AJAL

Argentinian Journal of Applied Linguistics

FAAPI

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AJAL is an international, fully refereed, open-access e-journal led by FAAPI (Federación Argentina de Asociaciones de Profesores de Inglés, www.faapi.org.ar). It is a publication for teachers, trainers, and researchers interested in sharing their expertise, experience, and concerns in the fields of Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching. AJAL welcomes original research articles, state-of-the-art articles, literature reviews, materials reviews, and classroom accounts which focus on practical aspects.

In Memory of Dr. Daniel Fernández, whose generous dedication inspired this journal.

"May these pages be a source for academic food, a source for motivation for future work and a source for intellectual inspiration."

Daniel Fernández, 36th F.A.A.P.I. Conference Proceedings Foreward

FAAPI Executive Committee

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Editorial introduction

Let us begin at the beginning. Inaugural ceremonies and opening words usually sound repetitive, if not trite. Yet these rituals are thresholds of interpretation and contribute to consolidate community bonds.

AJAL seeks to address current issues in Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching and its central concerns are to secure academic quality as well as diversity and plurality. Though 'A' stands for 'Argentina', this does not mean that our journal is a publication solely meant for and developed by Argentines. Internationally known authors have been convened as members of the Editorial Board or as reviewers and contributors from different parts of the world will find a voice in our pages.

AJAL welcomes different types of original articles. These include research articles, reflections, state-of-the-art contributions, and articles which look at classroom strategies and techniques explored by our colleagues. In so doing, we aim at receiving manuscripts from university-based trainers and lecturers as well as teachers involved in teaching young learners.

Like other journals, AJAL can only include a limited number of contributions so our policy is that the articles finally accepted for publication highlight the international nature of our journal and the variety of topics we pursue to address.

In order to materialize our ideas in line with FAAPI, the launching of AJAL entailed a series of preparatory stages and required the support and assistance of a long number of persons and sponsors. We owe them all our warmest thanks for what they have done and will continue doing. We would also like to express our heartfelt thanks to readers and contributors who approach AJAL from its inception.

This issue opens with an article by Mariana Virginia Lazzaro-Salazar (University of Wellington, New Zealand) which addresses the problem of motivation in SLA. Departing from traditional static views on the topic, she explores current developments in social psychology and sociolinguistics, adopts a stance that prioritises language learners' identity building, and reports on the preliminary findings of a case study in progress. A thorough reference to prior literature and an accurate description of the methods of data collection are two particularly valuable aspects of this presentation.

The contribution by María Lelia Pico (Universidad Nacional de Tucumán, Argentina) is deeply rooted in social interactionism. It links Vygotsky's concepts of mediation, zone of proximal development and scaffolding to genre-based pedagogy. The work includes a detailed description of an experience which involved a five stage teaching-learning cycle (developing the context, modelling, joint construction, independent construction) and the changes it undergoes under term test conditions.

Natalia Fabiola Muguiro's (Universidad Nacional de La Pampa, Argentina) article

opens with a thorough and well-documented description of two attributive possessive structures (*'s* possessive and *of* possessive) that pose problems to Spanish-speaking learners of English. Two sections are devoted to a detailed contrastive analysis of English and Spanish possessive structures and a shift of focus leads the reader into the field of L1 interference and error analysis.

The implications of assessment to improve learning as well as teaching practice in kindergarten is the central concern in the contribution by Sarah Hillyard (Colegio San Martín de Tours, Argentina). The author begins by elucidating the scope of a series of categories crucial to understand the problem addressed in the article and proceeds to consider the principles of assessment, to characterise different types of assessment and to present a delicate assessment tool especially designed for a group of five-year- old kindergarten children. A sample of "the continuum chart" is included in an appendix. The article ends with valuable suggestions for teachers.

Last, our guest materials review contributor, Mariel Amez, evaluates David Riley's *Triptico App*. Her review includes screenshots from this application for interactive whiteboards.

We truly hope that you enjoy reading this first number as much as we have enjoyed producing it.

Darío Banegas and Raquel Lothringer

Diving into the depths of identity construction and motivation of a foreign language learner

Mariana Virginia Lazzaro-Salazar*

Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

Abstract

Moving away from the bilingual assumptions that have traditionally informed the study of language learners' identity construction, this paper draws on cutting-edge SLA and sociolinguistic theories to explore the close relationship between identity and motivation in foreign language learning contexts. To this end, this paper presents some preliminary observations of a case study in progress involving a language learner who struggles to display his professional identity with the linguistic resources available to him. This, coupled with the social prestige acquired for learning a foreign language, acts as a motivating force for improving his language skills. Finally, adopting an emic perspective, the paper outlines some of the linguistic and socio-pragmatic areas the participant reports as problematic when displaying his professional self.

Keywords: identity; motivation; professional self.

Resumen

Alejándose de las conceptualizaciones bilingüistas que tradicionalmente han informado al estudio de la construcción de la identidad de los estudiantes de idioma, este artículo utiliza teorías de SLA y sociolingüísticas de vanguardia para explorar la estrecha relación entre la identidad y la motivación en estudiantes de lenguas extranjera. Con este fin, este presenta algunas observaciones preliminares de un caso de estudio en progreso, el cual involucra a un estudiante de idiomas que lucha por construir su identidad profesional con limitados recursos lingüísticos. Esto, junto con el prestigio social adquirido por el aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera, actúan como fuerzas motivadoras para el mejoramiento de sus habilidades lingüísticas. La adopción de una perspectiva 'emic', el artículo explora algunas de las áreas lingüísticas y socio-pragmáticas que el participante reporta como problemáticas al construir su identidad profesional.

Palabras clave: identidad; motivación; ser profesional.

* Corresponding author, e-mail: lazzaromari@gmail.com

TRADITIONALLY, THE THEORETICAL debate surrounding learner motivation has pivoted, almost exclusively, around the intrinsic-extrinsic and instrumental-integrative binaries (Dörnyei, 1994; 1998). Recent developments in social psychology and sociolinguistics, among others, have prompted second language acquisition (SLA) scholars to reconsider existing conceptualizations of motivation to take into account the often neglected social dimensions which influence a learner's motivation to learn a language (Dörnyei, 1994; Norton & Toohey, 2001; see Laoire, 2010). Within this discussion, SLA scholars have 'placed crucial questions of self and identity at the very core' (Laoire, 2010, p. 91; also see Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009; McNamara 1997). This identity is constructed, negotiated and reworked in meaningful interactions with relevant others (Blommaert, 2005). In this vein, learning a new language is seen not only 'as a gradual and neutral process of internalizing the rules, structures, and vocabulary of a standard language' (Norton & Toohey, 2001, p. 312) but also as the appropriation of the learner's own voice in that language. As Norton (1997, p. 410) explains,

> Every time language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with their interlocutors; they are also constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. They are, in other words, engaged in identity construction and negotiation.

This perspective emphasises the need to consider the identity of the language learner as a motivational factor influencing the learning process (Dörnyei, 1998).

This paper reports on the preliminary findings of a case study (in progress) of a language learner who uses English as a tool to display his professional self and his scholarly achievements in academic contexts. As will be argued, the data reflects this learner's perceptions of how he negotiates his professional identity when using English as a foreign language.

In what follows, vital theoretical considerations underlying the notions of identity and motivation underpinning this study are outlined.

