

# Supporting and Encouraging Oral Language Production in Spanish Using the Neurolinguistic Approach

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# Welcome and Overview

1. Introduction
2. How do we learn additional languages?
3. Contexts for language learning
4. Overview of the Neurolinguistic Approach
5. Implementation of the approach in various contexts

Questions

# My background and journey as an educator

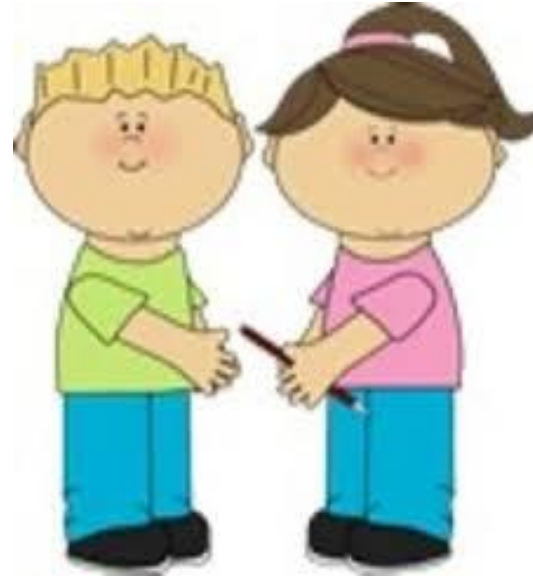
- ✓ Assistant Professor (Teaching) at Werklund School of Education
- ✓ Practicum supervisor for language teachers
- ✓ Former teacher of High School French and University-level French courses
- ✓ Award-winning professor
- ✓ Vice President of CASLT (Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers)
- ✓ Frequent presenter for Calgary Board of Education and other school boards, and at conferences



How do we  
learn  
language?

(a helpful model!)

Input → Interaction → Output



The pedagogical approach we use as a framework will depend on our context

## **Bilingual context:**

- Dual-language (Spanish and English)
- Immersion
- Target language is the medium for teaching content

## **Second Language:**

- The target language is a class in school schedule
- Varied exposure (time per class? number of classes per week?)
- Focus is on the language and not on content
- Language may be taught explicitly; themes may be used to frame delivery of language elements

# The benefits of Immersion and bilingual contexts, and of L2 contexts

- Students are surrounded by the language in an authentic classroom context
- Teachers do not teach the target language via English
- The content of the Curriculum provides a context for the language for Immersion and bilingual
- In Second Language contexts, we have the freedom to choose from a variety of pedagogical approaches.

**AND THE CHALLENGE:** how can we support the development of students' spontaneous oral language use in any of these contexts?

Won't my students learn the language if I just speak it all the time?

***NO !!! Osmosis*** is not a reliable approach!!

We need to employ a well-planned pedagogical approach to ensure that students' language grows in a meaningful way.



# What is the Neurolinguistic Approach?

The NLA is an approach for teaching and learning languages.

**Premise:** We can learn languages effectively by observing and repeating patterns in language and by making connections (especially if the language is modelled in meaningful contexts).

Repetition of language patterns is like digging a ditch in the brain (neural pathway) that becomes permanent and results in language habits.

**Goal:** to create in the classroom the conditions for supporting students to gain confidence in using the language with spontaneity.



A few words  
about  
*Intensive  
French* to  
understand  
the vision for  
classroom  
application of  
the NLA

- ✓ A highly successful classroom application of the principles of the NLA
- ✓ How does Intensive French work?
- ✓ What have we learned from the successes of IF?
- ✓ Can we apply these lessons to other contexts?



# PRINCIPLE 1

## IMPLICIT GRAMMAR

Learners need to acquire an INTERNAL GRAMMAR (non-conscious or IMPLICIT)

This means creating patterns in the students' brains, thanks to the **frequent use of a limited number of language structures.**

To construct these patterns, we need to establish links between the elements of a sentence – this means using complete sentences at all times.



