

FLORIDA FOREIGN

# LANGUAGE

JOURNAL

ISSUE 12 Number 1, FALL, 2016

## EXCLUSIVE

Interview with  
Dr. Betty Green,  
retired FFLJ  
Editor

## 2016 CONFERENCE

Michelle Olah & the  
Importance of TELL

A Publication of the Florida Foreign Language Association, Inc.

## FFLJ 2016

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The FFLJ is a publication of the Florida Foreign Language Association

ISBN: 1550-2988

## FFLJ 2016

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## FFLJ 2016

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### President's Corner

“Teacher Effectiveness for Language Learning: Learn, Grow, Inspire” is more than just the title of our 2016 Florida Foreign Language Association conference. To me it is also a personal mission statement. My mission as a teacher is to learn and grow in my knowledge and understanding of what is effective language learning and teaching. This knowledge and understanding inspires growth in myself, my students and my colleagues. Conferences like the FFLA, SCOLT, and ACTFL offer unique opportunities to accomplish all three of these goals! They provide a chance to learn new skills and practices, grow current practices, and find and give

inspiration. In the pursuit of professional growth this year I encourage you to explore The Teacher Effectiveness for Language Learning (TELL) Project. It is a valuable tool for growth and self-reflection. The mission of TELL Project is to “define what effective language teachers do and facilitate their growth to prepare for, advance and support language learning.” The TELL Framework consists of 7 domains that address how teachers **prepare for, support, and advance** student learning. These domains are focused on the following questions for self-reflection and professional growth.

1. How is a safe and supportive learning environment created to prepare students for learning?
2. How does your planning of learning experience prepare for student learning?
3. How are meaningful learning experiences provided so that student learning is advanced?
4. How do you and your students use performance and feedback to advance student learning?
5. How does one capitalize on a variety of learning tools to maximize student learning?
6. How does your collaboration with stakeholders support student learning?
7. How does your continued growth as a professional support student learning?

By examining my practice through the lens of these questions, I have been able to focus my professional learning experiences on the areas I have self-identified as my professional development goals. It is by focusing on my growth goals that I increase my effectiveness as a teacher. This in turn increases my students’ proficiency in the language and culture they are learning. As you continue on your professional journey this year, I want to challenge you to continue **LEARNING, GROWING** and **INSPIRING!** Whether it is through conferences, webinars, or journals and publications like this one; it is through self-reflection and deliberate practice that we continue to grow our effectiveness as world language teachers.

Source: The TELL Project [www.tellproject.org](http://www.tellproject.org)

Michelle Olah  
 FFLA President  
 2015-2016

## FFLJ 2016

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### Editor's Commentary

This is my first year to head the editorship of the Florida Foreign Language Journal. I am honored to be taking over the helm of this peer-reviewed journal from my wonderful colleague and predecessor Dr. Betty Green who served as Editor for 10 years and was on the editorial board for 20 years. Dr. Green was kind enough to share her thoughts about the growth of the FFLJ and transformations she has seen in our profession over these past 20 years. The transcript of

this interview is happily shared on page 7 with you all.

In this issue we have two very timely articles. The first, by Elena Vogel on the importance of input-based activities and how they can be implemented in the Spanish classroom, and the second, by Douglas Adams on using a discourse-based approach to teach verb tense and aspect. I say timely, because the introduction of the new Florida Standards requires teachers to explicitly integrate language structure and grammar into content-based subject areas. Of course as foreign language teachers, we are intimately familiar with notions of teaching grammar explicitly as well as implicitly. What Vogel's and Adam's research contributions do is to help explore further the right pedagogical conditions under which to instruct students in grammar and language structure.

In her article, entitled *FL Instruction that makes a difference: using meaningful input-based activities in the Spanish classroom*, Vogel investigates how and when input-based activities can be used to teach *par* and *para*. First, she unpacks what input is and provides a solid historical research account of input studies in second language acquisition. Ultimately, her study shows the differences between input flood (IF) and textual enhancement (TE) and the instructional activities suitable for the teaching of *par* and *para*.

In his article, entitled *The Big Picture: A Systematic Approach to Teaching Verb Tenses*, Adams details a discourse-based method for teaching the English tense/aspect system based on the concepts in the Bull Framework. Accordingly, Adams provides recommendations for teachers to think about when helping students with this aspect of grammar.

Lastly, the 2016 Florida Foreign Language Association teacher of the year is spotlighted. I am very proud to introduce you all to Dr. Deborah Horzen who is a German teacher in the IB program at Cypress Creek High School but also an Assistant Editor for the FFLJ.

Now in October, we have our annual state conference in Orlando. I hope to see you there. For now, let me leave you with this thought: you are an amazing group of teachers and you do amazing work! Why not detail here in your very own professional journal. I look forward to receiving manuscripts from you to place in the next issue of the FFLJ.

sincerely,

Tony Erben, Ph.D.  
(Managing Editor)

## FFLJ 2016

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### **Mission Statement**

The Florida Foreign Language Journal is the official academic organ of the Florida Foreign Language Association. Its objective is to serve as a vehicle for expression by teachers, students and the greater general public who have an interest in furthering the instruction and knowledge of foreign languages. The journal seeks articles, reviews, notes and comments concerning any aspect of foreign language acquisition. The era where educational funding is often limited, where foreign, immigrant, and migrant students seek instructional equity, and where a greater number of students are desirous of learning a foreign language, it seems imperative to have such a journal. The journal reaches out especially to those already teaching a foreign language as well as those who are preparing for such a career. The demands on teachers are overwhelming today. There is a plethora of methodological approaches, technical apparatuses, and multi-faceted textbooks available, amidst a variety of instructions with diverse milieus and attitudes toward foreign language instruction. Such an environment creates a daunting challenge to practitioners of foreign language instruction. The goal of FFLJ is a modest one; it is to serve as a sounding board and a reference point for those who teach and learn foreign languages. It is hoped that the journal will help foreign language enthusiasts and professionals form a community that shares its concerns, discoveries, and successes of issue in the foreign language domain. It is further hoped that our voices will become more numerous and ring more loudly as we proceed through what promises to be a century of challenge and opportunity for foreign languages. Our emphasis will be fostering better learning conditions and results for our students and teachers. FFLJ urges all readers and participants to become ardent advocates to further and safeguard foreign language practices.