Motivation

Motivation has been widely accepted by the SLA community as 'one of the key factors that influence the rate and success of second/foreign language (L2) learning' (Dörnyei, 1998, p. 117; 1994). To date, many have attempted to provide comprehensive definitions and theories of motivation (see Dörnyei, 1994 and 1998 for a comprehensive overview of concepts, classifications and theories of motivation). Gardner's conceptualisation of motivation remains central, however; in his view, L2 motivation involves 'the

combination of efforts plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favourable attitudes toward learning the language' (1985, p. 10). Recently, motivational researchers have critiqued traditional views of motivation which described it as a fixed characteristic of the language learner, while they emphasise the role of motivation as a dynamic process, the drive that initiates and maintains the learning process (Dörnyei, 1998; see the socially constructed process of motivation in the Vygotskian sociocultural theory in Ushioda, 2006). Moreover, a learner's motivation or drive to learn the language is determined by, as SLA research supports, a learner's assessment of the profitability of learning the language. In other words, learners evaluate the contributions the language, a linguistic system immersed in social meaningfulness, will make to their cultural capital (see Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, cited in Norton & Toohey, 2002; also discussed in Park, 2007). And learners invest, for instance, time and energy, in the learning process according to these evaluations. It follows then that if learning any given second language increases a learner's cultural capital, a wide range of symbolic and material resources, including the learner's sense of themselves, will also increase as the language becomes a site for identity construction (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton & Toohey, 2001, 2002; Ushioda, 2006). Motivation can then be seen as a factor that will influence a learner's drive to learn the language in order to develop the competencies needed to display a desired identity.

Identity

SLA researchers interested in exploring the relationship between motivation and identity have drawn on the cognate disciplines of social psychology, anthropology, and sociolinguistics, in order 'to develop a textured understanding of the relationship between the language learner and the sociocultural world' (Norton & Toohey, 2002, p. 115). Advancements in these fields have contributed to the shifting conceptualization of identity from a static mental process, represented in the essentialist views of identity, to a dynamic and dialogically created aspect of the self (Caldas, 2007; Park, 2007). This view rests on the social constructionist principle that a person's identity is a relational phenomenon; identity is socially and jointly constructed by social actors in interaction (Agnihotri, 2007; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Kosmala & Herrbach, 2006; Park, 2007). This shift has placed the social actor at the centre by emphasising their agency in managing the linguistic tools available to them in order to enact and construct their identity in social contexts (Norton Peirce, 1995). The self-regulated process means social actors accomplish the preferred orientation of the self through the display of certain stances or positionings (see Kosmala & Herrbach, 2006; see 'positionality principle' in Bucholtz & Hall, 2010). Identity then is something people do, not something people are (Widdicombe, 1998).

One way in which advocates of this dynamic view of identity define it is as 'an organized representation of our theories, attitudes, [values, experiences] and beliefs about ourselves' (Beijaard et al., 2004, p. 108). In this light, a person's identity is the reflection of their self-conceptualisations and the way they position themselves and others through talk in interaction (Buchlotz & Hall, 2010). For the purposes of this study, this is the working definition that guides the data analysis.

The relationship between a language learner's identity construction and their motivation status has traditionally relied on and built upon the contextual assumptions inherent to bilingual environments (see Block, 2007; De Costa, 2007; Miller, 2007; Morgan & Clarke, 2011; Noels & Giles, 2009; Norton, 2000; Park, 2007; Siegal, 1996; Spotti, 2007) This is possibly due to Gardner's claims that the integrative motivation for learning a language was a better predictor of L2 variables (for example, proficiency). This perspective highlights the learner's loss of their own cultural identity when they join a new language community (Gardner, 1991) and assume the learner needs to create a new L2 identity that is functional in the new L2 community (see Dörnyei, 1998; Ushioda, 2006). In this regard, this paper proposes to investigate the role of motivation and identity in the often neglected context of foreign language learning.

The Case Study

Building on the limitation discussed above, most literature in the field of learner identity and motivation is characterised exclusively by etic considerations, that is to say, the researcher's interpretation of the sociolinguistic event (see Norton, 1997 as an exception to this limitation; also see Markee & Kasper, 2004). Not surprisingly, this has resulted in a poor representation of the learner's voice. By taking up Norton's (1997) suggestion to include the emic voice of the learner, this paper hopes to contribute to the recently growing field of learners' self-perceptions of their identity construction (cf. Haugh, 2008).

Following a situated approach to the study of motivation, this paper reports on a case study in progress of a language learner who uses English as a professional tool to display his professional self and his professional achievements in academic contexts. This paper focuses on the first two of three stages of the data collection process involved in this study. The data presented in this paper is self-reported, and includes a Bilingual Self-Perception Survey (see Caldas, 2007), learner diaries and semi-formal interviews (cf. Matsumoto, 1996). The analysis focuses on the perceptions of a foreign language learner who reflects on his identity as enacted through the use of a foreign language and how this impacts on his motivation to learn the foreign language.

The Participant: Rodrigo

Rodrigo is a 32 year-old PhD student in science at a renowned university in Concepción, Chile. He was born in Chile and his mother tongue is Spanish. He started learning English at the age of twenty-six (26) as he was preparing to apply for a PhD programme in his country. He enrolled in the PhD programme in 2009 and is expected to complete his studies in 2013. For Rodrigo, English is a vital professional tool as he became involved in academic activities in a wide international community of peers with whom he interacted when attending conferences and online seminars of universities around the world. English for him is an intellectual resource used to communicate his professional self and his academic achievements (see Ushioda, 2006). Rodrigo's orientation to learning English then is instrumental, as opposed to integrative (see a rich discussion of the two in Dörnyei, 1994 and Gardner, 1985). By learning the language he hopes to open his work to international audiences with the aim of facilitating his professional advancement and mobility in an international community of peers (see Dörnyei, 1994; Noels, 2001).

Having friends in common, Rodrigo and the researcher met a few times at social gatherings. Almost three years ago, Rodrigo informally approached the researcher to express his concern about not feeling "quite" himself when speaking English, in the hope of insights that would improve this aspect of communication.

Data Collection

This section focuses on the methods of data collection, namely, TOEFL test, Bilingual Self-Perception Survey, learner diaries and semi-structured interviews.

Proficiency Level

Rodrigo completed a computer-based TOEFL (CBT) test, which was graded by an external examiner, with the aim of determining his current proficiency level. He scored 213 (highest total score= 300 points) in the overall test and 4 (scaled score of 0 to 6) in the writing section.

Bilingual Self-Perception Survey

This survey was taken from Caldas (2007), who studied the self-perceptions of his bilingual children, and adapted to meet the context of this study (see Appendix A). It includes 6 open-ended and 2 rating questions whose responses provide valuable evidence of the participant's self-perceptions of his identity. The survey was considered relevant for this study because, in spite of the fact that the participant does not live in a bilingual environment, it focuses on eliciting speakers' perceptions of their identity when using a language that is not their L1. This survey then elicited Rodrigo's reflections

on how he speaks and uses English and how he feels when he speaks English with his colleagues, for example. In a case study such as this one, this survey serves as a basis for understanding why the participant has certain perceptions of his self in relation to his use of a foreign language. The responses are also expected to reflect those comments made by the participant in his journal entries and they were used as a starting point in the drafting of the interview questions (see point 4).

The participant was given the choice to complete the survey in English or Spanish, and, having chosen Spanish, he completed the survey on his own in his own time. The survey was administered at the beginning of the study and will be administered again at the end of the study to see if there were any changes in the participant's self-perceptions of his identity.