# Fluency and accuracy from the beginning

Fluency and accuracy will develop **AT THE SAME TIME** as students are creating output. As the students create sentences, these sentences should be produced with **fluency** (little hesitation) and **accuracy** (minimum of errors).



## Pedagogical Consequences

Patterns are created by the frequent usage of a limited number of language structures.

This is why we must use and re-use a limited number of language structures in communication situations that are as authentic as possible.

We should correct errors as they occur in the oral phase, and have students repeat the complete utterance (this leads to accuracy).

FLUENCY WILL DEVELOP AS STUDENTS PRODUCE COMPLETE SENTENCES.

## PRINCIPLE 2: Project Pedagogy

*In order to develop an internal grammar (non-conscious), we need to concentrate on something besides the language, that is on the task.*

In Immersion or bilingual programs, for example, students concentrate on the content (math, science, social studies)

In Intensive French or in Second Language contexts, students concentrate on the project.





## PRINCIPLE 3: OPPORTUNITIES FOR ORAL INTERACTION among learners

To acquire an internal grammar (non-conscious), it is critical that we provide opportunities for oral interaction between the learners. These oral interactions permit the students to USE the language structures. Remember that, according to Vygotsky, social interactions contribute to the cognitive development of the learner.

## Pedagogical consequences

Create communication situations in the classroom that are as authentic as possible, and that resemble how the language is used in real life.

Ask authentic questions that demand authentic responses from the students to motivate them.



*And the result?*

The student is motivated because they want to transmit information about a theme that they find interesting, and with which they are engaged.



## PRINCIPLE 4

### Language is an ability



*We need to focus on the development of **literacy**, that is the capacity of the students to **USE** the language.*

**When we talk about literacy, we view language as an **ABILITY**.**

Literacy is not the transmission of knowledge **ABOUT** the language, nor should the language be seen as an object of study (**KNOWLEDGE**).



A few words about explicit grammar teaching . . .

What is the  
problem  
with the  
“old way”?

We don't talk in verb conjugations in real life!  
This is NOT “transfer-appropriate” language!

| THE VERB<br><b>SER</b> |                              |
|------------------------|------------------------------|
| YO<br>SOY              | NOSOTROS<br>SOMOS            |
| TÚ<br>ERES             | VOSOTROS<br>SOIS             |
| ÉL, ELLA, USTED<br>ES  | ELLOS, ELLAS, USTEDES<br>SON |

## A few words of reassurance !

The NLA is NOT a method that you **must** follow as presented – it is an approach that you can LAYER OVER your own teaching approach. Understand how it works and why, and then adapt it to your context in ways that will benefit your students. Remember that the goal is to enhance students' spontaneous language production.

