

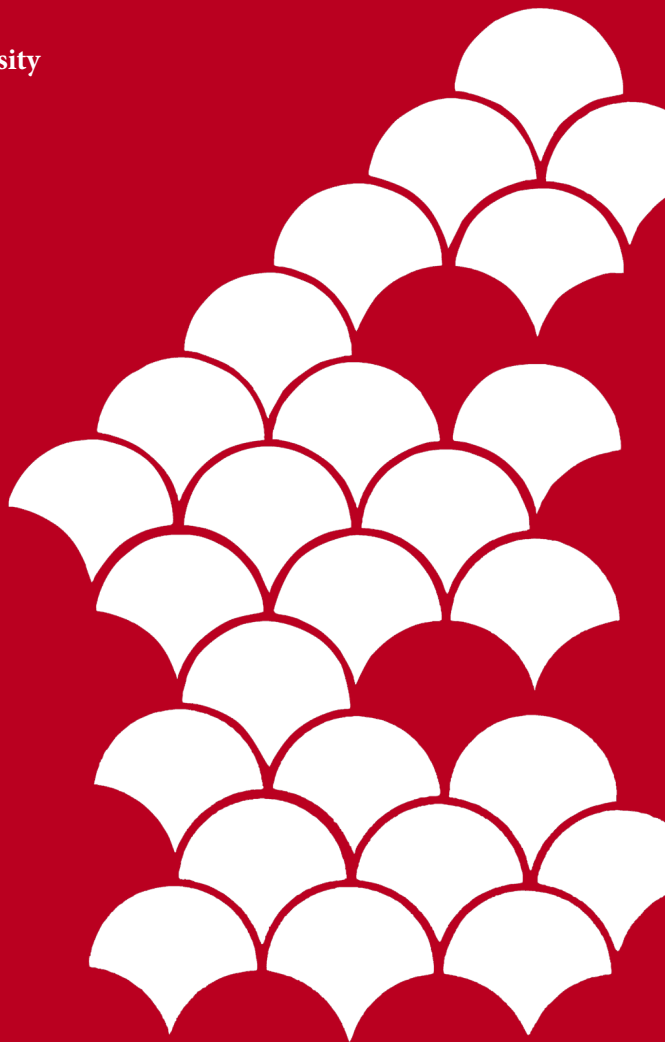
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Overcoming Skill-Specific Language Learning Anxiety: Research-Based Tools

Brian Olovson

Kennesaw State University

Madi Seigler

Kennesaw State University

Abstract

Over the past four decades, the variable of language anxiety in relation to second language acquisition has attracted the attention of second language researchers, teacher educators, and classroom practitioners. Gregersen and MacIntyre (2013) describe language anxiety as reflecting “the worry and negative emotional reaction when learning and using a second language and is especially relevant in a classroom where self-expression takes place” (p. 3). Research has explored how generalized language anxiety can manifest itself in world language classrooms, and consequently, how it can affect student learning and performance. However, emerging research suggests that language anxiety has distinct manifestations and features for each of the four skills specifically (i.e., reading, listening, reading, writing), and that it is more useful to consider them separately (Gkonou, Daubney, & Dewaele, 2017; Torres & Turner, 2016). Although these skills do not operate in isolation from one another, researchers have argued that a skill-specific approach is a more useful way of understanding classroom language anxiety, because each skill involves related and distinct anxiety factors (King & Smith, 2017). In this article, the authors explore the theoretical and empirical evidence to date related to skill-specific language anxiety across each of the four skills. Concrete pedagogical activities and interventions are discussed, through which teachers can apply research implications to their classroom contexts in order to help reduce students’ anxiety when communicating in the world language.

Keywords: skill-specific language anxiety, classroom language anxiety, instructional strategies

Introduction

World language study has become common in high schools, colleges, and universities across the U.S., as most have some type of language requirement either for college admission or graduation (American Councils for International Education, 2017; American Council of Trustees and Alumni, 2017). Moreover, the National K-12 Foreign Language Report estimates that over 10.6 million students in the formal education system (K-16) nationwide are enrolled in world language courses, so it is no surprise that a significant number of them face challenges, including dealing with language learning anxiety (American Councils for International Education, 2017). Language anxiety has been defined as “the worry and negative emotional reaction when learning and using a second language and is especially relevant in a classroom where self-expression takes place” (Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2013, p. 3). Understanding language anxiety is important for world language teachers because the Elementary and Secondary Education Act mandates that teachers must provide all students—regardless of the challenges they may have—with high-quality instruction designed to meet their individual needs (Hardy & Woodcock, 2014; United States Department of Education, 2008). Therefore, it is crucial for world language teachers to understand how anxiety may affect student learning and performance. As a result, world language teachers can design and apply appropriate pedagogical interventions to help reduce their students’ anxiety when communicating in the world language.

There has been “an intense growth” of language anxiety research over the past 40 years, making it one of the most studied variables related to individual differences and their influences on the learning process (Prior, 2019, p. 517). Early research on world language classroom anxiety specifically explored how generalized language anxiety can manifest itself in language courses and, consequently, how it may affect student learning outcomes. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) developed the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale, one of the first measures of generalized anxiety in the language classroom. Researchers still use this instrument to identify causes of generalized language anxiety and study their relationships with outcomes like course grades, self-perception, and self-concept. However, over time researchers have criticized findings based on the Horwitz et al. (1986), and other similar scales for their methodological limitations, particularly the largely quantitative approaches and the concept of language anxiety as a stable learner construct. They have argued there is a need for dynamic and creative approaches to language anxiety (Gkonou, Daubney, & Dewaele, 2017; Skehan, 1989).

Unlike the early language anxiety studies, which measured generalized anxiety, contemporary studies have “broadened and deepened considerably...and include new theoretical frameworks” (Bigelow, 2019, p. 515). For example, instead of conceptualizing language anxiety as a generalized phenomenon, emerging research has begun to show that language anxiety can be trait based, situation specific, unstable across time, and limited to specific language skills, but not others (Gkonou, et al., 2017; Torres & Turner, 2016). Although language skills (i.e., reading, listening, writing, speaking) do not operate in isolation from one another, researchers have argued that a skill-specific approach is a more useful way of understanding classroom language

anxiety, because each skill bears related and distinct anxiety factors (King & Smith, 2017; MacIntyre, 2017).

In this article, we explore the theoretical constructs and empirical evidence to date related to skill-specific language anxiety across each of the four skills for second language (L2) and world language learners. We provide concrete, researcher-based pedagogical activities and interventions, which align with the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) (2012a) *Performance descriptors for language learning*. Our activities can aid teachers as they work to apply research implications about language anxiety to their own classroom contexts in order to create more inclusive educational experiences in the process.