Learner Diary

In SLA research, journals have proved particularly useful as a self-reporting device to capture the various dimensions of English language usage and identity (see Caldas, 2007). Considering the purpose of this study, a learner's diary provides rich results as it can yield insights into Rodrigo's perceptions which are 'inaccessible from the researcher's perspective alone' (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 178; also see McDonough & McDonough, 1997, p. 121-136). In these journal entries Rodrigo was asked to reflect upon his linguistic competence, and his feelings and reactions while engaged in academic activities in which he participates in English. Rodrigo was encouraged to decide whether he wanted to write these entries in English and/or Spanish (cf. Hosenfeld, 2003) and, as in the case of the Bilingual Self-Perception Survey above, he, not surprisingly, chose Spanish as the preferred language to communicate issues of language and identity. So far, Rodrigo has written five entries of his reflections about giving talks at two conferences and participating in online seminars and focused group discussions of universities around the world.

Interviews

Three semi-structured interviews were conducted, one at the beginning of the study and two after each talk at the conferences. Before interviewing the participant, the researcher read the journal entries and used the answers in the Bilingual Self-Perception Survey to draft questions for the interview, using only those concepts that emerged from Rodrigo's reflections in order to avoid restricting his responses or introducing new topics and ideas (see 'prompted interview' in Henderson & Tallman 2006). Employing an introspective method of data collection (see Gass & Mackey, 2000), these entries were also used as prompts to have Rodrigo further reflect on and provide clarifying comments of issues concerned with the relationship between his identity and his motivation for learning the

language. In this regard, Henderson and Tallman (2006) contend that the fresher the event, the more likely participants are to recall their thoughts more accurately. Thus, in order to maximize Rodrigo's recall of his experiences, these interviews were carried out no longer than a week after the academic activity had taken place (see Lazzaro-Salazar, 2009).

Preliminary Findings

This descriptive self-perception study is guided by an inductive approach to the data analysis as, at this point, the discussion of the data revolves around emergent themes from the Bilingual Self-Perception Survey and entries of the learner's diary (Bowen, 2006). In other words, the topics, and their groupings into different categories, arise from the data collected. The researcher's work, then, has been to identify recurrent themes to group for discussion. Subsequent stages of data analysis will also include the data from the interviews.

A close look at the Bilingual Self-Perception Survey and some of his diary entries shows that Rodrigo recognizes the value capital that learning and speaking a foreign language has for him. As Rodrigo puts it:

> Actually, I feel pretty well for speaking two languages fluently. From my point of view most English speakers are monolingual, so being a very fluent speaker of English too makes me feel respected and somehow unique (in a good way). This represents for me an advantage when socializing with English speakers. Where I'm from, being bilingual or speaking other languages is a sign of high social status and opens a number of opportunities that are not available for monolingual people. I also feel fortunate because of being bilingual has opened an entire world of new cultures for me that otherwise would have been impossible to know.

He reflects on the meaningfulness of learning a foreign language as it 'opens a number of opportunities' that increase his chances of upward social mobility, such as that of possibly obtaining better jobs (see Pavlenko, 2002). In this regard, he also highlights the social prestige gained when speaking other languages as 'a sign of high social status' (see Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000). In addition, learning English empowers him as he gains knowledge related to 'new cultures', which helps him to understand the social worlds in which he participates. In this way, Rodrigo acknowledges the advantages that speaking English gives him in his two social worlds, the English speaking community and the community with which he interacts daily at work and at home.

When asked how he felt when speaking English with his colleagues in conferences,

for example (see second question of the Bilingual Self-Perception Survey), he said:

> From my point of view, the first conferences were a complete disaster!
> People were not used to talking to a foreigner with poor listening abilities
> and I was so nervous that I could not understand anything they said.
> At the beginning I felt uncomfortable. I was anxious about making myself
> clear and not committing too many pronunciation and grammar mistakes.

He later continued to reflect on this issue in his diary, where he explains that with time and exposure to these events, he feels he has improved both his receptive and productive skills, particularly listening and speaking.

> Later I started feeling better as I can notice my English has improved a lot.

Rodrigo also reports being highly aware of the lack of linguistic repertoire and socio-pragmatic resources (see Holmes, 2005) that he needs to display his chosen professional identity in professional contexts.

> English speakers use a lot of slang and idiomatic expressions related to
> their local cultures. I'm most of the time unaware of this expressions and
> that provokes lack of understanding. Speaking as them would make me feel
> much more part of that community of professionals.

As he has reported in his diary entries, Rodrigo is concerned that he does not know the right 'expressions' to use colloquial English during informal encounters such as the conference dinner. He reported feeling he spoke bookish English and that he unintentionally sounded too formal when, in fact, he wanted to sound more friendly and relaxed. Moreover, Rodrigo has reported he thinks that what is perceived as the speed of his speech delivery is too slow and, thus, he bores people when telling stories. In this regard, he explained that he feels he needs to provide a more detailed, and thus longer, context of the stories he tells in English compared to Spanish. This lies in his concern that his audience may not understand what he means if he does not provide background context. Rodrigo thinks his stories, then, become too long and he senses a feeling of boredom in his audience, which he attributes to his inability to speak in English as fast as he does in Spanish.

Knowing he needs to improve some aspects of language in order to legitimately claim his identity in this context, Rodrigo has actively reflected on other aspects of identity he finds himself unable to draw on. The most salient aspect he has identified is

his limited ability to make the kinds of jokes he would make in his mother tongue. When responding to question 5 of the survey, that is to say, what aspects of his personality he thinks he cannot competently display when speaking in English, Rodrigo explained:

> So far, my sense of humour! I'm very fond of puns in Spanish, and I feel frustrated when I try to recreate the same type of humour in English. Also, I cannot be as informal as I am in some social situations, especially when socializing with colleagues in more informal situations or even in more formal situations like conferences. I would like to sound more relaxed and more fluent, so feel more like myself when speaking Spanish.

Humour, as Rodrigo reflects, is a vital aspect of his professional identity. He reports employing it as an ice-breaker strategy in, for instance, conference talks with the goal of establishing good rapport and a relaxed atmosphere with his audience (see humour as a tool to establish relational identity display and development in Habib, 2008). In this regard, Rodrigo reports not feeling 'quite himself' when using English as a vehicle for communication for he is unable to use humour to build rapport with his interlocutors (see Nguyen, 2007). Indeed, social constructionist views of identity consider humour to be 'a very efficient means of the expression of identity' since, in addition to communicating transactional meaning, it is frequently also used to communicate relational meaning such as in-group belonging and solidarity (Archakis & Tsakona, 2005, p. 42).

As a common theme running throughout his comments, Rodrigo stresses his frustration for not being able to overcome the problems posed by these linguistic and socio-pragmatic aspects of his identity. Due to this, he feels he cannot manage his agency in the identity construction process in order to express his professional self competently.

Discussion

As the preliminary findings show, Rodrigo is well aware of the fact that, by learning a foreign language, he gains prestige in his two broad interactional worlds, the English speaking community and the community with which he interacts daily at work and at home. He is also aware of the ways he employs, or would like to employ, the language to construct and negotiate his professional identity. He reflects upon the lack of linguistic knowledge and the socio-pragmatic competence needed to display his professional self fully when faced with an English-speaking community of professionals. An exploration of those aspects of the language Rodrigo felt he lacked in order to display his identity satisfactorily led him to consider colloquial English, speed of speech delivery, and humour as the major factors contributing to his struggle in the articulation of his professional identity in the foreign language.