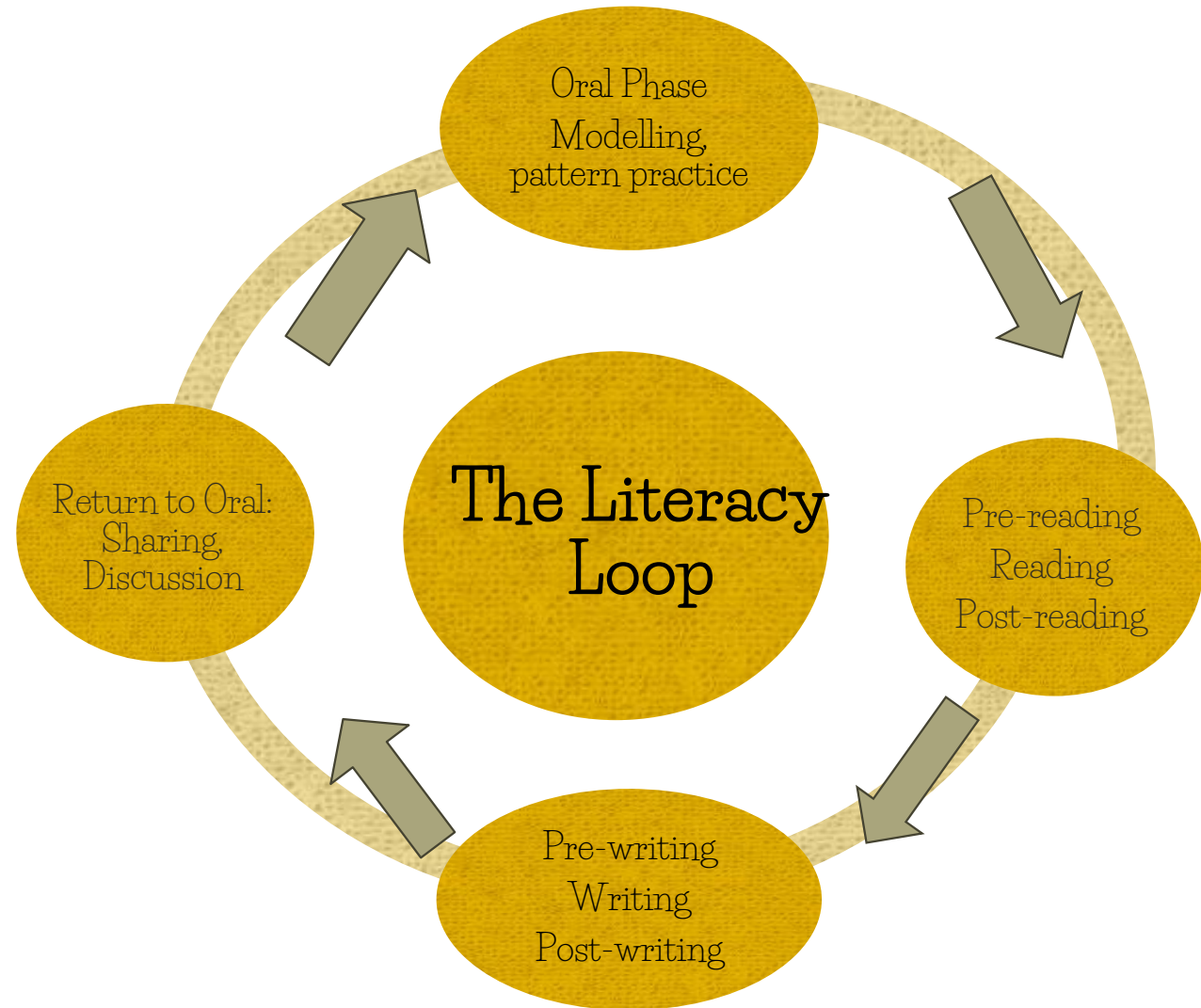


# What do these principles look like in the classroom?

- Teacher and students speak only in the target language
- Teacher and students speak only in complete sentences
- Correct errors in oral production as soon as they occur
- Frequent repetitions of questions and answer models
- Students may ask "*Cómo se dice?*" to get a word (not a sentence!)
- Give students as many opportunities as possible to practice oral language
- Create a positive, accepting atmosphere to alleviate student fear
- Backwards design: envision final product and build backwards to the very essential oral language that will be necessary
- Keep in mind that every sentence frame we present will become part of the students' repertoire and will expand their language bank

The Neurolinguistic Approach provides a way to develop literacy, starting with ORAL LANGUAGE

THE LITERACY LOOP is at the heart of this approach



# Developing literacy using the NLA

Literacy Loop:  
scaffolding language

**Model oral language:**  
guide students through a series of steps to create their own sentences – repeat the question and the modelled answer frequently

**Reinforce oral language using reading:** point out sound/letter correspondences, grammatical points that are salient visually

**Writing :** student can write using the language they can say orally – they know what it looks like because of they have read it (seen the words on the page/screen)