# An Interview With Dr. Betty Green

## Former Editor of FFLJ



Dr. Betty Green has served the Florida Foreign Language Association for more than two decades and within those 20 years she has served on the Board of our association in numerous

positions; the last 10 being the editor of the FFLJ. When I was President of FFLA in 2003/04, I remember Dr. Green has a hardworking colleague who was always prepared to help where and whenever necessary. I am honored to take over from her and am equally excited to have asked her thoughts on the following:

### **What is your current position?**

I am Professor at the College of Education at Daytona State, in Volusia County -ESOL, Reading and Teaching Principles.

### **How long have you been involved in FFLA?**

I have been a member since 1991, and on the FFLA board from the mid-nineties in several positions until 2015, when you took over as editor.

### **How long were you editor of FFLJ?**

I replaced Jane Govoni as editor in 2006, but was on the editorial board since the beginning of the journal's existence.

### **Over the years you presided over FFLJ as the Editor, what do you perceive as the**

### **major changes that FFLA has gone through?**

There have been frequent leadership changes (a new president each year), which I find is detrimental to good organization. I believe that Sunshine State TESOL's organization is a better way to have continuity. They have a 2nd Vice-President, 1st Vice-President, President and Past President set-up which provides leadership continuity over a four year period. But that is just my personal opinion. FFLA is a good solid organization, and under the leadership of some strong past presidents, it has flourished and has become the well-organized association we know today. We all can be proud of FFLA.

### **While you were Editor, what do you think were the major changes in our profession?**

There have been quite a number of changes in the foreign language (Modern Languages) field since I became the supervisor for Foreign Languages and ESOL in my school district back in 1991. It was very sad to see school districts cut down on foreign language programs, eliminating foreign languages at the elementary school level (the most important time to introduce a foreign language to students in my opinion), eliminating languages other than Spanish from middle schools, and cutting down on the classic languages like Latin, Greek and Hebrew. Some good news, though, is that some of the less-commonly taught languages like Chinese, Japanese and Arabic are becoming very popular nowadays. I do think this trend will help American students become more competitive as they enter into jobs that necessitate knowing languages and cultures of

global community businesses.

**You must have read many articles as Editor.....do any stand out in your mind?**

I particularly enjoyed reading articles on action research dealing with language and cultural instructional activities that could be used in any language taught in our schools in Florida.

**For you as Editor, what types of articles did you like to read most?**

I like to read about applied linguistics; applied linguistics is an area I am very interested in, and have been since childhood. IN those days it wasn't referred to as Applied Linguistics. I just didn't know then what terminology was used for this discipline. As a child at school in Denmark, we read a great deal about Otto Jespersen, a Danish linguist and a prolific writer on the English language. Many of our texts were written by him. As I began to learn English, I was never afraid of making a fool of myself by mispronouncing words, and I guess this is why I became quite good at learning languages. I am sure this is one of the biggest deterrents for our students in the United States; they are often afraid of speaking because of fear of making mistakes, and grammar translation methods are not enough to become proficient in any language.

**For new teachers coming into our profession, what would be some sound advice you would give them?**

Learn to use technology to your advantage when you teach languages. Older teachers, like me, are not as adept in the use of technology. But, in today's world it cannot be avoided. Teachers must have these skills in any discipline. Young people today have grown up with social media and teachers must follow by being able to use these social media tools in their instruction. In addition, use the target language for 80 percent of the time in

class. Conversation is important, and not everyone wants to be a linguistic scholar like Norm Chomsky or Steven Pinker; two people I admire a great deal from their linguistic writings. Even they advocate for the use of and benefit to second language acquisition of speaking.

**Lastly, what advice would you give any foreign language teacher hoping to get involved in FFLA?**

I am a firm believer in service to organizations such as FFLA and SSTESOL. Each content area has its own professional organization and it is very important for new teachers to seek out these organizations and become active in them. Our own FFLA has many affiliate organizations: one for each of the languages (Spanish, French, German, Chinese, Japanese, Latin ASL etc) as well as for each level these languages are taught at (from early childhood - NNELL to College - FWLCU). Joining these organizations brings huge satisfaction. It allows the new teacher to gain a deeper knowledge in the field one teaches. It also lets one network and find new friends from other school districts.

Professionally, it is, in my opinion, important to be a member of the organization of one's chosen discipline because membership offers benefits beyond measure. New members means new blood for an organization and new ideas to the organization. This also keeps an organization from stagnating; in other words it keeps an organization from developing a fixed mindset. FFLA has a growth mindset and it continually infuses new life and ideas into itself as an organization.

## FL Instruction that makes a difference: using meaningful input-based activities in the Spanish classroom

Elena Vogel

Doctoral Candidate in Spanish Linguistics at Florida State University

### ABSTRACT

This article proposes the use of meaningful input-based activities to support the teaching and learning of the prepositions *por* and *para* in the Spanish classroom. Based on the notion that acquisition cannot happen if comprehension does not occur (Krashen, 1989); input processing (IP) makes a strong theoretical argument that supports input-based pedagogical interventions over traditional instructional methods (VanPatten, 2002). Moreover, evidence-based studies (VanPatten & Cadierno, 1993; VanPatten & Oikkenon, 1996) have demonstrated the benefits of structured input activities over traditional instructional activities. For this reason, the purpose of the current discussion is to explore how meaningful input-based activities can be implemented in the Spanish classroom. More specifically, this paper provides foreign language educators and researchers with meaningful input-based instructional activities that are suitable for the acquisition of the prepositions *por* and *para*. Second, this paper indicates *how* and *when* these instructional materials can be used effectively in the Spanish classroom.