Rodrigo feels that his current linguistic and socio-pragmatic competence positions him professionally as 'a different person'. In spite of being proficient in English when it comes to discussing his academic work, Rodrigo strives to find his own legitimate voice that expresses all aspects of his professional identity adequately. Academic encounters, such as conferences, then become sites of conflict where Rodrigo's professional subjectivities cannot be expressed satisfactorily with the repertoire of linguistic resources available to him. He feels then that his agency in the identity formation process is seriously impaired and that this will constrain his access as a core member of an international community of professionals (see Wenger, 1998), which may, in turn, have an impact on, for instance, future job prospects (see Sakui & Gaies, 2003 for a discussion on issues of professional identities).

As he resists the subject position he finds himself in when speaking English in professional contexts, Rodrigo works hard to overcome this issue and to ultimately acquire the linguistic and socio-pragmatic competence needed to gain autonomy as a competent language user (Ushioda, 2006). In this light, the ideal professional image Rodrigo wants to project, together with the social prestige gained for speaking a foreign language, provide the motivational basis for improving his language skills and thus his proficiency in the language in order to develop the competencies needed to display the desired identity.

Conclusion

Traditionally, the study of the relationship between a language learner's identity construction and their motivation status has relied upon the contextual assumptions surrounding bilingual contexts. From this perspective, the language learner is believed to develop the need to create a new L2 identity that allows them to integrate in a new L2 community. However, as Noels (2001) argues, an integrative orientation to learning a language is not relevant to many language students1. This may be the case for foreign language learners who may be instrumentally, and not integratively, motivated to learn a language (see Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2009). In this regard, this paper has proposed to move away from the limitations imposed by bilingual contextual assumptions and to consider the role of identity construction in learners' motivation in the often-neglected context of foreign language learning.

L2 learners' perceptions of their selves affect the degree to which learners engage in, for example, the L2 community which influences the language learning process and the development of learners' sociolinguistic competence (Norton & Toohey, 2002). By adopting a pragmatic approach to the study of learner motivation, this study hopes to have raised language teachers' and researchers' awareness to the idea that foreign language learners also have learning needs that are identity-related in nature and which

need to be addressed so that we empower learners with the appropriate linguistic tools to negotiate their identities competently. Future research in this area should undertake the task of collecting larger samples of learners' perceptions of their identities in order to draw generalizable conclusions that can inform L2 teachers of an important aspect of the reality surrounding the learning process of their L2 students.

Note

1. See a rich discussion on the influence of the powerful forces of globalisation in the now fading explanatory power of integrative motivation in current contexts of language learning in Ushioda, 2006.

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Appendix 1.

Bilingual Self-perception Survey (English version)

Please be as honest and objective as possible. Please remember there are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Having the university environment that surrounds you in mind, respond to questions 1-8.

1) How do you feel being a very proficient foreign language speaker compared to native speakers of English?

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———————————————————————————————————
———————————————————————————————————

2) How do you feel when speaking English when around your English speaking colleagues at conferences, for instance?

———————————————————————————————————
———————————————————————————————————
———————————————————————————————————

3) In general, do you feel fortunate to speak two languages? Why?

———————————————————————————————————
———————————————————————————————————
———————————————————————————————————

4) Do you feel you're bilingual? Why yes? /Why not?

———————————————————————————————————
———————————————————————————————————
———————————————————————————————————

5) If any, what aspects of your personality do you think you cannot competently display when speaking in English?

———————————————————————————————————
———————————————————————————————————
———————————————————————————————————

6) If you spoke English exactly as your English speaking friends/colleagues, how would that change your feelings when with them?

_____

_____

_____

7) On a scale of 1-5, '1' equals a strong English accent, and '5' equals no English accent. To what degree do you think you have a detectable accent when you speak English?

<div align="right">1   2   3   4   5</div>

8) On a scale of 1-5, '1' equals a strong Spanish accent, and '5' equals no Spanish accent. To what degree do you think you have a detectable accent when you speak English?

<div align="right">1   2   3   4   5</div>

<div align="right">(Adapted from Caldas, 2007)</div>

Encuesta de Percepción del Hablante Bilingüe (Spanish version)

Por favor, sea tan honesto y objetivo como sea posible. Recuerde que no hay respuestas correctas o incorrectas a las preguntas en esta encuesta. Teniendo en cuenta el entorno de la universidad a la que asiste, conteste las siguientes preguntas.

1) ¿Cómo te sientes al ser un hablante de lengua extranjera muy competente comparado con hablantes nativos de inglés?

_____

_____

_____

2) ¿Cómo te sientes al hablar en inglés cuando te encuentras con tus colegas, quienes solamente hablan inglés, en congresos, por ejemplo?

_____

_____

_____

3) En general, ¿te sientes afortunado de hablar dos idiomas? ¿Por qué?

_____

_____

_____

4) ¿Sientes que eres bilingüe? ¿Por qué sí?/ ¿Por qué no?

_____

_____

_____

5) ¿De haber alguno, qué aspectos de su personalidad piensa que no puede reflejar competentemente cuando habla inglés?

_____

_____

_____

6) Si hablaras inglés exactamente como tus colegas/amigos, ¿de qué manera eso cambiaría tus sentimientos al estar con ellos?

_____

_____

7) En la escala del 1 al 5, donde '1' significa fuerte acento inglés, y '5' significa nada de acento inglés. ¿En qué medida piensas que tienes acento al hablar en inglés?

1   2   3   4   5

8) En la escala del 1 al 5, donde '1' significa fuerte acento español, y '5' significa nada de acento español. ¿En qué medida piensas que tienes acento al hablar en inglés?

1   2   3   4   5

(Adaptado de Caldas, 2007)

Social interactionism in the EFL writing class

María Lelia Pico*

Universidad Nacional de Tucumán, Argentina

Abstract

Social interactionism is a Vygotskyan approach to educational psychology which emphasizes the essential role of learners in constructing their own knowledge and understanding while learning foreign languages by means of the interaction and negotiation of meanings in communicative situations. The aims of this paper are to reflect upon our role as teachers to scaffold our students' learning and to show how such scaffolding may be applied in EFL writing classes of different genres and how it is altered during exams.

Keywords: social interactionism; foreign language learning; collaborative writing; genre.

Resumen

El interaccionismo social es un enfoque de la psicología educativa de raíz vygotskiana que enfatiza el papel decisivo de los aprendientes en la construcción de su propio conocimiento y en el aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras mediante la interacción colaborativa y la negociación de significados en situaciones comunicativas. El objetivo de este trabajo es reflexionar sobre nuestro rol como docentes de andamiar el aprendizaje de nuestros alumnos, mostrar cómo es posible aplicar dicho andamiaje durante las clases de escritura de diferentes géneros en la enseñanza de inglés como lengua extranjera y cómo se altera en instancias de exámenes.

Palabras clave: interaccionismo social; enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras; escritura colaborativa; género.

THE PROCESS OF education is 'one of the most important and complex of all human endeavours' (Williams & Burden, 2007, p. 5). Traditionally, education was something carried out by one person, a teacher, standing in front of a class and transmitting information to a group of learners who were expected to absorb it. Nevertheless, a successful educator could attempt to go beyond teaching-learning processes and teach issues which may have relevance for the students' future life.

