students from the follow-up after-school meeting commented, "I like the ability to speak with other people at my level in Spanish. It keeps things interesting and it is generally students' weakest area. It builds confidence." Another one of her students wrote, "It is easier to express yourself when you do it with other people, and in a fun environment."

Students' criticisms. The most salient category related to dislikes about communicative activities that emerged from the various data sources was the fact that some students felt frustrated because of their lack of Spanish vocabulary. During Week 4, Spanish II students told Sophia during a debrief session that communicative activities could be frustrating. They also said they wished the directions were in English, they needed to use their bodies more, it was hard to ask

questions, they had to pay attention, and that they needed more time to complete the activities because "we get going and have to leave."

One of Sophia's students wrote in the questionnaire after the follow-up after-school meeting: "It is very hard when you don't know a word in Spanish not to go back to English." A few students from both meetings described their dislike about not being able to use English and expressed how it was difficult to understand peers at times. Students also mentioned that communicative activities were hard or difficult, with one admitting, "They are often harder than worksheets or book work. Especially, at first, it is quite hard to catch on to what someone says in Spanish than read it."

Communicative Activities Students Enjoyed or Would Enjoy

Students were prompted in the student questionnaire to discuss communicative activities they had enjoyed in class or thought they would enjoy. After experiencing the communicative French lesson at the first EPD meeting, Sergio's students noted they would enjoy doing more conversational Spanish activities. They wanted to experience more activities like the ones they participated in during the French lesson at the first EPD meeting. Students had learned to introduce themselves to one another, to ask other students for their phone numbers, and then they attempted to answer a few written questions about getting around Montpellier, France by using three different bus schedules. Students mentioned, "More games and interactive conversationalist activities. Things like applying what we heard."… "Maybe not everyday, but once a week we speak only Spanish. I think that it would be good. It might be hard to reinforce but it would be helpful."… "Group conversations, more common language use, conversational Spanish."

After the follow-up EPD meeting, students listed that they would enjoy games, interviewing, and on-line chat the most often. One student remarked, "I like doing the computer activity where we talk and the activity that we did after that activity where we all talked and got to ask questions of each other verbally (in Español of course)." A smaller number of students liked doing skits and participating in Sophia's Immersion Day. One student noted, "The "all Spanish" day. It's when no English was to be spoken and it was frustrating at the time because I didn't know everything that I wanted to, but it was fun." One student emphasized that she liked anything that was hands-on because she did "much better interacting with others."

Inclusion in EPD meetings

Students appreciated being included in teacher professional development activities. While some students wrote in their questionnaire that they felt fine and comfortable, several others were happy to share their feedback about their perspectives and experiences with communicative activities. They believed that the meetings were valuable learning experiences for themselves and their teachers. Students wrote: "It was a great time to give feedback to teachers about how to make foreign language instruction interesting."… "I felt pretty good being able to work with Spanish and help out teachers for a good cause and helping the Spanish

teaching system develop." Students found the meetings fun, cool, and interesting. Only one student who participated in the follow-up meeting during Week 9 expressed dislike because "We had to stay after school."

Discussion

In order to understand secondary learners' perspectives about CLT and EPD, this study investigated the following research questions: 1) How did students describe communicative activities? 2) What did students think about communicative activities? 3) What communicative activities did students enjoy? 4) How did students react to participating in EPD meetings?

At the first after-school meeting, most of the students defined communicative activities inaccurately, describing situations where they had translated words into English-Spanish or Spanish-English during games. At the follow-up meeting during Week 9, after students had experienced training in CLT for several weeks in their teachers' classrooms, they were able to explain that a communicative activity involved negotiation of meaning, expression, and interpreting, and they understood the need to speak in Spanish (Long, 2000; Pica, 2002). They also emphasized in their responses that socialization was necessary with most communication occurring student to student, but also could involve interaction with the teacher (Pica, 2002; Shrum & Glisan, 2010).

Even though these secondary students expressed dislike about avoiding English during communicative activities because of their lack of Spanish vocabulary as Viakinnou-Brinson et al. (2012) had found with college-level French learners, they understood the importance of maximizing their Spanish use and showed it was possible in the classroom. Several times during and post-EPD, Sophia, in particular, engaged in debrief sessions or "strategy talks" with her students in order to prepare them for her expectations of behavior during communicative activities and to get feedback about how they were feeling after implementing them (Burke, 2010, p. 52; Ceo-DiFrancesco, 2013). As Brown (2009), Levine (2011), and Viakinnou-Brinson et al. (2012) advocated, by training students during class and at after-school EPD meetings to understand the benefits of CLT, they comprehended why they were being asked to engage in communicative activities during lessons. Students realized, although it sometimes could be frustrating and challenging, it was important to develop strategic competence early in order to be able to communicate in Spanish (Burke, 2006, 2010; Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980; Savignon, 1997). Similar to what Turnbull (2001) had concluded, and what Levine (2003) had found, many students believed communicative activities improved their confidence in speaking Spanish and lowered their stress level for using it. Students became users of the target language by interviewing classmates, playing games, and through technology integration (Moeller & Roberts, 2013).