Literature review

In this section, we review research related to each of the skill-specific language anxiety constructs, including techniques identified by researchers for reducing anxiety for each skill. We also discuss how ACTFL recommended that world language educators move away from a focus on the four skills to a more integrated, proficiency-oriented approach that focuses on three modes of communication: interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational.

The writing anxiety construct

It seems that writing would be the least anxiety-provoking of the four skills, since according to Williams (2012), on a psycholinguistic level it has a slower pace than speaking or listening, leaves an enduring record that can encourage deeper cognitive processing, and provides a platform for learners to utilize their explicit knowledge while planning, monitoring, or reviewing what they have produced. Manchón and Williams (2016) suggest that it is precisely its slower pace that permits learners to reflect on the linguistic and cognitive demands of the task, plan how to meet those demands, draw on a larger number of knowledge sources when carrying out the task, and more closely monitor and edit the written language they produce as a consequence. Nonetheless, while research on world language writing anxiety is still in its infancy, and often relies on first language (L1) writing apprehension studies, writing anxiety clearly negatively affects learners' writing performance (Cheng, 2004; Cornwell & McKay, 1998, 2000; King & Smith, 2017, Leki, 1999; Pajares & Johnson, 1994; Torres & Turner, 2016). The small body of research focuses on sources of L2 writing anxiety, correlations between L2 writing anxiety and individual differences, and consequences of L2 writing anxiety in the classroom (Cheng, Horwitz, & Schallert, 1999; Cornwell and McKay, 2000; Daly & Miller, 1975, Leki, 1999). In terms of sources of L2 writing anxiety, studies indicate that the primary sources among language learners are related to individual variables such as low self-confidence in writing ability, the misconceptions learners have about the purposes of writing, adverse attitudes about writing in an L2, and the fear of being evaluated and judged as a person on the basis of writing tasks (Cheng et al., 1999; Cornwell & McKay, 2000; Daly & Miller, 1975, Leki, 1999). Writing anxiety also can be classroom-specific depending on the degree and type of preparation the writer has to complete a writing task successfully (Leki, 1999).

Negative correlations between L2 writing anxiety and individual differences and have been demonstrated in the literature. For example, several studies

have found motivation, self-perceptions of ability, proficiency level, and course performance to be the four factors with the highest degree of negative correlation with writing anxiety (Takahashi, 2004, 2010). Whereas some researchers (Ewald, 2007; Kitano, 2001) have found that students enrolled in advanced language courses tend to experience more anxiety than those at the beginning levels, Takahashi (2004) suggests that the general weakness in students' language skills in beginning-level courses often leads them to consider writing as "one of the most unpopular, disliked activities in the classroom" (p. 97). Students who are anxious about writing in their L2 take fewer risks in writing and write shorter compositions, which are less straightforward and have longer rambling sentences (Leki, 1999).

Scholarship in the area of L2 writing anxiety is informed by cognitive-rhetorical approaches in L1 composition, which involve the writing process itself (i.e., the cognitive construct) and developing an authorial voice (i.e., the rhetorical construct) (Cheng, 2004). Because the research shows that anxious students tend to focus more on their written products and less on their writing processes, teachers must employ strategies that target the writing process itself. Thus, this perspective involves engaging in all phases of the writing process in the L2 and learning how to use one's L2 to make meaning and create a purposeful authorial voice (Cheng, 2004).

The reading anxiety construct

Reading in the L2 may cause the least amount of anxiety for students of the four skills (King & Smith, 2017; Lee, 1999; Saito, Horwitz, & Garza, 1999). Reading is often a solitary activity, it does not require multiple speakers in order for a learner to make meaning from the input, and it is largely constructed of internal processing capacities unique to each learner (Lee, 1999; Saito et al., 1999). Researchers argue that L2 reading anxiety often manifests itself when learners are inexperienced with different writing systems and cultural materials, and unable to create a sound-symbol correspondence with unfamiliar scripts (Saito et al., 1999). Additionally, anxiety also tends to arise when learners cannot understand nuanced contextual clues present in translations, despite understanding individual words (King & Smith, 2017). Students may not understand contextual clues because they lack certain reading comprehension strategies in their L1 (Grabe, 2012).

The consequences of L2 reading anxiety in the learning processes and performance of students is concerning. Lee (1999) argues that elevated levels of L2 reading anxiety most negatively affect learners' processing capacity, which in turn can influence the way learners derive meaning from a text. Lee (1999) contends that L2 reading anxiety can result in several problems: (1) direct attentional capacity away from reading processes; (2) cause learners to slow down and apply reading processes such as letter or word recognition; and (3) influence readers' decision-making processes, such as decisions about meaning and strategy use. Consequently, when learners have less-than-normal processing capacity available to them, reading processes do not happen automatically or efficiently, which causes learners' comprehension to suffer and renders them unable to create coherent discourse models while they read (Lee, 1999). Furthermore, research

by MacIntyre and Gardner (1991, 1994) demonstrated that high levels of reading anxiety can impact learners' attention spans and reading processes negatively. They found that highly anxious readers process only a few letters at a time, which causes the reading process to be slow, inefficient, and labor intensive. In sum, high levels of L2 reading anxiety can create significant cognitive deficits among highly anxious L2 readers (Lee, 1999; MacIntyre, 1994; Saito et al., 1999)

Lee (1999) argues that teachers' and students' misconceptions about the reading process can lead to increased L2 reading anxiety. Three major misconceptions Lee (1999) found about L2 reading and teaching that tend to heighten anxiety, and thus may cause cognitive processing deficits are: (1) reading is a private act; (2) successful reading equals answering comprehension questions; and (3) reading is a linear process.

The listening anxiety construct

Research has shown that listening is the most frequent skill used in world language classrooms, and it contributes to academic success more than reading or aptitude (Conaway, 1982; Vogely, 1999). It serves as the primary medium through which students receive and process the input to which they are exposed (VanPatten, 2014). Anxiety about listening in an L2, therefore, can cause a breakdown in the learning process at the most fundamental levels (Vogley, 1999). For example, anxious listeners are less effective at processing input, retrieving information, and concentrating on the language they hear (Elkhafaifi, 2005; Kimura, 2008; King & Smith, 2017; Vogley, 1998, 1999). Vogley (1999) goes so far as to argue that "listening-comprehension anxiety can short-circuit the entire language learning process from processing input to producing output" (p. 107).