Education is a "contextualized social practice, a process which involves not only governments and educational institutions" (Rodriguez Ascurra, 2010) but all of us as well, especially if we are teachers.

As teachers, we should reflect upon our mission and the way we work to achieve it: one such reflection is the reason for writing this paper. It aims to present a brief introduction to Social Interactionism as an approach to education, focusing on Vygotsky's concepts of mediation and zone of proximal development (Hyland, 2007; Williams & Burden, 2007) as theoretical background. Next, the way Vygotsky's ideas influenced genre-based pedagogy will be explained. Finally, the paper presents the steps for Developing the Context – Modelling – Joint Construction and Independent Construction; and shows how this methodology changes when students sit for term tests. This study was successfully carried out with students of English Language IV, Profesorado and Licenciatura en Inglés, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Universidad Nacional de Tucumán. But teachers and students from different teaching-learning levels and dealing with different genres may also benefit from these ideas.

Theoretical background

Social Interactionism

"For social interactionists, children are born into a social world, and learning occurs through interaction with other people. From the time we are born we interact with others in our day-to-day lives, and through these interactions we make our own sense of the world" (Williams & Burden, 2007, p. 39). "Social interactionism emphasizes the dynamic nature of the interplay between teachers, learners and tasks, and provides a view of learning as arising from interactions with others" (op.cit: 43).

An important representative of this approach is Lev Vygostsky. Central to his psychology is the concept of mediation. This is a term used to refer to the part played by other significant people in the learners' lives. The secret of effective learning lies in the nature of social interaction between two or more people with different levels of skill and knowledge. The role of the one with greater knowledge (a teacher, a parent or a peer) is to find ways of helping the other to learn (Williams & Burner, 2007). Donato (1994 in Cotterall & Cohen 2003, p. 158) describes the concept of scaffolding as follows:

in social interaction a knowledgeable participant can create, by means of speech, supportive conditions in which the novice can participate in, and extend, current skills and knowledge to higher levels of competence.

The notion of scaffolding "emphasizes the role of interaction with peers and with experienced others in learning, moving learners from their existing level of performance (what they can do now) to a level of "potential performance" (what they will be able to do without assistance)" (Hyland, 2007, p. 122).

Vygotsky's most widely known concept is that of the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which is used to refer to the layer of skill or knowledge which is just beyond that which the learner is currently capable of achieving. Working together with another person, either an adult or a more competent peer at a level that is just above a learner's present capabilities is the best way for the learner to move into the next layer (Williams & Burner, 2007). The majority of teachers now recognize that if students, young and old, are given tasks to accomplish that are just beyond their actual competence, but are able to secure the support of others, it is likely that they will be able to manage the task better than if they are left to struggle with it on their own. The teacher's skill is to observe carefully and monitor a student's progress in order to provide a task within the proximal reach of that learner and to suggest who their learning partner might be to provide a scaffold, or support, to achieve this goal.

Therefore, "the teacher and learners begin by working together, with the teacher initially doing most of the work, but gradually passing on more and more responsibility to the learners as their skills increase so that they are eventually able to work independently" (Hyland, 2007, p. 157).

Genre-Based Pedagogy

Writing was neglected in the early years of second language studies possibly because of the dominance of the audiolingual approach in the mid twentieth century. Priority was given to spoken language as writing was only considered as an orthographic representation of speech (Matsuda, 1999 in Kroll, 2003). In the 1970s and 1980s, psycholinguistic and cognitive theories dominated language teaching and writing teachers were encouraged to focus on principles of thinking and composing. Writing was seen as a skill that was learned rather than taught and the teacher's role was to be non-directive, facilitating writing through a cooperative environment with minimal interference (Hyland, 2007). In the 1980s, EFL/ESL writing started emerging as a distinctive area of scholarship. Since then, a number of theories trying to understand L2 writing and learning have developed, each having a different focus: language structure, text functions, creative expression, composing processes, content and genre and contexts of writing (Hyland,

2003a).

Until quite recently research on composition focused on the written product, trying to show that an approach that gave importance to usage, structure or correct forms would improve writing. More recent approaches to teaching L2 writing have accepted the importance of helping students to be aware of genre, which is defined as abstract, socially recognised ways of using language. It is based on the assumptions that the features of a similar group depend on the social context of their creation and use, and that those features can be described in a way that relates a text to others like it and to the choices and constraints acting on text producers (Hyland, 2003b, p. 21).

Bakhtin (1986 in Eggins & Martin, 1998, p. 236) defines genre as 'relatively stable types of interactive utterances', while Lo Cascio (1991) claims that whenever a message is transmitted, the linguistic code offers us a variety of choices. Such choices are closely connected to communicative circumstances and to the existing habits within a group of speakers. Cultures seem to possess a wide range of genres that are recognizable to all members of any given culture. All texts have a global defining purpose and it is this global purpose that predicts the stages the text will go through to achieve this goal. In our culture, the main function of the argumentative genres is to explain why things are as they are, in a rational way, to uncover the reality out there and to present it to readers (Martin, 1989).

Genre-based pedagogy believes that learning should be based on explicit and systematic awareness of language. Language develops with the passing of time, but this development, mostly in the case of written language, is the result of explicit teaching that starts at primary school level, moves on in secondary schools and, in most occasions, is strengthened at university (Parra, 1991). Teaching within a framework that draws explicit attention to genres offers students 'a concrete opportunity to acquire knowledge that they can use in undertaking writing tasks beyond the course in which such teaching occurs' (Johns, 2003, p. 197).

Students are provided with models which are 'analysed, compared and manipulated' (Hyland, 2007, p. 132), so as to become aware of the particular structures and language features of the different genres and the way purposes are realized (Larreamendy Joerns, 1991). Through models, students become aware of the way writing differs across genres and of the way particular structures and language features are drawn on to achieve students' writing goals . A careful, active, reflexive and critical reading of models will allow students to analyze the structure of the chosen text, its vocabulary and the strategies employed to achieve coherence and cohesion, among other elements which will help them produce an appropriate written text (Pico, 2007).

Social Interactionism in EFL Writing Classes

Genre-based pedagogy involves explicit teaching of the corresponding genre, critical analysis of models and interactionism. Genre orientation is drawn upon in Vygotsky's (1978 in Hyland, 2003a) work. Vygotsky emphasized the importance of language in interacting with people (Williams & Burner, 2007). As has already been established, for Vygotsky, learning is more effective when learners engage in tasks that are within the area between what they can do independently and what they can do with assistance, the teacher having a central role in scaffolding this learning as learners move toward their potential level of performance and the confidence to independently create texts.

The notion of scaffolding is achieved through a process which involves different steps: contextualizing, modelling, negotiating and constructing. Progress from one level to the other is not achieved only through input but rather through social interaction and the assistance of more skilled and experienced others. Teaching involves a dialogue between teacher and student, rather like an expert training an apprentice (Hyland, 2007).

The first step of this process, developing the context, involves assisting students in understanding the legitimate and meaningful context for writing. Students are made aware of the institutional and social purposes of the genre, the settings in which it is commonly used and the potential audience their production may have.

In the second step of the cycle, modelling, students make use of textual models of the corresponding genre. Modelling is an important scaffolding activity that involves teachers and learners discussing and exploring the stages of the genre and its key grammatical and rhetorical features. With the help of the teacher, these models are read and analysed. Key issues at this stage are:

a) the stages of the text and the function served by each stage,
b) how each stage contributes to the overall social purpose of the text,
c) the language features that help to express these functions,
d) how social relationships between the reader and the writer are encoded

(Hyland, 2007, p. 132).

