Validated Practices Project Narrative

This project took place Eastern Tech is a high performing magnet school located in Baltimore County Public Schools in Maryland. The school community is one of high achievement. According to *A World Report: US News*, Eastern Technical High School is ranked 8th within all Maryland public schools. Here, one rarely sees fights between students. Instead, students have school pride, strong work ethics, and respect for fellow students and teachers and the spaces that they are in.

The students that this project specifically focused on belonged to my 3A Spanish 3 section. These students are between 15 and 16 years old and are in either their freshman or sophomore year at Easter Technical High School. There are a total of 21 students in this class, nine female and eleven male. There is only one IEP in the class that calls for extended time and frequent check in’s. Racially, the 21 students in this class are divided as follows: 14 Caucasian, 5 African American, 1 Hispanic student (Costa Rican), and 1 Asian student. The average grade for males is a 78.5%, for females 78.3%, for African Americans 73.6%, for Caucasians 72.1%, for Asian 96% (one student) and for Hispanic 95% (one student). The average grade for this class (calculated by mean) is a 71.8%. There is an average .85 missing assignments in this class. Those who have missing assignments are encouraged to do the two offered re-do’s for that grading quarter.

I considered all of this information above and came to the conclusion that there are no significant differences in grades correlated with race or gender, so my instruction should parallel that conclusion. I also saw that the assignments that students were having the most difficulty with involved interpreting text in Spanish. In order for me to enhance that specific language skill, I knew that I needed to expose the students to more reading but to do so in a way that was still engaging and interesting for them. In the following sections, I will explain the lessons that I used to hone in on this interpretive reading skill while also keeping students engaged and feeling that every lesson was a new and interesting challenge.

**Objectives and Curriculum Goals:**

The standards that I work with in Spanish are ACTFL standards, but for this analysis I was focusing on one standard in particular: Interpretive Communication. As defined by ACTFL, Interpretive Communication is when *learners understand, interpret, and analyze what is heard, read, or viewed on a variety of topics.* Although confined to one explicit standard, this skill of interpreting a foreign language is extremely important and vital for language competency. As I mentioned in the previous section, my goal was to achieve a higher skill of interpreting written Spanish but in ways that were creative and interesting. In the objectives below, it is apparent that the goals of each lesson necessitate the successful interpretation of Spanish text, but it is not explicitly stated that the students are undergoing this specific skill development. Instead, they are focusing on the situation that I placed them in and the grammar and vocabulary involved. These objectives align with the foreign language curriculum at Eastern Technical High School because they cover the assigned grammar concept for that day. Each new concept either builds off of a previous concept or the lesson involves students interpreting/communicating using previous concepts as well as the ones that are in focus for a particular day. The grammar concepts are in bold below.

*Learning Objectives*

* Lesson 1: Students will be able to create and answer questions regarding a timeline of events in order to demonstrate an understanding of the **pluscuamperfecto** grammatical structure.

In this objective, students are learning the pluscuamperfecto verb form, but in order to create a timeline of events regarding the murder of Ozuna, they must interpret different stations where text explains the movements of the suspects in his murder and answer questions.

* Lesson 2: Students will be able to write a response letter after reading four letters that middle schoolers have sent in to Eastern Tech students in order to demonstrate an understanding of “**se pasiva**” grammatical structure and usage.

Students must interpret letters that are written in Spanish about problems that a middle schooler is having. In order to successfully write the letter and cater it to their middle schooler, students must understand the letter that they had received.

* Lesson 3: Students will be able to answer questions regarding three cultural events that are a part of March at Eastern Tech in order to demonstrate an understanding of **“lo” and “lo que” expressions**”.

Students must answer questions after interpreting three stations where text explains different cultural events that are going on at Eastern Tech.

**Assessment Plan:**

The pre-assessment involves reading a two page story in Spanish, appropriate for Spanish 3 learners and answering 20 questions involved with the reading, *El Eclipse*. The post-assessment is the same exact format with similar questions regarding reading comprehension and plot and using context clues to figure out unknown vocabulary but applied to a different story, *El Popol Vuh*. The only skill that is being assessed is interpretive communication for both assessments. Just like in my lesson plan objectives, students must be able to use the information gathered from Spanish text to answer questions.

