By Claudia Fernández

The task I chose to evaluate is in the Materials folder and is titled “Accommodations” adapted from  Kuiken and Vedder (2011) and published in Zalbidea, J. (2017). ‘One task fits all?’ The roles of task complexity, modality, and working memory capacity in L2 performance, in the *Modern Language Journal*.In particular, I chose the less complex speaking task version for my evaluation.

* The extent to which the material supports Skehan’s (1998) definition of a pedagogic task (meaning-focused, relates to real-life, is assessed on outcome, etc.)

The task reflects Skehan’s definition of a pedagogic tasks to a full extent. This is because meaning plays a central role in the completion of the task (i.e., students need to understand the information that carries relevant meaning for task completion and they will not be able to do the task if they do not understand what they are reading). For the production part of the task (i.e., convincing the partner of the hotel choice with arguments), students not only have to express meaning, but also do so with their own linguistic resources (i.e., not repeating other people’s meaning). The task and its purpose reflect a real-world activity: people usually have certain criteria to select a hotel for a vacation and it is common that one person does the research, does not find hotels that match 100% the criteria, needs to select one and tries to convince the other party involved that the selection is the right one. The task directions clearly state that a choice must be made, so task completion has a priority. Although the task directions do not include evaluation criteria, I would assume it would be evaluated on whether or not the student made a choice and provide relevant and logical arguments to support their choice.

* Its suitability for the target community of learners (if specified).

The task in the materials did not specify the target learning, however, it was easy for me to find the article and skim it to find out the proficiency level and age of the participants in the study. The tasks were done with intermediate students of Spanish in the third semester of Spanish in higher education in the USA (exactly the population I am very familiarized with!). My first thought was that conditions of the task, in specific the reading and planning time, my not be enough for this group of students to complete the task successfully; however, it seems that the participants may be of a strong intermediate level b/c the background questionnaire indicated that on average the participants had between 3.5-4.5 years of Spanish study. In that case, it may be possible that students were able to read 5 short hotel reviews, take notes, and make a choice in 5 minutes.

* Its effectiveness in supporting task performance and how this could be improved – suggest tweaks, and justify them.

Evidently, the conditions of the task were such due to what the study was designed to investigate (the relationship among complexity, task modality, and working memory). In the classroom, If I had to do this task, I would give students three or so minutes more to read if I want to make sure that the nature of their production (in terms of content, not necessarily of language accuracy) was not due to a poor text comprehension because of lack of time (IRL, one usually set some time aside to select the best hotels, I would say). Having said that, five minutes may work fine with higher proficiency students.

* Any other relevant observations!

I appreciate that this task has a more complex version (with more hotel selection criteria to be met) and a written modality. I like that the hotel descriptions seem plausible and do not quite fit all the criteria, so it really challenges students’ reasoning to a certain point (it is challenging but seems to be doable). In short, I find them to be very useful and appropriate models of what we have learned about pedagogic tasks so far.