### What is input?

To begin, *input* is defined as the language data that learners are exposed to through reading or listening. Many researchers have demonstrated that input is the most important factor in the acquisition of a second language (VanPatten & Leese, 2006; Gass, 1997; Krashen, 1989). Children naturally learn and understand their native language by being exposed to input in their daily interactions. Similarly, adult second language (L2) learners need to hear and see language in a communicative context so that they can process the input for meaning. Furthermore, according to Krashen (1989), adults are only able to acquire the target language once they understand language through *comprehensible input*, which is a type of input that is made easy to understand or easy to process.

### What makes input comprehensible and meaningful?

There are many ways to make the input comprehensible for L2 learners. For example, the input can be manipulated in a way that is more simplified for the L2 learner. In addition, the input should highlight the communicative

function of the grammar. By emphasizing the communicative function of the grammar, the L2 learner can more easily make connections between the form and the meaning of the input. VanPatten (2007) proposed that L2 learners are first and foremost driven to process meaning during comprehension. In other words, L2 learners process the meaning and content before they process the grammatical form in the input. Given that L2 comprehension is effortful and because L2 learners have a limited working memory capacity, it is difficult for L2 learners to focus on both the meaning and the grammatical form simultaneously. Therefore, L2 learners tend to rely on content words or lexical items instead of redundant grammatical features such tense. In the following sentence, the lexical items stand out, whereas the grammatical forms can easily be forgotten or passed over:

(1) The woman walked to the bakery yesterday.

In sentence (1), the grammatical form that marks the past tense is the *-ed* verbal inflection. Most likely, this past tense marker will be overlooked because of the lexical form

*yesterday*. By taking away the lexical item *yesterday*, the L2 learner can more readily focus on the *communicative value* of the verbal inflection. The communicative value is the meaning that a form contributes to the overall sentence (VanPatten, 2002). Forms that have a high communicative value possess two features: [+ semantic value] and [- redundancy]. By boosting the communicative value of the grammatical form, L2 processing becomes less taxing on the working memory of the L2 learner.

During an activity that is input-based, L2 learners should not be pushed to produce the target language before they are ready. In other words, L2 learners need sufficient time to process the input before they can be expected to produce the target language. Instead of being asked to produce the target grammatical form prematurely, learners should be pushed to deeply process the grammatical form in question. In some cases, as with structured input (SI), the input is manipulated to push learners to become dependent on the communicative value of the form.

Additionally, SI activities are known to improve the way that learners process the input by avoiding the L2 learners' negative processing strategies (VanPatten, 2004). In other words, SI activities can help learners to develop an appropriate target-language specific processing strategy, thereby addressing a specific processing problem.

The example from sentence (1) addressed a particular processing problem, known as the *Lexical Preference Principle*, in which learners rely exclusively on lexical forms without processing grammatical markers in the input. In addition to the *Lexical Preference Principle*, there are many other negative processing strategies that learners use, as they process the L2 input. In order to verify the validity of these negative processing strategies, several studies have investigated

the effectiveness of structured input activities, using the Processing Instruction model as their framework. These studies found that Processing Instruction (PI) is more effective than Traditional Instruction (TI) at the morphological and syntactic levels, especially in regards to communicatively redundant morphosyntax and verbal inflections (VanPatten & Cadierno, 1993; VanPatten & Fernández, 2004; VanPatten & Sanz, 1995). However, in regards to prepositions, research is still needed to better understand how and why L2 learners struggle to process *por* and *para*.

### **What are the factors that influence the acquisition of the prepositions *por* and *para*?**

So far, there are no known processing strategies that L2 learners follow as they process the prepositions *por* and *para*. Moreover, the input processing principles that have been laid out by VanPatten's input processing theory do not account for the acquisition of the prepositions *por* and *para* by native speakers of English who are studying Spanish. Nevertheless, these prepositions are late acquired among L2 learners of Spanish (Gunterman, 1992; Mumin, 2011). So the question remains: Why are these prepositions so difficult to acquire for native speakers of English who are learning Spanish?

One factor is that there is L1 English interference due to the preposition *for*, which is often confused as a literal equivalent to the L2 Spanish forms of *por* and *para* (Mumin, 2011). A second factor is that English translations are hindering the natural acquisition process of the prepositions *por* and *para*. For example, *para* is often translated to English as: *in order to*, *by*, and *to*, and *por* is translated as: *because of*, *through*, and *in* (Mumin, 2011). Regrettably, in some contexts, these translations are not appropriate.

Additionally, these translation ‘equivalents’ have resulted in an ineffective teaching methodology which relies on teachers asking students to memorize long lists of translations. A third factor which contributes to L2 learners’ difficulty when acquiring these prepositions is the nature in which *por* and *para* are presented in current Spanish language textbooks. In current Spanish language textbooks *por* and *para* are presented in opposition with 14 individual functions that are often covered in one class period (Pinto & Rex, 2006). This type of hurried and superficial instruction leads to a cognitive overload for the learner. An excess of explicit instruction on the 14 uses of *por* and *para* does not provide students with the necessary time that is required to process these different uses. Instead, students should be afforded the opportunity to attend to one particular function of one of the prepositions one at a time. In other words, it is a futile effort to expect students to move on towards a second or third function of a given preposition before they have acquired the first function of that particular preposition.

Although these problems have been identified, the fields of linguistics and language teaching have not yet developed an effective teaching methodology, which would allow learners to acquire these prepositions more easily. In addition, despite learner difficulties with *por* and *para*, these prepositions are not addressed properly in current teaching textbooks. As it was mentioned previously, the most common pedagogical approach to the prepositions *por* and *para* is to ask students to memorize each use individually. Typically, *por* and *para* are presented as opposite parts of a single paradigm, similarly to the ways that *ser* vs. *estar* are covered in a given Spanish textbook, presenting situations in which one form or the other is used.

This tradition of organizing Spanish grammar

to present items in contrast (*ser* vs. *estar*, preterit vs. imperfect, subjunctive vs. indicative, *saber* vs. *conocer*) is common and generally makes sense given the nature of these contrasts. However, in regards to *por* and *para*, such a contrast does not reflect the reality of how these two prepositions occur in natural discourse. As Pinto and Rex (2006) point out, in order to present two grammatical points contrastively, one must assume that if it is not appropriate to use one, then it will be appropriate to use the other.