Researchers have identified several sources of L2 listening anxiety. Vogely (1998), for example, identified four principal sources: (1) the nature of speech samples (e.g., speed of speech, regional dialects, clarity of voice, enunciation, pronunciation); (2) inappropriate or inadequate strategy use while listening; (3) the level of difficulty of a particular listening activity; and (4) a general fear of failure on the part of the student. Similarly, researchers have found other sources of L2 listening anxiety related to learner characteristics specifically, such as emotionality (i.e., experiencing an emotional reaction while listening), confidence to perform adequately, worry about negative evaluation, and anticipatory fear of negative evaluations in the future (Kim, 2000; Kimura 2008, Saito et al., 1999). Interestingly, Kimura's (2008) participants only experienced listening anxiety, which led her to conclude that L2 listening anxiety is a separate phenomenon from generalized language anxiety, and that certain learners may be predisposed to experience only L2 listening anxiety.

Anxious students often find listening particularly challenging because the input may contain unknown vocabulary or syntactic structures. As Vogely (1999) points out, students often feel the solution to their listening difficulties involves slowing or simplifying speech in order to accommodate their proficiency level. However, research suggests that simplification alone is not enough and that students should be encouraged to apply strategies to listening comprehension tasks. Researchers studying L2 listening comprehension have identified three strategies that are

particularly effective: (1) activating students' background knowledge (Anderson, 1985; Phillips, 1984; Vogely, 1999; Young, 1989); (2) helping students use their L1 knowledge (Vogely, 1999; Yano, Long, & Ross, 1994); (3) designing clearly and concisely structured tasks, like structured input activities (Lee & VanPatten, 2003; Vogely, 1999).

The speaking anxiety construct

When students experience anxiety in the world language classes, it is most often associated with speaking (Horwitz et al., 1986; Phillips, 1991, 1999; Price, 1991; Young, 1990). Speaking is both the primary means of communication in the classroom and the most likely of the four skills to be used for real-world communication outside of the classroom (King & Smith, 2017). Consequently, researchers have found L2 speaking anxiety to be one of the main components of generalized language anxiety, although it can operate independently as a skill-specific anxiety (Aida, 1994; Horwitz et al. 1986; Matsuda & Gobel, 2004). In other words, a learner experiencing generalized language anxiety may experience L2 speaking anxiety, but the opposite may not be true.

Researchers have documented a number of different potential sources of L2 speaking anxiety among learners, many of which are related to fear. For example, in studies conducted both in the U.S. and abroad, many learners reported fear of speaking to teachers because it could lead to negative evaluations by teachers on performance-based evaluations, fear of losing face or performing in front of peers, and fear of making errors while speaking (Ohata, 2005; Woodrow, 2006; Young, 1990). Additionally, researchers have found correlations between speaking anxiety and individual factors related to self-perception and self-concept, such as low self-esteem, low self-worth, and a lack of confidence in one's ability (Onwuegbuzie, Bailey, & Daley, 1999; Price, 1991; Phillips, 1999; Young, 1990). Teachers are likely to notice a number of negative effects among learners with high anxiety in the classroom. Students may be afraid to speak in class, produce language of less quality and quantity as reflected in the number of dependent clauses and total number of words, volunteer or to participate rarely in oral activities, engage in behavior like skipping class or procrastinating on their homework, avoid personal or difficult messages in the target language, or engage in unnatural turn-taking behaviors, such as unnatural periods of silence or extended silent pausing for linguistic processing (Argaman & Abu-Rabia, 2002; Clark, 1999; Clark & Wells, 1995; Ely, 1986; Horwitz et al., 1986; Phillips, 1990).

In order to reduce students' speaking anxieties, teachers must foster an environment of collaboration in their classrooms to create a community of learners (Dolan & Hall, 2001; Glisan & Donato, 2017; Phillips, 1999). In these classroom communities, "learning is viewed as a socially situated, collaborative, mutually beneficial process of transformation of both the academic and the social" (Dolan & Hall, 2001, p. 45). Dolan and Hall (2001) cite four main characteristics of effective communities of learners, which they believe are crucial to diminishing students' anxiety to speak in the world language. First, collaborative partner or group activities serve as the core of instruction. However, negotiation of meaning must be taught to ensure group activities are successful at providing feedback.

Second, students are responsible for their individual goals and for negotiating with peers to work toward and share in mutually beneficial achievements. Third, activities are communicative and frequently carried out during regular intervals. This type of repetition of communicative activities helps ease learner anxieties in two ways: they make learners familiar with and secure about task procedures and expectations, and they help learners develop strong interpersonal relationships where they feel safe to make mistakes. Fourth, they use a wide range of discourse participation opportunities, allowing for students to argue, narrate, hypothesize, and offer opinions about topics that are both familiar and new.

Language anxiety and proficiency-oriented instruction

On a theoretical level, recent research suggests language anxiety can be skill-specific, situational, unstable across time, and limited to specific language skills but not others (Gkonou, et al., 2017; Torres & Turner, 2016). Second language acquisition researchers have investigated language anxiety in relation to the four language skills because for research purposes each skill is its own construct that bears distinct anxiety factors, which thus warrants the examination of each skill separately (King & Smith, 2017; MacIntyre, 2017). However, within the last decade the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) recommended that world language educators move away from a focus on the four skills to a more integrated, proficiency-oriented approach that focuses on three modes of communication: interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational. This shift is reflected in ACTFL's (2012b) proficiency guidelines, ACTFL's (2012a) performance descriptors for language learning, the *World-readiness standards for learning languages* (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015), and the NCSSFL-ACTFL (2017) can-do proficiency benchmarks.