The next step is the *joint construction* of texts. 'Teachers need to provide support to students in the early stages of learning a new genre' (Hyland, 2007, p. 124). At this stage, teachers and students work together to produce their texts, using data from the previous steps. The teacher focuses less on input and modelling and begins to act as a facilitator for shared writing activities and as a responder to student writing. 'Teachers need to provide opportunities for group interaction and discussion' (Hyland, 2007, p. 124). Students brainstorm ideas in groups and then these ideas are boarded, shared and discussed. Next they are asked to write the thesis sentence and/or topic sentences

that will guide their written texts. Although the final production will be an individual activity, they work in groups and exchange ideas.

The purpose of the *independent construction* stage is for students to apply what they have learned and write a text independently while the teacher monitors and gives advice. In our case we work with the Introduction to the essay, whereby students are asked to write it at home and then in class some of the texts are written up on the board and students, together with the teacher, make suggestions to improve them. At this point different activities are provided by the teacher to develop strategies for planning, drafting, editing and polishing. This support is gradually reduced until the learner has the knowledge and skills to write texts independently, without any kind of collaborative work. It is only then that they are asked to write the complete essay.

The final step, *comparing texts*, provides opportunities for students to investigate how the genre they have been studying is related to other texts that occur in similar contexts.

What are the advantages we find in genre-based teaching instruction?

- It is explicit: It offers writers an explicit understanding of how target texts are structured and why they are written the way they are.
- It systematically addresses texts and contexts: To create an effective text, students need to know various issues such as the way texts are organized, the lexico-grammatical patterns that are typically used in a certain genre, the social purposes of the text, the probable audience that will read it or the roles and relationships of text users.
- It is supportive: Genre-based pedagogies emphasize the collaboration between teacher and student. The teacher scaffolds or supports learners as they move towards confidence to create texts independently. This scaffolding is more evident when students start learning a genre and is gradually reduced until they can perform it by themselves (Hyland, 2007).

Nevertheless, when the time for term tests and final exams comes, the teaching-learning cycle changes. The five stages of the complete teaching-learning cycle, *developing the context, modelling and deconstructing the text, joint construction of the text, independent construction of the text* and *linking related texts* are reduced to three: *developing the context, modelling and deconstructing the text* and *independent construction*.

For assessment purposes, students are usually required to write a text belonging to the genre studied, independently and in a specific period of time. They are supposed

to follow the steps previously described but this time without any scaffolding on the part of the teacher or peers. They should follow the stages of the genre; for example, for narratives, Introduction ['setting the scene: who, where, when, what]' ^ Main body ['event 1', 'event 2', 'event 3... usually in the order they happened] ^ Conclusion ['end of story' (including feelings, comments or reactions]1; for descriptions of people, Introduction ['name of the person'] ^ Main body ['when, where and how you first met him/her' ^ 'physical appearance: facial features and clothes' ^ 'personal qualities with justification(s) /examples ' ^ 'hobbies / interests' ^ 'comments and feelings about the person'] ^ Conclusion (Evans, 2000); for argumentative essays, *Issue ^ Sides ^ Resolution* (Martin & Rose, 2008). They should also think about the text purposes and the potential audience and choose the appropriate vocabulary, etc. Next, they should recall the models analyzed in class, their format, organization of ideas, ways of achieving cohesion and coherence, introduction of logical and convincing arguments, correct use of transitions, etc. Finally, they are expected to write the text combining 'knowledge of content, process, language, context and genre' (Hyland, 2007, p. 136).

The following figures show the complete cycle of teaching and learning (Figure 1 taken from Feez 1998 in Hyland, 2007, p. 129) and the reduced version that is usually followed for term tests and final tests (Figure 2) (Pico, 2010).
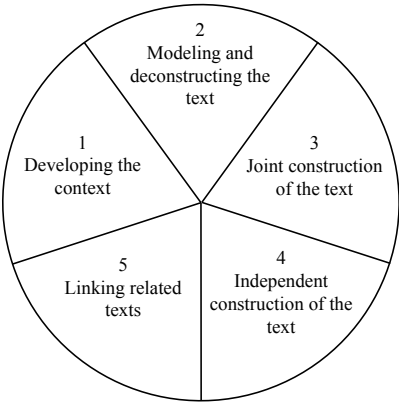

Figure 1.
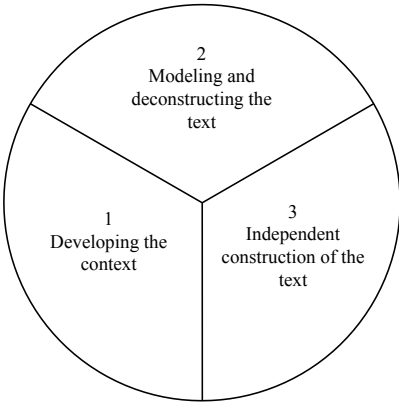
Figure 2.

Figure 1. Complete cycle of teaching and learning followed in writing classes.

Figure 2. Reduced version of the cycle followed for term tests and final exams.

Conclusion

Learning based on an interactionist approach, therefore, presupposes a collaborative relationship between teacher and learner, rather than a relation of learner's dependency and is likely to involve built-in opportunities for learners to discuss, collaborate,

negotiate and become actively involved with the learning process.

The concepts of mediation and zone of proximal development provide a positive message about how to help learners when they are "stuck" at any stage in their learning. They suggest that the teacher should set tasks that are at a level just beyond that which the learners are currently capable of functioning, and teach principles that will enable them to make the next step unassisted (Williams & Burner, 2007, p. 66).

In the 21st century, it is essential to achieve a good control of writing skills in order to communicate ideas and opinions effectively. However, this ability is not naturally acquired but rather culturally transmitted by means of instruction, training and practice. For this reason teachers should help their students become aware of their need to write coherent and effective texts. Social interactionism offers students and teachers the possibility of discussing ideas, helping each other, negotiating and becoming actively involved in the teaching and the learning processes.

For assessment purposes, the learning cycle is usually modified. In Argentina, at least at university level and for writing skills, what is generally evaluated is the text belonging to the genre studied, written independently by each student, in class and in a specific period of time. In class, students will have already identified the characteristics of the corresponding genre, exchanged ideas about different topics to write about, read and analyzed models, written as many versions as necessary to achieve a final draft and corrected their own productions and that of their classmate's. Therefore teachers consider that the time devoted to previous training, scaffolding and practice may provide students with the necessary tools to face the written task by themselves and in the context of tests.

Our role as teachers should be to guide our students from simple steps to more complex ones so that they can learn new topics and make use of them beyond the classroom situation, in everyday life. The ideas developed here have been carried out at university level and, while a detailed description of this experience is not within the scope of this paper, I consider that EFL teachers and students belonging to different teaching-learning levels and dealing with different genres may also benefit from these reflections.

Note

1. ^ followed by, [ ] phases within stages. Stages are labelled with capital letters and phases within each stage, with quotation marks (Martin & Rose, 2007).