Students appreciated that their voices were heard and valued by the researcher and their teachers at EPD meetings. By asking students to participate in these meetings, teachers were able to help students develop metacognitive, cognitive,

and coping strategies, and think about what it meant to be effective language learners (Ceo-DiFrancesco, 2013). Students could be risk-takers and felt safe while learning how to function in a communicative classroom (Moeller & Roberts, 2013).

Conclusion

Several researchers have recommended that language educators be realistic about their approach to teaching world language and continue to use a multilingual approach and allow for multiple codes to be heard in classrooms (Antón & DiCamilla, 1998; Brooks & Donato, 1994; Cook, 2001; Levine, 2003, 2011). This is necessary at the *beginning* of introductory language courses. Students may need to use some English during the first few weeks, and teachers can conduct strategy talks, debrief sessions, and other process-orientated discussions about CLT and second language acquisition in English the first quarter or semester of the introductory language course. When implementing communicative activities and using other communicative methods, teachers can ask students to reflect on questions such as, "Were you speaking the target language all the time? What would help you speak more often in the target language? How did you do during the lesson/activity? What was the level of difficulty? Why is it important to use the target language in class? How did you communicate to your partner when you did not know a word or an expression?" Teachers need to hear students' voices and engage them in dialogue about effective world language pedagogy and basic second language acquisition theory, and this may need to occur in English at the beginning of the language learning process.

However, eventually, world language teachers must ask students to stop using English, or their first language, and challenge themselves, use what they know and what they are learning in the target language, on a more consistent basis. If elementary, secondary, and post-secondary students are to develop higher levels of proficiency while learning in classrooms, they need to be required to *use* it. As Savignon found with college-level learners over 40 years ago, the secondary students in this study showed that they *can* be trained to understand CLT methods, and they *valued* the benefits of being asked to maximize their use of the target language. Instead of promoting the use of English in world language classrooms, researchers should work more closely *with* teachers and students so more students can become proficient in world languages. Some teachers may have enough training, and confidence, to be full-fledged CLT teachers, and use immersion, contextualized lessons, student-centered instruction, implicit grammar teaching, and integrate of culture during content-based instruction. Many trained teachers, however, have not. In order to move the profession forward and create contexts where students develop their proficiency at higher levels, researchers, teachers, and students need to work together. Researchers and consultants need to support teachers in their classrooms. Teachers and researchers need to ask students what they think about CLT and not just make assumptions about what they feel or think. All also need to be realistic about expectations as change takes time, and if

we really want more CLT teachers, all levels of instructors and researchers need to help teachers understand, create, implement, and reflect on communicative methods one step at a time, and with their students.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, translators and interpreters are expected to be two of the fastest growing occupations in the U.S. between 2010-2020 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). Being bilingual—fluent in more than one language—is now one of the most valuable skills for students to graduate with from high school or college. The U.S. Army, New York Police Department, Fortune 500 companies, hospitals, courts, and schools "can't get enough workers with this job skill" (Kurtz, 2013, para. 1). If students are going to become bilingual, then, in world language classrooms, they need to be required by teachers to negotiate, express, and interpret the world language consistently in a variety of ways. If a 14 year-old girl is working to become an Olympic swimmer, her coach is not going to spend most of her training time having her play soccer or basketball. The coach is going to have her swim. It seems simple, students who wish to learn Spanish need to speak Spanish 90% or more of the time in their Spanish class. Allowing students to revert to English denies them the opportunity to develop their proficiency. Both students and teachers unquestionably have been, are, and will be, challenged by CLT, but if they rise to this challenge, and get support to do it, they will enjoy it and benefit from it.

Dedication and Acknowledgements

Note

For purposes of privacy, the names of the high school, teachers, and administrators have been changed. The information on the school district is not referenced also to protect the anonymity of the participants.