The traditional approach of having students learn a list of uses for each preposition is inadequate, as it has been demonstrated by the difficulties that learners have with these prepositions. One reason for such inferior instructional interventions can be attributed to the difficulty that arises when teaching and explaining these prepositions. Oftentimes, when teachers attempt to explain a preposition, they end up using another preposition to define the meaning of the preposition in question. Consequently, the definition and meaning that is provided to the student are often vague and do not result in a clear understanding for the student. In this case, the L2 learner is unable to make a connection between the meaning and the form when these explanations are unclear. Crucially, form-meaning connections are a vital component of the language acquisition process as it is this initial encoding that allows L2 learners to more deeply comprehend the communicative value of a given grammatical form. When a student makes a form-meaning connection, it can more reliably result in *intake*—the part of the input that stays in the stores of long-term memory. Intake is the input that is comprehended and that impacts the learners’ developing linguistic system. Bear in mind, not all input is comprehended. Thus, the next section of this paper focuses on ways to increase instances of intake when

teaching the prepositions *por* and *para*.

### **An alternative pedagogical treatment for the prepositions *por* and *para***

This section of the paper examines the effectiveness of an alternative teaching methodology, namely *input flood* (IF) and *textual enhancement* (TE) for the teaching and learning of the prepositions *por* and *para*.

Although SI activities are not the most appropriate activities for the acquisition of the prepositions *por* and *para* (due to the lack of a processing strategy for *por* and *para*), other meaningful input-based activities can be implemented instead.

Textual enhancement is one technique that can be used to improve meaningful input-based activities. TE is used to enhance the saliency of input in written or oral text. Additionally, textual enhancement aims to focus the L2 learners' attention on the target form, therefore facilitating the learners' ability to notice the target form (Sharwood-Smith, 1993; Schmidt, 2001). Schmidt (1995) stated that noticing of the new target form is necessary for second language acquisition. Therefore, TE is ineffective if the L2 learner does not notice the target form. Overall, TE is considered to be an implicit approach towards directing learners' attention to targeted forms, thereby facilitating form-meaning relationships (R. Ellis, 2008). The next three examples below demonstrate part of an activity, which shows how the current instructional materials utilize an input enhancement technique in the written input by **bolding** and underlining the target forms:

**Activity 1:** Read the following sentences carefully.



Yo soy inteligente **para** mi edad.



La asignación es **para** el 23 de septiembre.



El regalo viene **para** Juan **por** el correo.

Another technique that can be used in combination with TE is input flood. Input flood makes specific features of the target language more frequent. In order for input flood to be successful, the input a learner receives should be saturated with numerous examples of the target language. The expectation is that these frequent examples of the target form will aid in the learner noticing and then acquiring the target structure (Wong, 2005). Because of the *Noticing Hypothesis* (Schmidt, 1995, 2001) and the *Frequency Hypothesis* (Gass, 1997), researchers have investigated the extent to which IF is able to improve language learning. For instance, Doughty (1991) revealed that IF did have a positive effect on the acquisition of the target structures. According to Doughty (1991), by drawing students' attention to the target forms, their ability to use these forms improved significantly. Keeping these benefits in mind, the four examples below demonstrate part of an activity that uses input flooding to act as a means of exposing learners to the many instances of the target forms:

**Activity 2:** Read each sentence and decide

which you prefer.

1. Prefieres:
  - a. viajar **por** bicicleta
  - b. viajar **por** coche
  - c. viajar **por** tren
2. Prefieres:
  - a. leer **para** una clase
  - b. investigar **para** un proyecto
  - c. presentar **para** una conferencia
3. Prefieres:
  - a. perdonar a tu novio/a **por** cancelar una cita
  - b. perdonar a tu novio/a **por** llegar tarde
  - c. perdonar a tu novio/a **por** olvidar tu cumpleaños
4. Prefieres:
  - a. comunicar **por** teléfono
  - b. comunicar **por** un rato comunicar
  - c. comunicar **por** mucho tiempo

Once the L2 learners have had ample opportunities to process the input without being required to produce the target forms, subsequent activities can slowly integrate more occasions for the learner to produce the target form. Naturally, it is important to ease into these activities, introducing easy activities in the beginning and slowly working towards more difficult activities. In other words, the current activities gradually shift from purely input-based activities (as demonstrated in activities 1-2 above) towards what can be considered as majority input-oriented activities with minimal requests for output (production) of the target forms. In this way, instruction should largely consist of input-based activities for as long as possible, steadily integrating more chances for output as the L2 learners become developmentally ready to ‘show-off’ the knowledge that they gained from the input activities.

Just as input is considered to be an important

aspect of language learning, output is also an important component of language learning as students move past the initial stages of acquisition. Both input and output can effectively encourage grammatical development as long as form-meaning connections are being made (Toth, 2006). An example of how instruction can progressively move from input to output is demonstrated in the following activity below:

**Activity 3:** Indicate if the following sentences communicate destination or route by marking an **X** in the appropriate box.

	<i>Frases</i>	<i>Destino</i>	<i>Ruta</i>
1.	Vamos <b>para</b> Oz.		
2.	Tendríamos que ir <b>por</b> los Alpes.		
3.	Viajo <b>por</b> todos los océanos en mi submarino.		
4.	Sali <b>para</b> las Indias pero llegué a un territorio nuevo.		
5.	Siempre bajo <b>por</b> la chimenea.		

The third input activity (shown above) was adapted from the textbook *¿Sabías qué...?* by VanPatten et al. (2008). In this third activity, the students are not yet asked to produce the target forms. Instead, for this activity the students simply need to indicate whether the sentence communicates a destination or a route.

The fourth activity, however, does require the learner to fill in the missing blank with the appropriate target form of *por* or *para*. This fourth activity still uses basic sentences and includes an image to accompany each sentence. In this way, the L2 learner gradually receives more difficult tasks from one activity to the next. Two examples from the fourth activity are provided below:

**Activity 4:** Look at the pictures and decide whether to use **por** or **para** in the sentences that appear below each picture.