# Strategic use of Spanish in the classroom



|                 |                                                                                                |
|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Use             | Use Spanish as much as possible                                                                |
| Speak           | Speak authentically (speed, language choices)                                                  |
| Don't translate | Don't translate yourself! (sandwich method?)                                                   |
| Provide         | Provide sentence starters to students                                                          |
| Teach           | Teach strategies for effective communication (re-use parts of question in answer, for example) |

## ORAL: how do we approach the development of oral language?

Two possibilities depending on your context:

1. With beginners or with learners who have never had exposure to the target language: Follow the oral modeling sequence
2. For students who have had exposure to the language, either in the classroom, or if they are heritage speakers of the language: Use sentence frames, sentence starters to encourage well-structured, spontaneous and richer language

# Modelling ORAL language: the steps

1. Teacher models oral sentence – deliberately crafted sentences
2. Teacher asks individual students to respond
3. Teacher asks one student to ask another, several times
4. Two students stand to demonstrate the Q/A
5. Teacher asks students to turn to partner and ask Q
6. Teacher asks <sup>00</sup> who was partner, what did they say?
7. Repeat: ask another partner + repeat #6

# READING

1. Contextualization - re-use in discussion oral language that students have now
2. Predictions - discussion, teacher-led to push re-use of language
3. First reading: teacher reads story or passage without interruption, ask questions to verify comprehension, re-read story sentence by sentence (?) - students repeat chorally (?) , re-visit the predictions
4. Second reading: ask questions to review text, students read aloud in small groups, teacher shows one sound and how it's spelled, students find other examples in the text (Goal is to reinforce spelling to facilitate writing)
5. Third reading: ask questions to review text, students read story aloud individually, teacher highlights one language structure, discuss, students find other examples in text (carefully structured activity to reveal important grammatical points)

# WRITING

1. Contextualization – oral use of language that students will need to write
2. Model writing by writing a co-created text with the students – discuss what the story<sup>aa</sup> could<sup>vv</sup> look like, re-using the vocabulary they know from oral practice
3. Remind students of spelling, grammatical points that will arise
4. Ask several students how they will modify the whole class version of the story
5. Provide story starters
6. Students write individually: circulate to help, encourage them to write directly in TL based on what they can say orally, encourage accuracy in writing
7. Post-writing: share texts, discuss,<sup>aa</sup> publish<sup>vv</sup>

☆ Students with more developed oral language will write more elaborate texts

How do you plan  
for using the  
literacy loop?

Remember that  
oral precedes  
reading which  
precedes writing

Start by selecting a reading passage, short text or book that will inspire the oral phase.

Pull out the vocabulary or structures that students will need to master in order to read the text/book and/or to understand the language in the reading

Turn that language into a series of response/question pairs:

*"What can you see in your garden in the spring?"*

*"I can see ... in my garden in the spring."*

Use the oral modeling sequence so that all students can practice the model sentence and personalize it according to their own experience and interests.

Once students are comfortable using the oral language to discuss the theme, move to the reading phase – they will hear and see the passage and be able to identify sound/letter correspondences and grammatical points.

Then move to writing where students will be able to use the language that they can use ORALLY and that they have seen via READING to WRITE a meaningful and spontaneous piece.

For students  
who have  
already  
developed  
language, or  
for heritage  
speakers

For more advanced learners or  
heritage speakers:

- You will still provide an oral model but at a higher level.
- Provide sentence frames or sentence starters and encourage students to re-use them in their expression
- Encourage the use of the targeted vocabulary or grammatical structures that will support their language development and spontaneous language use.