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Genitive *'s* and *of* possessive structures and their use constraints for Argentinian EFL learners: a reflective stance towards grammar errors

Natalia Fabiola Muguiro*

Facultad de Ciencias Humanas. Universidad Nacional de La Pampa, Argentina

Abstract

Possession is a universal domain, since every human language makes use of conventionalized expressions for it. The case of attributive possession, mainly as regards the genitive case (*'s*) and the use of the preposition *of*, can cause some difficulties for EFL learners. The aim of this work is to provide a preliminary study of those structures in comparison to the Spanish N *de* N structure so as to shed light on some concepts related to L1 interference and error analysis. Some contributions related to the teaching of grammar contents are also included.

Keywords: attributive possession; genitive case 's vs. preposition of; L1; interference between languages.

Resumen

El concepto de posesión es un campo universal, ya que las lenguas pueden utilizar expresiones convencionales para referir a ese campo universal. El caso de la posesión atributiva, principalmente en cuanto al caso genitivo (*'s*) y el uso de la preposición *of*, puede causar algunas dificultades para los estudiantes de Inglés como lengua extranjera. El propósito de este trabajo es brindar un estudio preliminar de esas estructuras en inglés en comparación con la utilización de la preposición *de* en español a modo de ilustrar algunas situaciones relacionados con la interferencia de la lengua materna y el análisis del error. También incluye algunos aportes referidos a la enseñanza de contenidos gramaticales.

Palabras clave: posesión atributiva; caso genitivo 's vs. preposición of; interferencia entre lenguas.

* Corresponding author, e-mail: nataliamuguiro@hotmail.com

LEARNERS OF ENGLISH whose first language (L1) is Spanish generally experience some problems when deciding on the use of attributive possessive structures, mainly because of their L1 interference. Based on my experience as an EFL teacher as well as on research studies carried out on the topic, I will analyze the use of those structures, especially the pre-nominal possessive (*'s* possessive or genitive case) and post-nominal prepositional constructions (*of* possessive) by Argentinian learners of English.

Students make mistakes during their learning process, since this is an inevitable part of learning a language. The way in which errors are treated, or ignored, is of paramount importance for the development of teaching attitudes towards error and correction. Thus, a second aim of this paper is to reflect upon the way in which grammar errors, specifically those related to attributive possessive structures, need to be dealt with so as to encourage appropriate teaching practices.

As regards the organization of this work, I will firstly provide an explanatory section to contextualize attributive possession within the broader sphere of possession as a universal domain. Then, I will describe and analyze *'s* and *of* possessive structures and their contrasts in English and Spanish. After that, I will refer to the main constraints for Argentinian learners of English as well as some considerations about error treatment. Finally, I will provide some suggestions regarding the implications for the teaching of grammar.

Possession: General Considerations

Possession is a universal domain, that is, any human language can be expected to have conventionalized expressions for it (Heine, 1997). Following Seiler (1983, pp. 2-4), possession may be defined 'as a bio-cultural domain involving a relationship between a prototypically human possessor (PR), in most cases presented as the topic, and the possessum (PM), normally the comment'. Baron and Herslund (2001) claim that what is normally called possession is the linguistic expression of the relation between two entities, a PR and a PM, such that one, the PR, is seen as being in some way related to the other, the PM, as having it near or controlling it.

McGregor (2009) describes three types of possession: attributive, predicative and external possession. The term attributive possession refers to constructions in which the PM and the PR expressions form a noun phrase (NP), as in '*My dog*, *The king of France*, and *Cliff's ankle*'. By contrast, predicative possession is used in constructions in which the possessive relationship is expressed in the predicate, often by a possessive verb as in '*I have a dog*'. Finally, constructions in which the possessive relation is not specified either by the lexical verb or within the NP but rather at the level of a clausal construction are examples of external possession, as in '*The dog bit Cliff on the ankle*' (McGregor, 2009, p.2).

The present work will be focused on attributive possession. Heine (1997) states that attributive possession appears to present a relatively simple structure: it consists essentially of two NPs linked to one another in a specific way. Accordingly, work on attributive possession has focused mostly on the way the two NPs are linked.

English and Spanish Contrasted: *'s* and *of/de* Possessive Structures

Attributive possessive constructions overlap across English and Spanish in different ways. One case is the use of possessive pronouns, possible in both languages, which will not be under study in the present work because of length restrictions. Besides the use of pronouns, English has two ways of expressing nominal possession: genitives, which are realized pre-nominally with the *'s* marker, e.g. *John's eyes*, and the prepositional possessive, which is post-nominal and is realized with the preposition *of*, e.g. *the door of the cave*. In contrast, in Spanish only one realization is possible, the post-nominal prepositional possessive with *de* (of), e.g. '*la casa de Juan*' (John's house) since pre-nominal possessives are not accepted, e.g. '**María casa*' (*Mary house), as stated by Vásquez Carranza (2010, p.148).

To sum up, both languages realize nominal possessive constructions through post-nominal prepositional constructions with *of/de*, and English also allows pre-nominal *'s* constructions, which is not allowed in Spanish (Whitley, 2002). In the following sections, I will provide a more detailed analysis of English and Spanish possessive structures separately.

English *'s* and *of* possessives

Quirk (1985, p. 321) claims that in many instances there is a similarity of function and meaning between 'a noun in the genitive case and the same noun as head of a prepositional phrase (PP) with *of*. For example, in '*What's the ship's name?*' and '*What's the name of the ship?*', the two forms are equivalent in meaning and are both perfectly acceptable (Quirk, 1985, p. 321). In other cases, either the genitive or the *of* construction is the only appropriate choice, e.g. '*John's school/*The school of John* or *the front of the house/*the house's front*' (Quirk, 1985, p.321).

Different accounts have been proposed to explain why the use of one structure is selected over the other. For example, Quirk (1972) suggests the use of a gender scale and claims that the ' *'s* possessive is favoured when the PR is higher on that scale': human male and female (*aunt, uncle*) < human dual (both genders, such as *doctor*) < human common (*baby*) < human collective (*family*) < higher animals (*dog, cow*) < higher organisms (*ship*) < lower animals (*ants*) < inanimates (*box*) (Quirk, 1972, p.198). Following this scale, sentences like *Anna's car* and *the roof of this house* would be acceptable but **the car of Ann* or **this house's roof* would not.

Hawkins (1981), cited by Vásquez Carranza (2010, p.149), argues that 'it is not simply the humanness of the possessor what determines the choice of constructions; instead, it is a comparison of the animacy of the PR and the PM'. He proposes that human nouns have linear precedence over non-human nouns (Hawkins, 1981) and he supports his argument with two examples: '*Mary's car/the car of Mary*' (marginal because an inanimate precedes a human); and '*the foot of the mountain/the mountain's foot*' (marginal because an inanimate precedes a human attribute). In that way, Hawkins proposes a simpler animacy hierarchy: 'human (*Mary*) < human attribute (*foot*) < non-human animate (*rabbit*) < non-human inanimate (*table*)' (Vásquez Carranza, 2010, p.149).

Referring to the hierarchies described above, Vásquez Carranza (2010) cites Anschutz (1997), who argues that they should be interpreted as tendencies rather than rules. He states that 'the main factor that determines the choice is the information status of the nouns involved' (Anschutz, 1997, pp.28-35). Specifically, if the PR is old information and the PM is new information, then the structure will be realized with *'s*. When it is the other way round, the possessive phrase will be realized with the *of* construction. Similar to Anschutz's view, Quirk (1985, p.1282) also affirms that the choice between the genitive and the of construction 'is conditioned by the linear organization of utterances in discourse'. He claims that the genitive is generally favoured when the second noun has a higher communicative value than the first one, whereas the *of* construction is preferred when the thematic distribution is the reverse.