The three modes of communication serve as a way to organize and describe language use across five ranges of performance: Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, Superior, and Distinguished. The ACTFL proficiency guidelines were developed originally for assessment of the four skills because they were written before the ACTFL (2012a) performance descriptors for language learning. However, ACTFL's proficiency guidelines consider how "each skill is used, for example, describing both interpersonal and presentational for speaking" (ACTFL, 2012a, p. 7). The authors of the ACTFL (2012a) *Performance descriptors for language learning* explain,

Performance Descriptors embrace the communicative purpose behind the three modes of communication, describing how a language learner performs to achieve each communicative purpose: interpersonal, interpretive, presentational. The language functions are appropriately matched to the mode of communication. (p. 7)

According to the ACTFL (2012a) *Performance descriptors for language learning*, interpersonal communication involves the active negotiation of meaning among individuals. Participants observe and monitor one another to see how their meanings and intentions are being communicated so that they can make

adjustments and clarifications accordingly. Interpersonal communication can involve a number of language skills; speaking and listening through conversation, and reading and writing through the use of social media (ACTFL, 2012a). The ACTFL (2012a) *Performance descriptors for language learning* describe interpretive communication as one-way communication with no recourse to the active negotiation of meaning with the writer, speaker, or producer. Rather, it is the interpretation of what the author, speaker, or producer wants the receiver of the message to understand. Interpretation differs from comprehension or translation in that interpretation implies the ability to read (or listen or view) “between the lines,” including understanding subtle nuances or cultural perspectives (ACTFL, 2012a, p. 7). This type of communication can involve reading (pamphlets, websites), listening (voicemails, songs, announcements) or viewing video or other media of authentic materials (ACTFL, 2012a). Presentational communication, as defined by the ACTFL (2012b) *Performance descriptors for language learning*, is one-way communication involving the creation of messages. It is intended to facilitate interpretation if no direct opportunity for the active negotiation of meaning exists. In order to ensure the audience is successful at interpreting the learner’s message, the person presenting needs adequate knowledge about the audience’s languages and cultures. Presentational communication can involve writing (articles, reports), speaking (telling a story, giving a speech) or visually presenting (digital storytelling or PowerPoint) (ACTFL, 2012a).

The NCSSFL-ACTFL (2017) *Can-do proficiency benchmarks* serve a dual purpose for contemporary world language educators. On the one hand, the benchmarks can guide teachers to create the necessary conditions for learning and design appropriate performance tasks according to their students’ proficiency range, while still pushing their language development forward to the next range. On the other hand, the benchmarks help teachers develop realistic expectations for summative assessments because they provide a rich description of a range of what learners can do with the language.

Anxiety-reducing pedagogical strategies and interventions for world language classrooms

In this section, we offer concrete pedagogical strategies and interventions based on the body of skill-specific language anxiety research to date. These strategies and interventions can guide teachers as they work to apply research implications related to language anxiety to their classroom contexts in order to create more inclusive educational experiences for students. Although we discuss the targeted proficiency levels and modes of communication with the NCSSFL-ACTFL (2017) *Can-do proficiency benchmarks* in mind, the suggested activities and strategies can be adapted to engage multiple modes of communication for students of varying proficiency levels. Examples are provided in English to facilitate understanding for all readers, but the expectation is to maximize target language use when developing materials, and designing and implementing activities.

Strategies for targeting the interpersonal mode of communication

Interpersonal communication is a two-way exchange where learners actively negotiate meaning with one another. This mode of communication consists of

spontaneous and unpredictable language, which arises as learners work to make meaning of one another's messages and intentions (ACTFL, 2012b). Two types of speaking activities that are found typically in effective communities of learners, which are aimed at lessening L2 speaking anxiety and promote speaking proficiency, are Prelude to conversation activities (Thompson, 2005) and situational role-play activities.

Prelude to conversation activities. Developed by Thompson (2005), Prelude to conversation is a pre-speaking activity that allows learners to focus on both form and content before speaking. These activities have been found to have a profound impact on proficiency development (Thompson, 2005). As the name suggests, pre-speaking activities occur before learners engage in a speaking task, whether it be in the interpersonal mode or presentational mode. Students are responsible for brainstorming, with one another, the content and language forms they will need to carry out the subsequent speaking task. The role of the instructor is to ask questions that generate ideas about content relevant to the task and to draw students' attention to relevant grammatical forms, vocabulary, and elaboration strategies. The teacher classifies the ideas generated by the students as content and form related, recording this information on the board in two columns, *Content* and *Form*. Prelude to conversation activities help learners plan and organize task-relevant information, and they have been shown to increase the complexity, accuracy, and fluency of students' subsequent spoken discourse (Gaillard, 2013).

In the sample speaking task (Activity A), students imagine that they call their favorite TV cooking show host to get advice from the chef about planning a meal for a family reunion that will include guests who have different food allergies. This particular example is designed for Advanced-level students, but Prelude to conversation activities can be adapted for students of varying proficiency levels.

The teacher displays the graphic organizer on the board (Figure 1), and then guides the students to generate ideas related to both the content and forms related to this task. For example, related to content, students will need vocabulary related to dietary restrictions, kinship terms for the family members who will be present, and the words for dishes and their respective ingredients. In terms of forms, students will need language to request suggestions from the chef (e.g., conditional tense); to receive or make a recommendation (e.g., subjunctive tense), and when making detailed descriptions of the meals that will be prepared, they may need to monitor noun-adjective agreement.

Activity A. Prelude to conversation activity—Family reunion

You are going to be having a family reunion next week, and for the first time you will be hosting the event at your house. You will be responsible for preparing dinner. You need some help because some of the guests have dietary restrictions. Your favorite daytime TV chef takes calls during her show, and you want to call in to ask for advice on planning the meal. On her website, she has a guide to help callers prepare what they want to ask. As a class, brainstorm what you will say and how you will say it.

Figure 1: *Graphic Organizer for Prelude to Conversation Activity*

Content	Communicative Functions/ Forms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dietary restrictions: what people cannot eat • Relationships of the people present (e.g., brother, aunt, grandmother) • Vocabulary for food items and dishes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request information, interrogative forms • Ask for recommendations, subjunctive • Descriptions, noun–adjective agreement

Research has demonstrated that teacher-led pre-speaking activities, such as Prelude to conversation tasks, increase the quality of students' output and reduce their L2 speaking anxiety (Gaillard, 2013; Thompson, 2005). In particular, Gaillard (2013) hypothesizes that there are several features of these activities that aid anxious students. She believes students' anxiety is lowered because (1) they are able to ask questions about the task during the brainstorming phase to ensure they understand the requirements; (2) their background knowledge is activated in preparation for speaking; (3) they can generate and organize ideas; and (4) they can focus their attention on forms needed for the activity.

Situational role-play activities. In situational role-play activities, learners use their meaning-making resources to take on roles and act them out in real-life situations. In some cases, they may be asked to take on roles that are familiar to them outside the classroom, such as a customer in a restaurant. In other cases, the roles may be new experiences, like those of a doctor or a customer service representative. In terms of language learning benefits, situational role-play activities provide a platform for learners to develop a sensitivity to context by considering the characteristics of a situation and the roles of the people involved in the conversational exchange (Nava & Pedrazzini, 2018). Thus, by offering a close approximation of the conditions in which language is used in context, these activities focus learners' attention not just on their messages, but also on conveying their messages in pragmatically appropriate ways (Larsen-Freeman, 2003; Nava & Pedrazzini, 2018). Learners experiencing L2 speaking anxiety may benefit particularly from these role-play activities, because as Dolan & Hall (2001) argues, the consequences of such play are likely to be nonthreatening or inconsequential, and they give learners opportunities to try out different voices or take on new social identities. Role plays can be carried out effectively at any proficiency level, and can be an effective way for learners to practice vocabulary, a grammatical form, or communicative function related to a particular theme.