Los ciclistas viajan \_\_\_\_\_ por bicicleta.



Mandamos mensajes  
\_\_\_\_\_ email.

The fifth activity is a fill-in-the-blank activity, in which the students are required to fill-in-the-blank with the missing prepositions (*por* and *para*). This fifth activity consists of four short paragraphs, which recounts the narrator's trip to Peru. The sixth activity then tests the students reading comprehension from Activity 5. For Activity 6, the students are presented with seven pictures, and they are asked to number the pictures in chronological order based on the story from Activity 5.

Next, Activities 7-9 are all fill-in-the-blank with the missing prepositions (*por* and *para*). Some of the activities are short dialogues and others are short stories with an average length of one paragraph per activity. Lastly, Activities 10-11 are also fill-in-the-blank with the missing prepositions (*por* and *para*). However, these last two activities ask the student to draw a comic strip based on the plot of the stories from Activities 10-11. Overall, Activities 7-11 require relatively little output by the learner, and Activities 1-6 require little to no output by the learner. Therefore, Activities 1-11 are considered to be mostly input-based, although they do include some output of the target forms (*por* and *para*).

### **How and when can these activities be integrated into the classroom?**

First, Activities 1-3 can be used to introduce the L2 learners to the prepositions *por* and *para*. Ideally, Activities 1-3 should be referred back to and consulted while students complete the remaining activities (Activities 4-11). After completing Activities 1-3, Activities 4-11 can be used to help students practice their *comprehension* of the prepositions, moving

from isolated sentences to stories-in-context. With the many examples of how these prepositions are used in various contexts (through input flood and input enhancement), there is no reason to resort to using the L1, translating, or explicit instruction.

The general goal is for these activities to allow students to make form-meaning connections for themselves through an *inductive approach*, which involves the L2 learners detecting, noticing, and discovering patterns of the various functions of *por* and *para*. The learner-centered nature of this inductive teaching method allows the learner to be more active and engaged in the learning process rather than simply being a passive recipient. As R. Ellis (2010) puts it “inductive instruction provides learners with the data and guidance that they need to derive their own understanding of the grammatical feature” (p. 4). Additionally, R. Ellis (2010) argues that an inductive approach prompts a deeper level of processing, resulting in the target structure being retained more effectively in memory. Ultimately, an inductive approach to language learning teaches the L2 learner to notice patterns in the target language, therefore developing his or her metalinguistic skills.

Aside from implementing an inductive approach with these activities, another major objective is for these activities to provide students with sufficient time to process the L2 input at their own pace without translating back and forth between Spanish and English. In order for these activities to be effective, it is highly recommended that the students are given ample time to work through all of these activities. The length of time that it takes to go through these activities will vary, but they should be spread across three days or three class periods at the very least.

As a follow-up activity, other prepositions and adverbs (i.e., *en*, *de*, *a*, *hacia*, *durante*) can and should be experimented with as well.

Crucially, many of these aforementioned prepositions and adverbs can be used as substitutes for *por* and *para*. However, learners have been known to incorrectly substitute some of these prepositions (Gunterman, 1992). Therefore, by including some of the other prepositions (besides *por* and *para*), Spanish instructors can help reconstruct and build on to the learners' current interlanguage systems. In addition, the teacher can clear up any misuse or misunderstanding of these other prepositions (i.e., through corrective feedback methods), given that all of these prepositions are likely to get confused with one another. As it has been demonstrated, learners' interlanguage systems are constantly changing as they develop their understanding of the target language grammar (Selinker, 1972). Given that L2 learners frequently experience restructuring of their L2 systems, it is important that students are exposed to other prepositions in conjunction with *por* and *para*, thereby illustrating the connections (or lack thereof) that can be drawn between all of the prepositions.

Regarding some of these other common prepositions and adverbs, there are many occasions in which native speakers prefer the use *en*, *de*, *a*, *hacia*, *durante* over the use of *por* or *para*. To address these native speaker preferences, as L2 learners develop their L2 systems, more authentic texts can be integrated into the L2 classroom to facilitate the learners' growing knowledge of how these prepositions can be used in context in a more native-like way.

Furthermore, by practicing with numerous different prepositions on various occasions throughout the academic year, students can re-visit the prepositions through structured activities. This extra practice will aid in clearing up confusion that they may have between the various forms and their meanings. Likewise, for L2 acquisition to take place, it

will be most beneficial to distribute the functions of each preposition across various class periods, particularly when the need for a certain function arises.

### Conclusion

The current paper has examined input flood (IF) and textual enhancement (TE) for the teaching and learning of the prepositions *por* and *para*. The eleven activities that have been discussed were specially designed to provide teachers and researchers with meaningful input-based activities that are characteristic of SLA (second language acquisition) research. Spanish instructors at the middle school, high school, and university levels can make use of these instructional materials. In addition, it is worth noting that the author of this paper has implemented these instructional materials in her classroom at the university level and they have produced positive results for her students' acquisition of *por* and *para*. In conclusion, although the practical application of linguistic theories is not always clear, it is my hope that this paper serves to make a connection between some of the current theories in SLA and how they can inform current pedagogical practices.

### Notes

1 If a copy of the instructional materials are desired, please email the author at [add email] and she will gladly send them to you.

2 All images were taken from Microsoft Word (see References for works cited).

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# The Big Picture: A Systematic Approach to Teaching Verb Tenses

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Embry-Riddle Language Institute

## ABSTRACT

Several researchers have argued that language is discourse and as such, that grammar functions within a discourse and should therefore be taught within a discourse context. This concept is not new; however, the vast majority of ESL instructors continue to teach grammar items at a sentence level. These non-discourse-based instructional methods fail to teach students how to use tense/aspectual forms in real world situations such as in authentic writing. This article details a discourse-based method for teaching the English tense/aspect system based on the concepts in the Bull Framework. This framework divides tenses into past, present, and future time with the tenses within each time period grouped into those actions occurring at a temporal point of reference, represented by the simple and continuous tenses, and those actions happening before that point in time, represented by the perfect and perfect continuous tenses. Recommendations for discourse-based practices also accompany this article.

