Ideal Language Use in the Proficiency-Oriented Classroom

• Developed for the NRCAL Professional Development Webinar (May 27, 2015) by James Hussar, Associate Professor of Spanish and Portuguese, CSUF
Session Objectives

Participants will be able to:

**List** and **explain** the features of proficiency-oriented language instruction.

**Evaluate** strengths and weaknesses of their language textbooks and ancillary materials using criteria associated with ideal language use in the proficiency-oriented classroom.
What is Proficiency-Oriented Instruction?
Ideally, language use in a proficiency-oriented classroom...

- ...is contextualized.
- ...is authentic.
- ...moves from meaningful, structured (“monitored”) practice to more open-ended communication.
- ...is centered on a topic that is familiar and interesting to students, or is personalized.
- ...involves discourse beyond the sentence level.
- ...is “intersentential” (sentences in an activity are related, not isolated).
Unpacking Proficiency-Oriented Instruction
Alice Omaggio Hadley, *Teaching Language in Context*
Hypothesis 1. Opportunities must be provided for students to practice using language in a range of contexts likely to be encountered in the target culture.

Corollary 1. Students should be encouraged to express their own meaning as early as possible after productive skills have been introduced in the course of instruction.

Corollary 2. Opportunities must be provided for active communicative interaction among students.

Corollary 3. Creative language practice (as opposed to exclusively manipulative or convergent practice) must be encouraged in the proficiency-oriented classroom.

Corollary 4. Authentic language should be used in instruction wherever possible.
Hypothesis 2. Opportunities should be provided for students to practice carrying out a range of functions (tasks) likely to be necessary in dealing with others in the target culture.

Hypothesis 3. The development of accuracy should be encouraged in proficiency-oriented instruction. As learners produce language, various forms of instruction and evaluative feedback can be useful in facilitating the progression of their skills toward more precise and coherent language use.
Hypothesis 4. Instruction should be responsive to the affective as well as the cognitive needs of students, and their different personalities, preferences, and learning styles should be taken into account.

Hypothesis 5. Cultural understanding must be promoted in various ways so that students are sensitive to other cultures and are prepared to live more harmoniously in the target-language community.
Taking Stock
Textbook and Ancillary Materials Evaluation

• To what extent do your current textbook(s) and ancillary materials align with a proficiency-oriented approach to language instruction?

• Where must we compensate for shortcomings in the textbook(s) and ancillary materials?
Reports and Debriefing

- Summary of textbook/ancillary materials evaluation
- Do you have questions?
Teaching in the Target Language

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Participants will be able to:

Identify and describe strategies for delivering comprehensible input in the target language.
Do you know the answer?

- As per ACTFL recommendation, during what percentage of instructional time should instructors and students use the target language?
“ACTFL therefore recommends that language educators and their students use the target language as exclusively as possible (90% plus) at all levels of instruction during instructional time and, when feasible, beyond the classroom.”
Discussion

- How do you measure up with regard to ACTFL’s recommendation? What percentage of instructional time is conducted in the target language in your classroom?

- Is the 90% plus goal consistent with a proficiency-oriented approach to language instruction? Why/why not?
Brainstorm

- What strategies contribute to use of the target language in the classroom (by the instructor and students)?
Strategies: Comprehensible Input

- Know your audience!
- Provide a meaningful and purposeful context
- Modify/simplify language use (paraphrase, slow down, repeat, use familiar structures and key words, modulate tone and volume)
- Nonverbal communication (facial expressions, gestures, visuals, props)
- “Prime the pump” by assigning “pre” activities for homework prior to instruction (the “flipped” model)
- Check for comprehension frequently and in a variety of ways
Strategies: Student Use of Target Language

- Design communicative activities relevant to the students’ interests/lives
- Provide opportunities for students to communicate with a variety of classmates
- Reduce anxiety by implementing some small-group activities as well as whole-group activities
- Incentivize use of target language (participation grade, positive reinforcement, class goal)
Example: PORT 101, Day 1

SHOW ME, DON'T TELL ME

Meu nome é Paulo Pontes. Igualmente.
Como você se chama?

Muito prazer.

Luísa Marques.

O prazer é meu.
Dona Anabela, este é meu amigo Carlos.

Igualmente.

Muito prazer, Dona Anabela.
A Senhora é a Dona Manuela Silva?

Desculpe, Dona Laura.

Não, meu nome é Laura Costa.
Trabalho a pares

- Pergunte para o seu companheiro/a sua companheira qual é o seu nome.
Apresentações gravadas
Debriefing

- Do you have questions?
Challenge

• Outline a contextualized, comprehensible input segment in the target language based on a vocabulary/grammar lesson from a language textbook.