For situational role plays to be effective and enjoyable for students at different proficiency levels, a varying degree of pre-task scaffolding may be needed (Omaggio Hadley, 2001). In Activity B, we provide an example of a situational role play for Novice-level learners, which involves a phone conversation between two friends. This activity was adapted from Guzmán, Lapuerta & Liskin-Gasparro (2020), which contains an abundance of situational role play activities that can be adapted for different languages and proficiency levels.

Activity B. Situational role play—An international roommate (adapted from Guzmán et al., 2020, p. 55)	
Role A	Role B
<p>Your best friend calls you to tell you that they have a new roommate who is an international student. After you greet your friend, ask:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Where your friend's new roommate is from. 2. What they are like physically. 3. What they like to do in their free time. 4. What they study at your university. 	<p>You call your best friend to talk about your new international roommate. Your friend asks a lot of questions. Answer their questions in as much detail as possible.</p>

Teachers can use a pre-task graphic organizer during the planning phase to scaffold learners' subsequent role-play performances to discuss the context of the situation and whether a formal or informal language register is required (Figure 2). Together with the students, the teacher can brainstorm key language functions, grammatical structures, vocabulary, and content that learners will need to include in their role plays to accomplish the task successfully. For this example, the key language functions and forms related to the informal context of this activity are asking questions and giving information, talking about origin, talking about hobbies, and employing noun–adjective agreement and the present tense. Essential vocabulary in order to carry out this situational role play includes adjectives of nationality, adjectives to describe people, school subjects, hobbies, and question words. With the learners, the teacher also can explore programmatically appropriate ways to start and end their conversations, like using the informal *tú* [you] in Spanish when talking to a friend.

Figure 2. Pre-Task Graphic Organizer for Situational Role Plays

Context	Key grammatical structures	Key vocabulary
Register <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal • Formal 		
Key content to accomplish the task	How to start the conversation	How to end the conversation

By using graphic organizers for Prelude to conversation activities and situational role-play activities, there is potential to lower students' speaking anxiety. Students can refer to the information generated during the planning phase as they are performing the task. Additionally, students can anticipate how to carry out communicative functions, such as starting and ending a conversation in a situationally appropriate manner.

Strategies for targeting the interpretive mode of communication

Interpretive communication involves the interpretation of a message, an understanding of the creator's cultural mindset or perspective, and reading and listening skills. In the following section, we suggest research-based pedagogical interventions that are designed to reduce anxiety related to the interpretive mode, which include social reading software, scaffolded tasks, and reading-readiness activities.

Digital-social reading tools. Digital-social reading tools are designed to make the reading process a collaborative act (Thoms & Poole, 2017). Rather than take notes in the margins of a text, groups of learners can annotate the same online text, and thus share their annotations with one another. These tools allow learners to share their reactions in real time and work together to pool their knowledge to build a collective body of commentary about a text. *eComma* is an example of a free digital-social reading tool that was created for use in L2 classrooms by The Center for Open Educational Resources and Language Learning at the University of Texas–Austin (COERLL, 2020). The developers suggest that teachers and learners use it to: (1) create and use word clouds to analyze meaning in a text; (2) leave annotations and other marks in the text; (3) create digital tags to help organize, classify, or track information; and (4) use analytics to discover students' meaning-making patterns both during and after they read a text (COERLL, 2020). Emerging research about the use of digital-social reading tools in L2 classrooms suggests they lead to increased cognitive and social engagement among learners, and also offer a way to for learners to engage in interpersonal communication in the target language (Michelson & Dupuy, 2018; Thoms & Poole, 2017, 2018).

In Activity C (next page), we show an example of how a digital-social reading tool can be used to facilitate Advanced-level students' understanding of *Platero y yo* [Platero and I] by Juan Ramón Jiménez. This activity is adapted from Bleichmar and Cañón (2012) and is part of a larger unit on the descriptive genre, which culminates with students writing a descriptive essay of their own. In this activity, students use the tools of *eComma* to annotate, tag, and comment on the text collaboratively while they read. These tools can be used to guide students' attention to particular literary devices and effective descriptions, or they can be used to show common parts of a text that may be difficult for them to understand. Additionally, students can scaffold one another's understanding by leaving their own questions on the text, as well as responding to the questions or comments of their peers.

Sequenced reading tasks and reading-readiness activities. Researchers have argued that one of the keys to reducing L2 reading anxiety is to structure readers' interaction with a text in a way that breaks the task down into several guided steps (Lee & VanPatten, 2003; Phillips, 1999; Swaffer, Arens, & Byrnes, 1991). Additionally, to decrease anxiety with reading tasks, teachers can activate learners' prior knowledge about the content of a text and preparing them to carry out an activity before they begin. Thus, creating reading-readiness activities may involve having learners brainstorm; use para-textual elements, such as titles, subtitles, headings, charts, and illustrations; recall their prior knowledge related to text content; scan for specific information or key words; and anticipate the content

Activity C. Digital-social reading tools (adapted from Bleichmar & Cañón, 2012, p. 6)

Instructions: Read *Platero y yo* [Platero and I] by Juan Ramón Jiménez (in *eComma*) and answer the questions below. Your comments will be graded. Remember that you must make at least one comment on each of the poems by Tuesday at 11:59 pm and respond to someone else's comments by 11:59 pm on Thursday. Remember to highlight any words or phrases that interfere with your understanding of the text.

1. Some descriptions in *Platero y yo* are simple and concrete, while others rely on analogies, metaphors, or comparisons. First, tag one example each of an analogy, a metaphor, and a comparison. Then, choose three different descriptions that seem particularly effective to you and leave a comment explaining why you feel that way.
2. The narrator never describes himself/herself, but we can tell a lot about him/her through his/her observations, descriptions, and reactions. Describe the narrator using three different adjectives and tag the parts of the text we can observe these parts of his character.
3. After you have finished reading, identify what you think the moral of the poems is and leave a comment explaining why.

of the text before they actually start reading (Lee, 1999; Lee & VanPatten, 2003; Omaggio Hadley, 2001).