## Introduction

Language is organized. This may seem like an obvious statement, but if it is in fact true, then why do we so often try to teach it as if it were a list of rules rather than an organized system with predictable patterns and forms that can be inferred by language learners. Of all the skills instructors try to teach their students, grammar is perhaps the one least often taught as an organized structure, yet grammar is most easy to understand and to teach when we look at it as a complete system taught within a discourse approach rather than a list of rules, and the verb tense/aspect system is no exception.

The idea of teaching grammar in discourse, such as a paragraph or larger context, is nothing new. In fact, textbook writers frequently will use a short reading passage to model the particular tense being taught. This is a step in the right direction, but when the time comes for students to produce that form, practice often takes the form of sentence-level fill-in-the-blank style exercises. That said, many grammar textbooks attempt to introduce an element of discourse through the use of cloze test exercises to practice grammatical forms within a context. However, even in texts where sentence-level instruction is joined with short, dialogue-style or cloze test practice

exercises, such dialogues are almost always contrived to model a single particular tense while failing to demonstrate how tenses/aspects interact and affect one another in genuine discourse.

Additionally, in such exercises the temporal context is often somewhat hard to clearly discern. The meaning of an entire section of a passage can be changed by a simple verb tense/aspect choice. Did event one happen before event two or did they occur simultaneously? It often proves difficult for teachers to justify the choice of one tense/aspect over another to their students in such situations since both choices may be grammatically correct depending on how the student interprets the context. To better illustrate this idea let us examine the following sample cloze test passages:

1. The audience in Dodger Stadium \_\_ (waited) \_ for almost thirty minutes when Micheal Jackson finally \_\_ (arrived) \_\_ on stage. Within seconds his band \_\_ (played) \_\_ some music and his brothers \_\_ (joined) \_\_ him.

2. The audience in Dodger Stadium \_\_ (had been waiting) \_ for almost thirty minutes when Micheal Jackson finally \_\_ (arrived) \_\_ on stage. Within seconds his band \_\_ (had played) \_\_ some music and his brothers \_\_ (had joined) \_\_ him.

(Celce-Murcia & Hilles, p.152)

Cloze tests exercises like the one above are confusing in that there is more than one temporal interpretation for the events in the passage. The very act of omitting the verbs, for the sake of practice, often removes the ability to interpret the author's intended time frame. Thus, cloze tests are probably not an optimal instructional instrument. It is arguably better to let the students set the context by writing their own passages (Celce-Murcia & Hilles, p.152-156).

What is needed is a systematic, more encompassing and user-friendly conception of verb tense/aspect within the framework of a discourse approach. Such a concept was suggested by Bull in 1960. The Bull Framework, as his concept has come to be known, was originally applied to the Spanish verb tense system, but is applicable to English as well. Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) provided such an adaptation of Bull's framework as it applies to English. What is unique or innovative about the Bull Framework is that, rather than place all tense and aspect along a single, continuous line, it establishes three separate time lines/axis-one for the past, the present, and the future. Within each time line there is a point of reference, an *at* point, where the action of the narrative or state of being is transpiring. Additional events and states are all related to this point of reference. They either happen *before*, *at* or *after* this point of reference in time (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, pp.162-163). Lyons (1995) conceptualizes tense/aspect and time in a similar way to Bull. He states that tense use is determined by context (based on events and the temporal relationships between events). Thus, the choice of tense/aspect is determined by the person's temporal point of reference...their *at* point (Lyons, p.315).

### **A Practical Instructional Method**

Although it holds potential for conceptualizing

verb usage patterns, the Bull Framework, is not so much a practical pedagogical method as it is a theoretical concept for thinking about the English verb tense/aspect system. As such it is somewhat confusing and inaccessible to many ESL/EFL teachers, and many books and teachers continue to present the verb tense/aspect system at the level of a series of decontextualized and contrived sentences or a couple of contrasting sentences lacking any larger discourse context. However, having done so, teachers frequently expect students to be able to use tense correctly in a variety of discourse contexts. In addition, instruction of these tenses is typically spread out in isolation over several chapters making it difficult for learners to see how they interact as a system. Such an approach often deprives learners of the necessary larger contextual clues with which to adequately determine the function of the forms under consideration. These are problems inherent in teaching tense/aspect outside of a discourse context and one that the approach and method proposed in this article seeks to remedy. It is the intention of this author to propose a practical, teacher and student-friendly method, adapted from the Bull Framework, which can be used to teach the English verb tense/aspect system in a discourse context.

### **A Look at the Big Picture**

There are essentially twelve active verb tenses in English; four past, four present, and four future and teaching them in this order works well. The good news is that because their forms follow an organized pattern, three of them can be expressed with just three basic formulas:

- **the continuous/progressive** = "be" + verb + ing
- **the perfect** = "have" + past participle[p.p.]
- **the perfect continuous/progressive** = "have" + been + verb + ing

where "be" means some form of the verb *be*, and "have" means some form of the verb *have*. It's worth noting that the only part of the basic formula for the continuous and perfect forms that changed from the basic pattern is the "be" and "have". The only exceptions to these forms are with the simple tenses which have some variations that can be shown to students. Instructors can organize their lesson on tenses into the past, present and future times, and present each group separately. Within each time group, they should write the formulas for the four tenses on the board for their students to memorize. Teachers can begin a detailed explanation of the tense system with the past tenses.

### The Past Tenses

Learning the formulas for the past tense verbs is only part of the story, and not the hardest part. The part that troubles students the most, and is the focus of this article, is when it comes to knowing how to use these tenses. Grammar doesn't happen in isolation and shouldn't be taught that way, so teachers can begin by presenting an example in context.