For the first lesson I informally assessed students during the interpretive activity by checking to make sure they were on task, answering questions regarding specific vocabulary words or verb forms, and checking to make sure that students were answering the questions correctly. If they weren't, I would point them in the right direction but I would not outrightly tell them the answer. I used a formative assessment at the end of the class when they turned in their sentences regarding the timeline that they had made using information from the stations. For the second lesson I used informal assessment strategies while students were reading the letters. This came in the form of me making sure students were on task and me answering questions regarding specific vocabulary words or verb forms. The formative assessment came at the end when I collected the letters that they addressed to their middle school student. I checked for relevance to the original letter as well as correct usage of the Se Pasiva verb form. For the third lesson I made sure students were on task and completing the questions related to the stations. I would point students in the right direction if some aspect of the reading was being misinterpreted or if vocabulary or grammar was being misunderstood. At the end of the third lesson I formally assessed the students on their own “lo” and “lo que” sentences but this was unrelated to the actual interpretation of the readings.

My personal expectations for the pre-assessment was fairly low because I had never seen the students sit quietly and explicitly read and answer questions for 20 minutes. Also, during my observations of my mentor teacher it seemed that interpretive communication was not a focus and priority was given to presentational communication. Because of this I was fairly surprised at the pre-assessment grades, even though to a third party they would seem low. The class average for the pre-assessment was a 76.6%; the highest grade was achieved by the hispanic student (a native speaker) with a 100%, and the lowest grade was a 55% by a white male student. I mention white male only because I was informed by one of the guidance counselors during my child study that white males were the lowest achieving students at Eastern Technical High School. Because the native speaker got a 100% and a few of the regularly high performing students in the class got 80-90% on the pre-assessment, I knew that the reading was achievable and that the questions were in an appropriate range of difficulty.

I was originally going to do the post-assessment on a different story, *El Mundo Nuevo*, but upon looking at it again I realized that the language was more elevated than the pre-assessments *El Eclipse*. I was able to find a different story, *El Popol Vuh*, that had language similar to the pre-assessment story. I also wanted to focus more on the one white male student that performed the worst so I planned on asking him multiple times to come during Mav Time to work on Spanish readings. None of these offers were taken up.

**Instruction:**

Lesson 1:

This lesson was the second day of teaching the pluscuamperfecto verb form, this is a part of Unit 4: *El Arte y la Música*. The lesson opens up with a drill in which students fill in sentences with the correct conjugated form of the pluscuamperfecto. After the drill, students do their verb of the day in which one student comes to the front of the room and conjugates a verb in all of the forms that we have learned up until this point in the year. The verb that day was *ensayar*. After completing the verb of the day, students participate in a two minute, informal communicative activity in which they ask and answer the question *“What had you done when you finished school yesterday?”* in Spanish. After these daily routines are done, the first part of the lesson involved students responding with a *yes* or a *no* to various scenarios on different powerpoint slides, all of which is practice understanding the pluscuamperfecto verb form. This specific activity appealed to those students who need to move around since answering in the affirmative required students to sit in the seats while answering in the negative required students to change seats with someone and sit on the new desk. After this activity, students read a small amount of text (two paragraphs) regarding the serial killer Andrew Cunanan and they must put in correct order statements from an interview between Andrew Cunanan and Detective Fernando. All statements involve the pluscuamperfecto verb form. Next, students will be told that the Baltimore Police Department thinks that they are ready to solve a real crime, the murder of Ozuna (a popular reggaeton artist). There are three suspects and there are three stations around the room, each describing the movements of the suspects. This is the part of the lesson that heavily involves interpretive communication. Students must read these texts and answer questions about the provided about the suspects. After this is done, students must create a timeline of events for that evening, putting in perspective where different suspects were at different times, including the movements of the victim, Ozuna. Upon finishing their timeline, students must use information from the timeline and from the stations to create sentences using the pluscuamperfecto verb form.

Originally I had included an entirely additional activity that involved students taking on another hypothetical situation in which someone had stolen a piece of art from Eastern Tech, but I found that the activity was too difficult and complex for the second day of pluscuamperfecto. The activity was only included in the first period that the lesson was enacted but it was obvious that it was far above the language level of a Spanish 3 learner, so it was cut for the rest of the classes.

Lesson 2:

The second lesson was also in Unit 4: *El Arte y la Música*, but it dealt with the Se pasiva verb form. It started similarly to the first lesson: a drill about the pluscuamperfecto reviewing content learned from the previous lesson, the verb of the day (*disempeñar)*, and the informal communicative activity (*When you entered Eastern tech, were you scared?)*. After these items are completed, the first activity of the day was for students to quickly walk around the room and interpret various signs and simply copy down the sentence from the sign on a worksheet. After the sentences are copied, we go over what we found as a class, and I transition into instructing the explicit grammar necessary in order to be able to form sentences just like the ones they found on the signs. After they receive this instruction, students then practice with Se Pasiva sentences by answering questions from the powerpoint on whiteboards. After getting a better handle on the grammar and when to use it and how to use it, students get to create their own charades game by first making active sentences regarding ideal rules for their school. After making the active sentences on small piece of paper, they use those pieces of paper to play charades in their table groups. Once a sentence is guessed correctly, they, as a group, must change the active sentence to a Se pasiva sentence. This activity appeals to most students but it is specifically beneficial for the students who need an outlet to socialize while still using Spanish and the new grammar. Upon finishing the game, I will explain to the students that the principal of the school, Mrs. Anderson, need help responding to worrisome letters made by middle schoolers and addressed to Spanish 3 students. Students must first read the letters and afterwards they create a letter to one of the middle schoolers, addressing their worries using the Se Pasiva.