For example, Activity D (next page) is designed for Intermediate-level students and is based on a text about art movements in Mexico in the 1920s. The task is made up of several smaller tasks that scaffold students' performance before, during, and after reading. It involves a reading-readiness phase that asks students to use their background knowledge as they examine the title and subtitles to anticipate the content of the text before reading.

Sequenced listening tasks. Activity E is an example of an Intermediate-level task that facilitates interpretive communication and incorporates strategies to lower learner anxiety by helping them focus on specific features (e.g., when the events were happening) of the input they receive. First, students are asked to brainstorm how the task relates to a real-world situation with which they may be familiar (e.g., festival information). Second, they are guided to key words or phrases that will be essential to their understanding during the task (e.g., time-related words). Third, students' attention is directed to features related to tense (e.g., past, present, future), which allows them to devote their attentional resources to receiving and processing the message to which they are exposed (Lee, 1999). Lastly, the activity is structured in a way that breaks the tasks into manageable steps, from which anxious learners in particular will benefit.

Activity D. Sequenced tasks and reading-readiness activities—Art movements of Mexico in the 1920s

Before reading: Read the title and subtitles of “*Los movimientos artísticos en México en los años 20*” [“Artistic Movements in Mexico in the 1920s”] (Appendix A, written by second author Madi Seigler). Then, with a partner discuss the following questions and explain your answers.

1. What information do you hope to learn from this article?
 - a. Titles: _____ Subtitles: _____
2. What do you already know about magical realism and muralism?
3. What do you know about what was going on in Mexico in the '20s, for example, political movements?
4. Make a list of Mexican artists that you know. Who do you like most? What kind of art did they make?

While you read: Read the article “*Los movimientos artísticos en México en los años 20.*” Then connect the sentences on the left with the correct answers.

1. The art movement that depicts real life with strange symbols and imagery.	A. Muralism
2. The artist who painted self-portraits to represent disability, love, and death in the magical realist style.	B. Diego Rivera
3. The movement in which the artists painted art works in public spaces to show their political opinions.	C. Magical Realism
4. They painted murals in Mexico City about the economic system during and after the Mexican Revolution.	D. Frida Kahlo

Extension: With a partner, search the Internet for a piece of artwork by Frida Kahlo or Diego Rivera. Complete the graphic organizer with information about these pieces of artwork. Use the information that you have found and discussed to present your artwork to the class.

	Name of the artwork	Description (like colors, people, significance)	Elements of the artistic movement (e.g., magic realism or muralism) reflected in the piece
Frida Kahlo			
Diego Rivera			

Activity E. Sequenced listening activity—The national festival of Chamamé (Spanish and English versions of the script used are available in Appendix B)

Step 1. The National Festival of Chamamé is an annual festival in Corrientes, Argentina to celebrate the music, folklore, and culture of Argentina and surrounding countries. The festival is this weekend. Listen to the schedule for the National Festival Chamamé. For each event, indicate if it refers to Friday, (F), Saturday (Sa), or Sunday (Su) on the blank *before* the event name.

	Day of the week	Event	Last night? Today? Tomorrow?
1.		Dance by the National Ballet of Argentina.	
2.		Song by Florencia de Pompert.	
3.		Performance by Tupa Noy.	
4.		Screening of a film about the festival.	
5.		Opening of an art gallery about Argentina.	

Step 2. We will now listen to the schedule a second time. Add an appropriate time-related word from the list below in the blank after the event name.

- Model: Yesterday, they sang after the intermission.
- Last night...
- Today...
- Tomorrow morning...

Strategies for targeting the presentational mode of communication

The presentational mode of communication is a one-way form of communication, where learners create a message for an intended audience through writing or speaking. Because there is no direct opportunity for negotiation of meaning, learners need some knowledge of the audience's perspective in order to facilitate the interpretation of their intended message (ACTFL, 2012b). Three strategies that researchers have identified as useful for students experiencing language anxiety during presentational communication are freewriting, written peer corrective feedback, and scaffolded writing tasks (Leki, 1999; Listyani, 2018).

Freewriting. Many anxious learners tend to have trouble at the beginning of a writing task and often struggle to find the right words or phrases as they work

to complete it (Leki, 1999). Freewriting is a type of low-stakes writing task that involves learners writing everything they can about a topic without stopping for a set period of time, usually between 10 and 15 minutes. Students can write a large amount of content without worrying about accuracy or structure. Whether students write by hand, or type on their devices, this technique increases the flow and number of ideas generated and can increase written fluency as a consequence of writing without pause (Elbow, 1973; Gill, 2006). Research suggests that the type of writing prompts that work effectively with anxious students are those which allow for learners to use their own experiences or preferences to decide what to write about within the broad topic suggested by each prompt (Leki, 1999). The following three examples of freewriting prompts are targeted toward Intermediate-level students.

1. Think of a trend that is popular right now that you don't like, for example, a dance, fashion style, or type of music. What do you like or dislike about it? Why do you think others like it? What do you think should be popular instead?
2. Take 10 minutes to think about all of the hobbies. Pick one to write about. What do you know about the history of it, the processes of making it or participating in it, current leagues or clubs related to it, etc. Next, choose your favorite hobby and write as much as you can about it.
3. Pick an event that you remember vividly, like your first day at the university, or a time when you came to the defense of someone who was being bullied. Do not feel limited by these two ideas—they are just examples to start your thinking process. Write down as many memories as you can from this event, including how you felt, what you did, who was involved, etc. Include the tiniest details you can remember, like clothes you wore or the colors of the walls.

These prompts are relevant to students' lives because they relate to concrete themes or events that students likely have experienced. They may make students less anxious because they ask them to use their prior experiences or opinions as tools for successfully carrying out the task (Leki, 1999).

Peer revision. Peer revision involves students working together to review and give feedback on one another's drafts. While it is interpersonal in nature, the goal is for students to create a final product that enhances their presentational communication. With this technique, "the teacher no longer needs to play the anxiety-producing role of judge of the student's abilities; instead...[the teacher] places the student comfortably in the hands of a supportive collaborator" (Leki, 1999, pp. 77–78). However, there is evidence to suggest that students may not value peer feedback or take it seriously because they do not see their peers as qualified substitutes for their teachers unless the teacher teaches them peer editing strategies explicitly (Rollinson, 2005). Rollinson (2005) believes peer review training should include: (1) an awareness-raising phase, which involves discussing the value and purpose of peer feedback; (2) a productive group interaction phase, where teachers model the etiquette of collaboration; and (3) a productive response and revision phase, where students learn basic revision procedures and effective commenting.