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Appendix A: EPD Timeline

<u>Date</u>	<u>Description of event</u>
Spring 2003	visited 8 MVHS world language teachers and met curriculum coordinator
Summer 2003	presented EPD to MVHS world language curriculum coordinator
November 19, 2003	4 MVHS Spanish teachers enrolled in EPD course and agreed to participate in study
January 24, 2004	**EPD course began**, breakfast meeting
January 26-February 13	**EPD (weeks 1-3)** researcher-consultant conducted observation visits and consultant meetings; teachers completed biographical questionnaire and pre-EPD questionnaire
February 11	first after-school EPD meeting, students completed questionnaire
February 16-20	**EPD (week 4)** researcher-consultant conducted observation visits and consultant meetings; teacher crew meetings began; teachers planned for implementation of communicative activities
February 23-March 26	**EPD (weeks 5-8)** teachers implemented, observed, reflected on communicative activities; researcher-consultant conducted observation visits and consultant meetings; teachers met in crews to plan and reflect on communicative activities
March 8-14	MVHS spring break
March 29-April 2	**EPD (week 9)** teachers implemented, observed, reflected on communicative activities; researcher-consultant conducted observation visits and consultant meetings; teachers met in crews to plan and reflect on communicative activities
March 31	follow-up after-school EPD meeting, students completed questionnaire

April 5-9	**EPD (week 10, final week)** researcher-consultant conducted observation visits and consultant meetings; fieldwork reports and final reflection papers submitted by teachers
April 9	**EPD course ended**
April 13-29	**EPD+1,2,3 post-EPD visits began** researcher-consultant conducted observation visits and consultant meetings
August 31	MVHS world language department meeting, discussed post-EPD visits with teachers
September 14-30	**EPD+23,24,25 post-EPD visits occurred** researcher-consultant conducted observation visits; teachers completed post-EPD questionnaire

Appendix B: Student Questionnaires

EPD Spring 2004 Student Questionnaire (February)

Thank you for participating in World Language EPD. So that I can learn more about your experience during today's activity and about your World Language learning experience in general, please answer the questions below. You may use additional sheets of paper if you would like. If you have any questions, you may contact me via e-mail or by phone XXX-XXXX. Please return the questionnaire to your World Language teacher by February 13, 2004. I appreciate your time and dedication to making EPD a success!

Your name: _____

Name of your WL Teacher: _____

Your year in school: _____

Your class/level: _____

Number of years you have studied the WL: _____

1. How did you feel about participating in professional development activities with the WL teachers?
2. Describe the activity you participated in today. What did you like or dislike about it?
3. How do you think you did when you communicated in French for the activity today?
4. What was positive about the experience?
5. What was frustrating about the experience?
6. Describe a communicative activity that you have enjoyed doing in your WL classroom this year.
7. Choose the approximate percentage of classroom time per week (total=

100%) that you participate in communicative activities like the one you participated in today.

    a. 0%   b. 25% c. 50% d. 75% e. 100% f. other: _____

8. Describe a communicative activity that you would enjoy doing in your WL classroom this year.
9. What is it about dialogues, skits, and conversation work in class that is valuable to you?
10. What do you dislike about communicative activities?
11. Do you have any questions at this time?

EPD Spring 2004 Student Questionnaire (March)

Thank you for participating in World Language (WL) EPD. So that I can learn more about your experience during today's activity and about your World Language learning experience in general, please answer the questions below. You may use additional sheets of paper if you would like. If you have any questions, you may contact me via e-mail or by phone XXX-XXXX. Please return the questionnaire to your World Language teacher by April 2, 2004. I appreciate your time and dedication to making EPD a success!

Your name: _____
Name of your WL Teacher: _____
Your year in school: _____
Your class/level: _____
Number of years you have studied the WL: _____

1. How did you feel about participating in professional development activities with the WL teachers?
2. Describe the activity you participated in today. What did you like or dislike about it?
3. How do you think you did when you communicated in Spanish for the activity today?
4. What was positive about the experience?
5. What was frustrating about the experience?
6. What is your definition of a *communicative activity* in the Spanish classroom?
7. Describe one or more communicative activities that you have enjoyed doing in your Spanish classroom this year.
8. Choose the approximate percentage of classroom time per week (total=100%) that you participate in communicative activities like the one you participated in today.

    a. 0%   b. 25% c. 50% d. 75% e. 100% f. other: _____

9. Choose **one** of the five circles that show the approximate percentage of time YOU use Spanish (for example, speaking or writing) during the activities that you mention in #8 (total=100%). a. 0%   b. 25% c. 50% d. 75% e. 100% f. other:_____

10. Describe a communicative activity that you would enjoy doing in your Spanish classroom this year.
11. What is it about dialogues, skits, Spanish chat, answering questionnaires, and conversation work in class that is valuable to you?
12. What do you dislike about communicative activities?
13. Do you have any questions at this time?

Appendix C: Observational Data Sheet

Teacher:_____Date:_____ Class:_____ #Of Students:_____

Time	Pattern of Interaction	Comments