I made a few tweaks to this lesson for the various times that I taught it, all changes centering around interpreting the letters. At first it was individual and silent, but then I realized that it was an opportunity for students to speak to each other while still getting the information that they need. I changed that activity to interpersonal/interpretive, where students would read a letter out to their group and other students needed to listen to fill in blank spaces that they had on their paper. Only after everyone had shared their letter could students then more intently analyze one chosen letter to respond to. This took more time but it appealed to those who needed practice both speaking and orally interpreting.

Lesson 3:

The third lesson was in the following unit, *Mis Aspiraciones* but centered on Lo and Lo que expressions. This lesson, similar to the others, also started with a drill on writing sentences about a challenge that they had to face in the past, the verb of the day (*apoyar*), and the informal communicative activity (*What is your ideal lifestyle?*). Upon completing this portion of the lesson, students started out by walking around the room and, using their phones, they scanned different QR codes that led to YouTube videos of me speaking different sentences using the expressions that they were about to learn. Students merely had to copy down what they heard in the video. After students were exposed to the new expressions, I went over the QR sentences and explicitly explain the Lo and Lo que expressions on a notes sheet. After completing their note sheet, students are told that the month of March is cultural month at Eastern Tech and Spanish 3 students have been asked to plan the next cultural event. The only requirement for the event is that it must be about the positives and negatives of the school. They will now see the first three events that have already been planned in the form of stations and long texts. Each station has information regarding a cultural event and students must interpret the text and answer questions. Afterwards, students will take a few minutes to prepare 4 sentences (two positive, two negative) using Lo and Lo que expressions. After making the sentences, students will interpersonally speak to each other in the form of negation. If a student approaches and says a negative thing, the next student must respond by saying *NO!* and say a positive thing, or vise versa. Finally, students will be able to create their own cultural event (this is very appealing to students that thrive when given creative freedom over an assignment) using Lo and Lo que expressions.

The only adjustments that I had to make for this lesson dealt with the way that I modeled the interpersonal activity. It took a few sections for me to figure out exactly how I could model the activity with no confusion on the students end.

**Analysis, Reflection, and Self Evaluation**

I was at first very disappointed to see the mathematical calculations of the results, particularly the undeniable evidence that most students performed worse than they had on the pre-assessment. Upon analyzing the data spreadsheet, any third party not in my classroom could conclude that students had not met their learning objectives because they did indeed do worse. However, other factors must be taken into account. Only 6 of the 20 students that took the post assessment met the SLO objective of percentage improvement, while 14 of the students failed to meet the objective. Because such a large number of students did worse of the post-assessment in comparison to the pre-assessment, there must have been a factor that was able to influence many students as a collective. I believe that this factor was an unavoidable difference in assessment environment as well as assessment consequence. The pre-assessment was administered on an exam day, before students took their IPA. This means that the grade for the pre-assessment was a major grade, while the post assessment had no affiliation with an exam. Students came to class as if it were any other Spanish class, not an exam day. In addition, students could tell that the post-assessment could not be a major grade because it was not an exam, so the consequence of not paying attention or not focusing during the 20 minutes that it takes to complete the post-assessment was less.

I wish I could have the chance to elaborate on specific students and postulate as to why they individually may have gotten a worse grade but this is an impossible feat as the conditions between the two assessment were a factor with too much influence. I can only postulate as to why the 6 students were able to improve their scores: they are students who come to class everyday prepared and ready to focus and do well regardless of the weight of the grade or the seriousness of an exam environment.

In the future, I would do my best to ensure that both the pre-assessment and the post-assessment take place under the same exact conditions, or more realistically conditions that are as similar as possible. Only then would I be able to truly tell if my students had truly met/failed the learning objective. I could schedule both to be on exam days or schedule both to be weighted as minors. I would also like to more explicitly improve this specific skill of learning comprehension over a longer period of time. Although many of my lessons include small texts that the students have to interpret, more time and slowly increasing the length of text would allow me to push the students in the specific direction that I want: being able to read a two page text and answer questions accurately.