During a unit in which Advanced-level learners compose a narrative essay about a memorable event they experienced during a trip, teachers could use our peer feedback template (Appendix C). The template identifies the five required components of the essay: introduction, actions, descriptions, dialogue, and conclusion, and it breaks them down into manageable parts to guide students in the writing process. At the end of the template, students focus on conventions and note any errors they find in their partners' drafts or instances where they might be unsure about language use. The language-oriented suggestion comes at the end and is downplayed to make the point that this peer feedback template is designed to help students focus on content and organization, and only minimally on language errors. The template also includes a reflective component that prompts students to reflect on what parts of their partner's comments helped them the most as they wrote their final drafts, as well as what revisions they made between their first and final drafts and why they made them. Nassaji and Kartchava (2017) argue that although peer training is important, in order for peer collaborative feedback to be most effective, it has to be scaffolded and content focused.

Scaffolded writing tasks. Instead of presenting students with a traditional writing task, and asking students to complete it, anxious students may benefit from the teacher scaffolding the task into more manageable chunks (Leki, 1999; Listyani, 2018). Teachers need to assess students' performance levels and task complexity when considering the amount and the explicitness of the scaffolding they offer students (Nassaji & Kartchava, 2017). For example, Novice and Intermediate-level students' performance may benefit from ample, direct scaffolding, while Advanced and Superior-level students may require less and more indirect scaffolding to carry out a task successfully (Gaillard, 2013). In the Activity F (next page), Novice-level learners are asked to create a tutoring advertisement to post on their school's social media page. The task involves students creating an advertisement for a tutor while they study abroad. First, as a pre-task, students break down the elements of a tutoring advertisement, including the personality of the tutor they are looking for, their availability, more information about the areas in which they need tutoring and why, and how much they can afford to pay. Using this scaffolded information as a base, they then use this information to write their advertisement. As a follow up, they compare advertisements with a peer and decide whether or not they would be capable of tutoring them.

Anxious students are often so focused on their written products that they neglect to understand the processes they used to compose them (Leki, 1999). Scaffolded writing activities like Activity F are designed to reduce students' anxiety directly by breaking down the task into manageable chunks, and indirectly by making the relationship between the quality of students' writing processes and the quality of their final products more explicit (Leki, 1999; Listyani, 2018).

Conclusion

Language anxiety affects world language students' learning processes and their in-class performance. Until recently, language anxiety was conceived of as a generalized personality trait activated in response to particular situations where

Activity F. Scaffolded writing task—Creating an advertisement for a tutor

Step 1. You moved to Peru a month ago for study abroad. In most of your classes, you are succeeding but in one you are really struggling. You will be writing a Help Wanted advertisement for a tutor in the subject and, specifically, the concepts with which you are struggling. Before writing, fill out the graphic organizer to help you prepare for the task.

Personality traits of a good tutor	<i>Ex: a patient person</i> 1. 2. 3.
Days and hours you are available	<i>Ex: Monday and Friday; 3-5</i> Days: Time:
Which class and topic you are having trouble with	<i>Ex: Spanish class, I don't understand the difference between an indirect and direct object</i> Course: Theme:
Why you need a tutor	<i>Ex: I am looking for someone to help me understand grammar and to practice speaking with</i>
How much you can pay per hour	

Step 2. Once you have filled out the graphic organizer, write your advertisement. Include the information from the graphic organizer, as well as other information that will help the tutor. After you have finished writing your advertisement, exchange your work with a partner. Would you be able to tutor your partner? Write two reasons why you would or would not be a good tutor for your partner. Be prepared to share with the class.

students have to process or produce language (Kormos, 2016). However, emerging research demonstrates that anxiety in world language classrooms is much more complex. Language anxiety can be situational, unstable across time or proficiency level, and limited to particular language skills and not others (King & Smith, 2017; MacIntyre, 2017; Torres & Turner, 2016). This insight has led researchers to call for studies that examine the dynamic relationship between anxiety in world language classrooms and each of the four skills. This more nuanced understanding of language anxiety recognizes that each skill may be the site of both related and distinct anxiety factors, which in turn can affect learning outcomes in different ways (Gkonou et al., 2017; King & Smith, 2017; MacIntyre, 2017).

Recent trends in world language education highlight the importance of creating more inclusive classrooms for language learners with specific learning challenges,

such as those experiencing skill-specific language anxiety. However, despite the call for studies on inclusive language teaching practices, researchers cite a lack of concrete pedagogical practices that enhance the language learning opportunities for these students in the literature (Kormos, 2016; Wight, 2015). One of the most prominent themes that emerges from the research is the pedagogical suggestion to focus on language learning processes rather than on products. The implication, then, is that teachers design multi-stage activities in which students' performance is scaffolded before, during, and after the central task of the activity. This may involve, for example, modeling performance of the task, breaking the task down into various steps, activating learners' background knowledge, or helping learners plan for the task before they actually perform it.

Another important overarching anxiety-reducing theme is the value of a classroom community that promotes dialogic interaction among learners. At their core, these types of classrooms promote collaboration, encourage peers to form strong interpersonal relationships and to help others work toward their goals, and foster the familiarity and security about classroom expectations that anxious students seek.

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Appendix A: Readings related to Activity D. Sequenced tasks and reading-readiness activities

Los movimientos artísticos en México en los años 20 (Spanish version)
Madi Seigler

El arte mexicano

En los años 20 el arte en México floreció. Todavía se ve la influencia de los estilos europeos, pero empezaba a incorporar temas de los indígenas y la identidad mexicana. En esta época, durante y directamente después de la revolución mexicana, hubo un aumento de enfoque en dos temas: las experiencias de uno mismo y de su grupo. Las representaciones artísticas de estos temas fueron el realismo mágico y el muralismo. En este artículo, vamos a explorar estos movimientos y los artistas más famosos para entender más las perspectivas de la gente mexicana en los años 20.

El realismo mágico

El realismo mágico fue un movimiento para demostrar la rareza de la vida cotidiana. Los artistas pintaban la vida real con figuras realistas, pero en situaciones extrañas. Los temas no eran críticas de la sociedad, eran exploraciones de la cultura y de la experiencia humana. El realismo mágico se ha comparado con el surrealismo, pero a diferencia de ello, este movimiento se enfocaba en las observaciones más que en los sueños y la consciencia. Una artista famosa de esta época fue Frida Kahlo por sus autorretratos. Representaban la vida, la muerte, el amor y la vida con discapacidades.