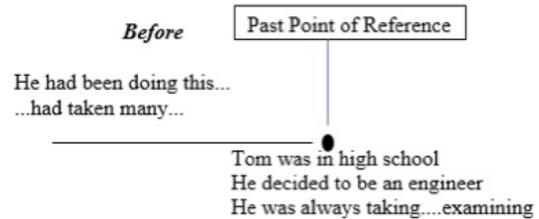
*When Tom was in high school, he decided to be an engineer, and he was always taking apart small machines and examining them. He had been doing this since he was a small child, and had taken many math and science courses since he started school.*

In this short example, each of the four past tenses appear in context, and can be identified by students. At this point it also becomes possible for teachers to ask their students to determine when each of these actions happened, and with his or her assistance, place them on a time line to better visualize their relationship to one another. We can use the *simple past* and *past continuous* tenses to discuss some actions that happened or were happening at some point in the past. In other words, these tenses place the action at some particular point of reference in the past, and show what things happened or were happening

at that point in time. For example, in Figure 1, at the point in time when Tom was in high school, two other actions were happening.

- He decided to be an engineer, and...
- He was always taking apart small machines and examining them.

Figure 1.



Returning to the sample paragraph, the teacher can also note that the past perfect and past perfect continuous are used to talk about things that happened or were happening *before* the simple past and past continuous actions. In fact, the *perfect* tenses can be thought of as the *before tenses* since they are always used for actions that happen before some past point of reference even if that point is merely implied and not directly stated. For example, in Figure 1 we can also see that Tom had taken many math and science courses *before* he decided to become an engineer, and that he also had been taking apart small machines and examining them for years *before* he decided to become an engineer.

### Past Tense Practice

Not every student will grasp the concept of the *before tenses* right off the bat, but with more examples and time to reflect, they will. If students are confused, teachers can work through another example paragraph; this time eliciting suggestions from students for continuing the story. Otherwise, students can practice this pattern by making short stories of their own using each of the four past tenses twice and diagramming them to check for accurate usage.

Essentially this pattern of the simple and continuous tenses establishing a point of

reference in time and the perfect and perfect continuous tenses describing actions happening before that point is repeated for all the tenses: past, present, and future. This pattern can be further illustrated for students with an examination of the present tense.

**The Present Tenses**

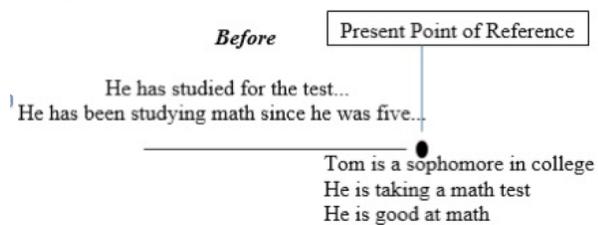
Like the past tenses, learning the formulas for the present tense verbs is just the first step for students. Using these tenses within a context is often more challenging, so teachers can introduce present tense usage with another example.

*Tom is a sophomore in college, and he is taking a test in math. He has studied for the test, so he should get an "A". He has been studying math since he was five, and is pretty good at it.*

In this short example, students can see each of the four present tenses in context, and can be asked to place them on a time line. Just as with the past, the *simple present* and *present continuous* tenses can be used to talk about some actions that happen or are happening at some point of reference in the present. For example, in Figure 2, at the point in time when Tom is a sophomore in college, two other actions are happening.

- He is taking a test in math, and...
- He is good at math.

Figure 2.



A quick look at our sample paragraph also shows that the present perfect and present perfect continuous tenses are used to talk about things that happened or were happening *before* the simple present and present continuous actions. In fact, just as in the past, we can think of the present *perfect* tenses as

the *before* tenses since they are always used for actions that happen before some present point of reference whether that point is directly stated or merely implied. For instance, in Figure 2 we can also see that Tom has studied for the test *before* he is taking it, and that he also has been studying math since he was five which also occurred *before* now even though it is still happening. Again, this pattern of the simple and continuous tenses establishing a point of reference in time and the perfect and perfect continuous tenses describing actions happening before that point holds true for the present tenses.

**Present Tense Practice**

As with the past, teachers can work through a second example paragraph if needed by eliciting suggestions from students for continuing the story. Otherwise, students can practice the present tenses by making short biographies about their classmates using each of the four present tenses at least twice and diagramming them to check for accurate usage. Then, as a review at the beginning of the next class, ask students to share their biographies without the names. It's often fun for the rest of the class to try and guess the identity of the person being described.

**How Do the Present and Past Tenses Overlap?**

Before delving into the future tenses, it's worthwhile at this point for teachers to take a closer look at how the present and past tenses relate to one another and show students another area of choice in the tense system. An examination of the use of the present perfect tenses revealed that they are used to discuss events that *happened* or *were happening* before the simple present and present continuous actions. As we know, the period of time this describes can also be represented by the simple past and past continuous tenses. Hence, a new element of choice is introduced.

For example, in our sample paragraph we can write *Tom has studied for the test* or make a new point of reference and write *Tom studied for the test* without making any real change to the meaning. Likewise, with the continuous tenses we can also write that *He has been studying math since he was five* or *He started studying math at the age of five, and is still studying it now* though the latter would be less efficient; hence the reason for choosing the present perfect continuous. Making choices, or judgement calls, is a part of using grammar in any language. This is a concept that most students readily grasp and appreciate.

### Present and Past Tenses Overlap Practice

To help their students practice the present and past tense overlap, teachers can begin a story in the past with a sentence containing the simple past and ask their students to continue the story in the past using all four past tense forms and finish the story in the present using all four present tense forms.

### The Future Tenses

Like the past and present tenses, learning the formulas for the future tense verbs is only the beginning. Students must learn how to use these tenses, and teachers can accomplish this with a final example.