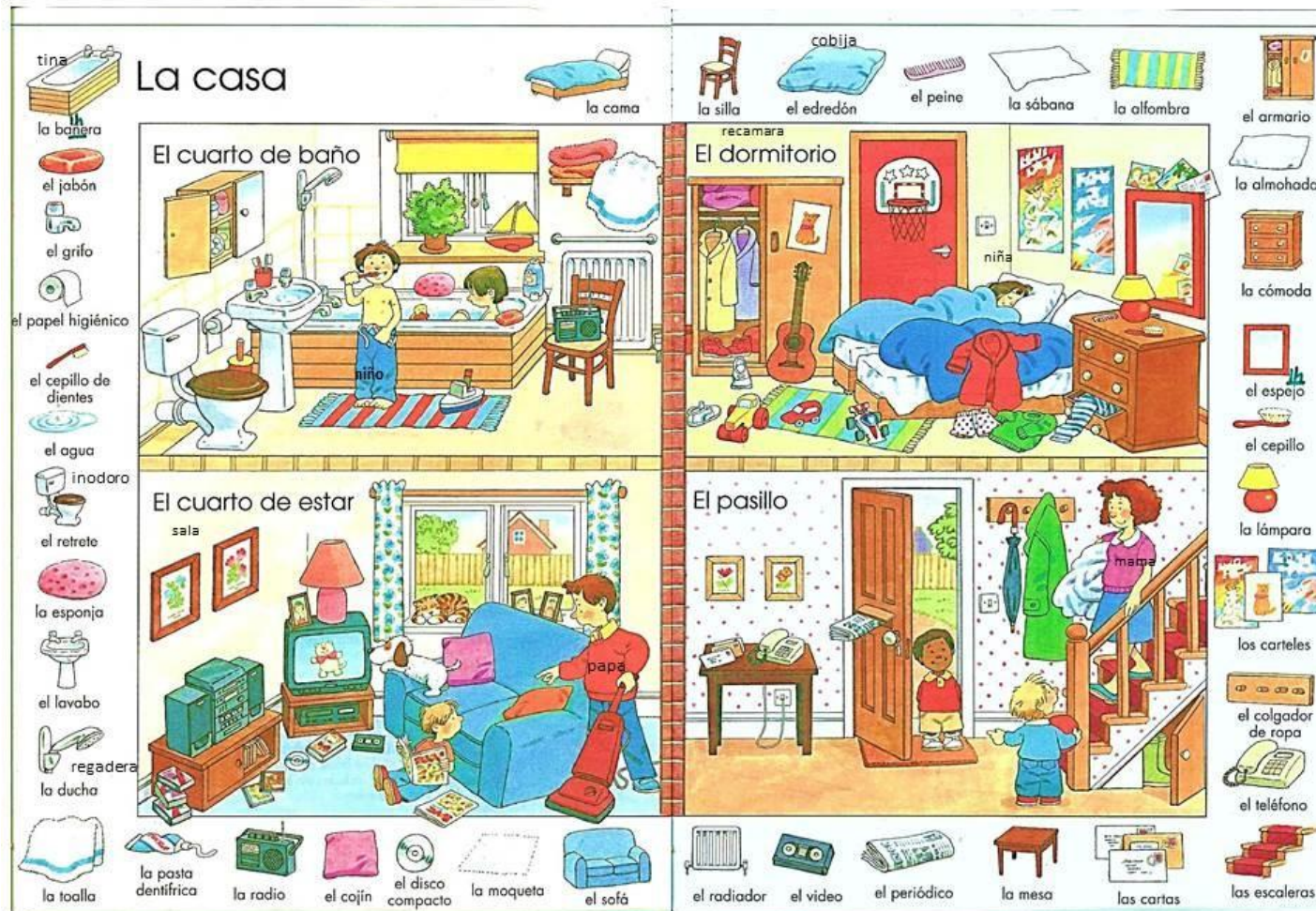
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Some great ideas and  
examples of how the NLA  
is being used in classrooms



# Example of adapting a very traditional tool to use NLA oral modelling

Credit: Sra Galiana Achang,  
Dalhousie School, Calgary



## PROCESS:

Teacher used traditional vocabulary picture to support her personal oral presentation (you could use photos of your own home to supplement): **her own experience was the model**

Use oral modelling protocol to ask students questions and then moved to having them question each other.

Question: ¿Cuáles son los muebles más importantes de el/la \_\_\_\_\_? (What are the most important pieces of furniture in \_\_\_\_\_?)