El muralismo

Después de la revolución mexicana, los muralistas resurgieron para unir la nación. Un mural es una pintura en un muro. Históricamente las bellas artes sólo eran para los ricos, pero los murales estaban en edificios públicos que todos podían ver. Los artistas pintaban sobre la política, la identidad, la opresión y la resistencia; de esos murales se formaban las opiniones del público y ayudaba a decidir cuáles

problemas necesitaban ser cambiados. Unos de esos problemas era el sistema económico, lo cual era un tema del que Diego Rivera, el muralista más famoso, pintaba mucho. Todavía se pueden ver sus obras en la Ciudad de México.

Artistic Movements in Mexico in the 1920s (English translation)

Madi Seigler

Mexican Art

In the 20s art in Mexico flourished. Artists were still influenced by European styles but were beginning to incorporate themes from indigenous people and the Mexican identity. At this time, during and directly after the Mexican Revolution, there was a rise in focus in two themes: the experiences of yourself and of your group. The artistic representations of these themes were magical realism and muralism. In this article, we're going to explore these movements and the most famous artists in order to understand more perspectives of the Mexican people in the 20's.

Magical Realism

Magical realism was a movement to show the strangeness of daily life. The artists painted real life with realistic figures, but in strange situations. The themes weren't criticisms of society, they were explorations of culture and the experiences of humankind. Magical realism was compared to surrealism, but unlike that movement, this movement was focused in observations more than dreams and the unconscious. A famous artist from this time was Frida Kahlo for herself portraits. They represented live, death, live, and life with disabilities.

Muralism

After the Mexican Revolution, muralists resurged to untie the nation. A mural is a painting on a wall. Historically, the fine arts were only for the rich, but murals were in public places so all could see them. Artists painted about politics, identity, oppression, and resistance; these murals formed the opinions of the public and helped them decide which problems needed to be changed. One of these problems was the economic system, a subject that Diego Rivera, the most famous muralist, painted about a lot. You can still his works in Mexico City.

Appendix B: Scripts related to Activity E. Sequenced listening activity (written by Madi Seigler)

La Fiesta Nacional de Chamamé es este fin de semana. Estoy aquí con mis amigos y estoy emocionado por ver todo. El festival empezó anoche con una canción de Tupa Noy, un grupo que toca música folklórica. También anoche, mi amiga trabajó en la galería de arte. Hay una pintura famosa que quería ver, pero no entré porque había demasiada gente en el lugar. La primera noche fue increíble. Esta mañana vamos a ver el baile del Ballet Nacional, y yo quiero desayunar antes de salir. También hoy, Florencia de Pomper, una cantante súper famosa, canta en el escenario principal. Mañana por la mañana veremos el estreno de una película sobre el festival y la ceremonia de clausura. ¡Va a ser muy divertido!

The national festival of Chamamé is this weekend. I'm here with my friends and I'm excited to see everything. Yesterday, the festival began with a song by Tupa Noy, a group that plays folkloric music. Last night as well, my friend worked in the art gallery. There is a famous painting that I wanted to see, but I didn't go in because there were too many people inside. The first night was incredible. This morning we are going to see a dance by the National Ballet, and I want to eat before going. Today as well, Florencia de Pompert, a super famous Singer, sings at the main stage. Tomorrow morning, we will see a showing of a movie about the festival and the closing ceremony. It's going to be so fun!

Appendix C: Peer feedback template

Writer: _____ Reader: _____

Please read your partner's draft carefully and make helpful and informative comments on the content, organization, and logic of the story. Also, think about how you can analyze your draft in the same way as your partner's to make substantive revisions for the final version.

Read your partner's draft carefully and then answer the questions.

1. Introduction.

- a. What is the **topic** of the narrative? Use your own words. It should be a phrase (e.g., an accident during a trip to Florida, the scariest moment of X's life).
- b. What is the **thesis**? Again, use your own words. Express the thesis as one complete sentence (e.g., One can learn a lot from negative events).
- c. Where does the story take place? When? What else about the context do you learn from the introduction?
- d. Make at least two meaningful, substantive suggestions to improve the introduction.
 - 1.
 - 2.

2. Actions.

- a. Is there a clear story line in chronological order? (Be careful: Pay attention only to the main events; you will comment on the descriptive parts later.) Write your comments about the story line (main events) on your partner's paper, but summarize them here also. Make suggestions to improve the sequencing and the logic of the events.

- b. Are the actions/events that led up to the main event of the story presented in enough detail to create suspense or make the story interesting? Give one or two examples of detailed actions that show how the action of the story is unfolding before arriving at the main event.
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - c. Look at the verbs in the sentences that recount the main story line and push the narrative forward in time. Are they in the preterit tense? Underline verbs that you think should be in the preterit tense but are not, and write “Pret?” above them to draw the writer’s attention to them.
3. Descriptions.
- a. Give examples of detailed descriptions ...
 1. of the characters in the story.
 2. of the setting in terms of time (i.e., when the story takes place).
 3. of the setting in terms of space (i.e., where the story takes place).
 - b. Give your partner one or two suggestions to improve his/her descriptions.
 - c. Where there are sentences that provide description but do not advance the actions of the story in time, look at the verbs. Are they in the imperfect? Underline verbs that you think should be in the imperfect but are not, and write “Imp?” above them to draw the writer’s attention to them.
4. Dialogue
- a. Is there dialogue in your partner’s draft? If there is dialogue, what does it contribute to the story? (Be specific.)
 - b. If there is dialogue, give your partner one or two suggestions to increase the impact of the dialogue.
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - c. If there is no dialogue in the draft, suggest to your partner where he/she might put in some dialogue and how it would improve the story.
4. Conclusion.
- a. Is the thesis presented (or repeated) in the conclusion? Underline the sentence in the conclusion that restates the thesis, and write **Thesis** next to it. If you cannot find the thesis statement, explain the problem here.
 - b. After you have finished reading your partner’s draft, and have thought about it by answering these questions, are you finding loose ends, parts that are not clear or where something seems to be left out (e.g., lack of logic, important events left out, you can’t understand why a character did something)? Explain the problems below.
5. Language check. If you have time, read the story again and look for basic errors, like agreement errors between subject and verb, or between noun and adjective, and errors in noun gender (*el/la*). Then underline all of the preterit/imperfect verbs and circle any you think may be incorrect.
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Note to the writer of the rough draft: Use the space below to write your assessment of your partner's comments on your draft and your revision process (rough draft to final version).

- (a) What parts of your partner's comments helped you the most when you revised your draft?
- (b) What changes did you make from the draft to the final version? Why did you make those changes?

This activity was created by Dr. Judith Liskin-Gasparro and was used in her Spanish Writing Course at the University of Iowa. Adapted and reprinted with her permission.