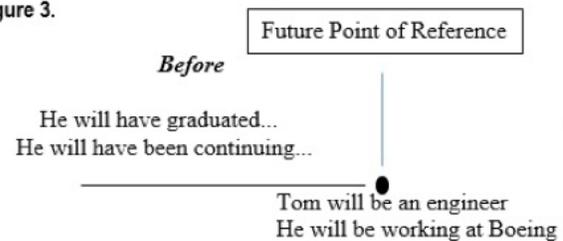
*Ten years from now, Tom will be an engineer, and he will be working for Boeing. He will have graduated from college and will have been continuing to study math.*

In this short example, teachers can present each of the four future tenses in context, can ask students to identify them, and when each of these actions will happen, placing them on a time line to see their relationship to one another. As with the other tenses, we can use the simple future and future continuous tenses to describe some actions that will happen or will be happening at some point in the future. For example, Figure 3 depicts that at a point in time ten years from now, two actions will be

happening.

- Tom will be an engineer, and...
- He will be working at Boeing.

Figure 3.



An examination of our sample paragraph also reveals that the future perfect and future perfect continuous tenses are used to cover events that will happen or will be happening *before* the simple future and future continuous actions. Tom will have graduated *before* he will be an engineer, and he also will have been continuing to study math *before* the point in time ten years from now. Although all the actions in our example will happen after now, the future perfect tenses are still the *before* tenses since they will happen *before* a future point in time.

### Future Tense Practice

Students can practice the future tenses by making short stories about what their own or a classmate's life will be like in ten years using the four future tenses and diagramming them to check for accurate usage.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, this pattern of the simple and continuous tenses establishing a point of reference in time and the perfect and perfect continuous tenses describing actions happening before that point is repeated for all the tenses (past, present, and future). Of course, teachers still need to show their students the negative and question forms for these tenses, but the basic pattern of usage remains the same, and helps students see the English tenses for what they are—an organized

system with predictable patterns that can be inferred and more easily understood and applied. (see Note)

### Note

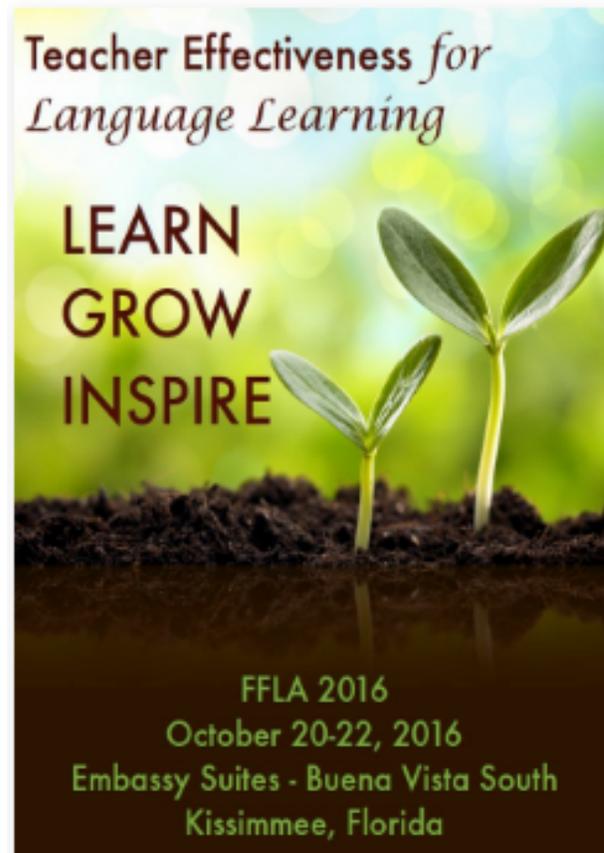
For a more detailed explanation, lesson plans and practices visit [teslimes.org/grammar/verbtense4.html](http://teslimes.org/grammar/verbtense4.html)

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# Words of Wisdom

## Dr. Deborah Horzen

### 2016 FFLA Teacher of the Year

I am in my fifth year of teaching at Cypress Creek High School in Orlando. CCHS is home to the largest German program in Florida, and one of only a handful of schools in the state to offer German Language B in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program. Prior to coming to Cypress Creek I taught at the University of Central Florida and Rollins College. I earned my MA and Ph.D. in German Language and Literature from the University of Florida, and as a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar did graduate work at the Westphalian Wilhelms University in Münster, Germany.

My most important language learning experience was Junior Year Abroad in Freiburg, Germany. I boarded the plane with a violin case (I was a music major) and exactly one semester of college German under my belt. I couldn't string a sentence together, and the idea of actually speaking to someone in German terrified me. I think about that year all the time when I am in the classroom. I know how challenging it is to sit in a student's seat.

As is the trend across Florida, most of my students are bilingual or heritage speakers of another language. German is their third - or even fourth - language. About half of our language learners are IB students, and all of our fourth year students sit for the IB exam in May, for which they receive college credit. Our program is booming, and this year we added a second full-time position to accommodate that growth. Our county also

went 1:1 digital this year. Instant access, virtual textbooks and online assessments have transformed what we do in the classroom, and finding what works is an ongoing project this year. Just like my students, I am constantly trying to differentiate between what is useful, what is entertaining, and what is simply a distraction. Our students need the skills to engage with, work in and navigate a global society. Our classrooms are key to the development of global mindedness, where they can explore, question and reflect not only on the target language and culture, but also on their own. My goal is to provide a supportive environment for students at all levels to



engage in relevant communication in the target language, for example by making cross-curricular connections and integrating STEM topics. For our 21st century language learners, communication skills and intercultural savyness will pave the way to academic and professional success.

Becoming proficient in another language requires an enormous investment of time and effort. The International Baccalaureate diploma requires - and dream colleges expect - four years of foreign language. My job is fairly straightforward: engage, make it relevant, move toward proficiency and inspire students to think globally about their academic and career paths.

## FFLJ 2016

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3. Be well written, clearly organized, and carefully proofed.
4. Include a complete reference list at the end.
5. Be formatted according to guidelines in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 5th Ed. (2001). [APA Style Resource](#).
6. Be no longer than 12-15 double-spaced pages in 12 pt. Times New Roman typeface, with 1½ inch margins, black text on white paper.
7. Be sent in triplicate (3 copies are necessary for review purposes).
8. Be submitted with no authors' names indicated (for review purposes).
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# NOTES

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## NOTES

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