Answer: Los muebles más importantes de el/la \_\_\_\_\_ son ... (The most important pieces of furniture in \_\_\_\_\_ are...)

With a partner:

Question: ¿Cuáles son los muebles más importantes de tú \_\_\_\_\_?

Answer: Los muebles más importantes de mi \_\_\_\_\_ son ...

|              |                  |
|--------------|------------------|
| En la cocina | En el baño       |
| En la sala   | En la habitación |

An NLA  
moment in a  
French  
Immersion  
Grade 3/4 split  
class

(Spring Break was last week ....)

Pendant la pause du printemps, moi je suis allé ....

J'ai .... et j'ai .....

Et toi, qu'est-ce que tu as fait pendant la pause du printemps?

Moi je suis allé(e) ....

J'ai ... et j'ai ....

It's a small moment, but think what the students are taking away from this: passé compose with être, sentence structure for talking in the past

## How one FSL (Core French) teacher is using the NLA every day: mini literacy loops!

(credit: Erika Jarowicz)

- Class is 50 minutes – teaches Grade 6, 7, 8 at a TLC (Traditional Learning Centre) where all students must take FSL
- She starts with oral Q/A (where did questions come from? From the text she created for the reading step)
- Follows the typical Intensive French oral modelling sequence
- Once all students can manipulate the language as per the oral sequence, she moves to reading phase
- Projects text of 5 sentences on the screen – follows reading protocol of NLA – she reads once through, some choral repetition, pulls out sound/letter correspondences, then pulls out grammatical feature
- Students write their own short text of 3 or 4 sentences
- They read their text aloud or hand it in as an exit slip

If you don't  
have an  
appropriate  
reading  
passage,  
create a  
*Message of  
the Day*

- Re-use vocabulary presented orally
- Complete sentences
- Authentic, personal model of language use
- Use the message to indicate sound-letter correspondences
- Use the message to highlight grammar points (for example, how plurals work . . . patterns that will arise when students start to write)

Salut les amis,  
Ça va? J'espère que vous avez passé un bon weekend.  
Samedi j'ai assisté à un match de football américain. Malheureusement les Stampedeers ont perdu. Le score était de six à dix. J'aime regarder les sports avec mes amis. Je préfère regarder le football américain, mais ils aiment regarder la natation.  
Dimanche je suis restée au lit parce que j'avais une sciatique, alors j'ai regardé un film. 😊

# Using Chat GPT to create texts

Type in parameters according to your needs

1. Grade 1 level; (provincial) curriculum
2. Theme is what we see in the park, include the following vocabulary items: x, y, z
3. Write in the present tense with simple ER verbs

Further tweaks:

“Simplify .....”

“Make more complex sentences using conjunctions...”

Using NLA to  
support French  
Immersion or  
bilingual  
program math

Provide the language to help students discuss  
concept, puzzles, solutions, problems

Photo Credit: Beth Peddle (ACPI Conference Nov 2024)

# DANS CETTE PHOTO...

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Je vois, j'observe, je remarque, je trouve...

Pour trouver le total, j'ai fait ...

Si on enlève...

\_\_ % des macarons sont ...



## QUEL EST L'INTRUS?

Je crois que l'intrus est  
\_\_\_\_\_ car \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ n'appartient pas parce  
que...

\_\_\_\_\_ est différent parce  
que...

Gabarit pour en créer

9

16

25

43

## So what is the big goal?

- ✓ Reflect on what language the students will need to accomplish the task
- ✓ Frontload the necessary vocabulary
- ✓ Model the language you want the students to reproduce: sentence frames, sentence starters
- ✓ Ensure that you use that model frequently during the lesson and that students produce complete sentences using the modelled language



Ultimately – we want to expand students' language repertoire and give them language that they can re-use with confidence as their language learning progresses. Look for any opportunity to support students' oral language.

Enjoy  
experimenting  
with the NLA!

Gracias!

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