To sum up, it can be stated that two main criteria exist when providing explanations for the selection of one possessive form over the other: different categories from scales or hierarchies (Quirk, 1972; Hawkins, 1981) and information status of the nouns involved (Anschutz, 1997; Quirk, 1985).

Spanish N *de* N structures

Müller (2001) claims that if we search in the Spanish grammatical literature for a description of the meaning of the preposition *de*, it is very common to find the word 'possession' in the first lines of this description. The author also explains that the function of the preposition *de* is 'to combine entities in a given way and that the interpretation of N *de* N structures depends on the nature of the head noun, placing the whole construction on a sort of restriction/non restriction scale' (Müller, 2001, p.176).

This scale is divided into two main parts according to the properties of the nouns in question (relational and non-relational). The bottom part of the scale consists of nouns that are either inherently relational: denoting objects (body parts), arbitrary parts and persons (kinship) or nouns that are morphologically related to predicates: deverbal and deadjectival nouns. The upper part of the scale contains nouns that do not refer to

external entities, and consequently are non-relational. It is important to note the part-whole constructions can be both relational and non-relational (Müller, 2001).

Although Müller (2001) presents every kind of N *de* N combination based on the described categories in detail, I will only introduce some examples to illustrate comparisons with English structures. To explain deadjectival nouns it is stated that the predicative force of the adjective is transferred to the derived noun, e.g. '*la inteligencia de Juan*' (John's intelligence) (Müller, 2001, p.177). As for deverbal nouns, the nominalized verb inherits the argument structure of the verb, e.g. '*la llegada de Juan*' (John's arrival) (Müller, 2001, p.178).

Inherently relational nouns are divided into three groups. In the first one, the head nouns denote quantities and arbitrary parts, e.g. '*el porcentaje del banco*' (the percentage of the bank); in the second group, they denote persons, e.g. '*las madres de Plaza de Mayo*' (May Square mothers); and in the third one, physical objects, e.g. '*la nariz de la chica*' (the girl's nose). Finally, '*la cola del caballo*' (the horse's tail) is an example of relational part-whole relationships, while '*la ventana de la casa*' (the window of the house) illustrates a non-relational one (Müller, 2001, pp. 179-180).

To summarize, the main criteria present in Spanish to organize possessive N *de* N structures is also a scale, as it was observed for English structures, but dependent mainly on the relational or non-relational nature of the nouns involved.

Main Difficulties for Argentinian EFL Learners

Swan and Smith (2001, p. 106) state that 'possession and related concepts that in English are expressed by possessive cases of nouns, e.g *Jim's bike*, are expressed by Spanish learners of English with an *of* phrase, e.g. **The bike of Jim*.' Although this might be considered an overgeneralization, Argentinian learners, in general, might face difficulties when using those structures. Similar assumptions have been proved according to findings from some research studies on the topic carried out with Spanish speaking learners from different countries (Wolford, 2006; Vásquez Carranza, 2010; Fernández Dominguez, 2010; among others). Even more, the distinction between the use of the apostrophe and the preposition *of* for possession is signaled as a common mistake students make when sitting for international exams (see Driscoll, 2005, p. 12).

Additional problems might appear if we consider that the combination of two nouns together to mean one thing/person/idea, etc. also exist in English, such as *tennis ball*, *road accident*, *bank manager*, *life story*, *income tax*, (Murphy, 2004, p. 160), among many others. Those combinations, in which the first noun usually carries an adjectival value, can cause problems to students who might think about them as attributes the second noun 'possesses,' mainly because of the use of *de* in Spanish for almost every case. Thus, as in Spanish we say *una pelota de tenis* or *el gerente del banco*, learners

might probably think of *a ball of tennis* or *the manager of the bank* as valid options. Some specific cases can be even more confusing, for example the difference between *a sugar bowl* (perhaps empty) and *a bowl of sugar* (=a bowl with sugar in it) or *a shopping bag* (perhaps empty) and *a bag of shopping* (=a bag full of shopping) (Murphy, 2004, p. 160).

The adding of unnecessary apostrophes plus *s* is also common, mainly when dealing with complex nouns, such as *garden vegetables*, *the restaurant owner* or *the garage door* (Murphy, 2004, p. 160). It is not strange to find cases in which students think of *garden's vegetables*, *the restaurant's owner* or *the garage's door* as possible options. This occurs because once learners become familiar with the genitive case, they might tend to over generalize its use to every noun + noun combination. Many other confusing cases exist if we consider the use of the genitive *'s* or the preposition *of* for time expressions, organizations and geographical names, without forgetting that in many cases the decisions towards which is the best option purely depends on contextual features such as end-focus or end-weight (Quirk, 1990, p. 104).

As a way of illustrating the topic I will describe a recent teaching practice with a group of teenagers (pre-intermediate level). Students were asked to work in pairs on the writing of a horror story to be part of a school contest. Some words with different scores were given and learners had to use as many as they could. Some of the given words were: *man*, *voice*, *roof*, *haunted*, *house*, *cat* and *eyes*. When reading the stories, I noted that most students had not used the *'s* possessive structure where it would have been more appropriate. They tended to use the *of* construction most of the times, e.g. *Suddenly, I heard the voice of a man* (instead of *a man's voice*), *The eyes of the cat were bright red* (instead of *the cat's eyes*). Unsurprisingly, no problems appeared when they wrote sentences like *A cat was walking on the roof of the haunted house*. What is more, nobody wrote phrases like *a haunted house's roof*. As a preliminary conclusion, it can be stated that two tendencies appear: the overuse of the *of* possessive structures and the evident absence of *'s* possessive ones.

These difficulties experienced by learners can be explained through the concepts of L1 interference and the development of interlanguage. When writing or speaking the target language (L2), learners tend to rely on their native L1 structures. If the structures of the two languages are distinctly different, a relatively high frequency of errors could be expected, thus indicating an interference of L1 on L2 (Ellis, 1997). Lott (1983, p. 256) defines interference as 'errors in the learner's use of the foreign language that can be traced back to the mother tongue'. Similarly, Ellis (1997, p.51) refers to interference as 'transfer,' which he says is 'the influence that the learner's L1 exerts over the acquisition of an L2'.

As regards interference errors, Alonso Alonso (1997), citing Lott (1983), distinguishes

three types. The first one is defined as 'overextension of analogy' and it occurs when the student misuses a vocabulary item because it is similar to another form in the Ll. 'Transfer of structure' forms constitutes the second group of errors. These happen when the student makes a grammar mistake because the mother tongue rules are followed. The third type is called 'interlingual/intralingual' and consists of the errors students make because a word distinction, either lexical or grammatical, which is made in the L2, does not exist in their L1 (Alonso Alonso, 1997, p.8).

In an attempt to classify the two typical errors made by EFL learners according to Lott's (1983) categories, I would say that they belong to two types. The overuse of the *of* structure would be a 'transfer of structure' error, since students follow the rules of Spanish and transfer the N *de* N structure to the *of* construction to all possessive instances. The absence of *'s* possessive constructions could be case of 'interlingual error', as learners make mistakes because that particular structure (*'s* possessive) does not exist in Spanish.

Some last considerations about errors are important, as suggested by Thornbury (1999). The first one is priority: which errors really matter and which do not? Some errors are likely to distract the reader or listener while others go largely unnoticed. Another aspect is intelligibility: to what extent does the error interfere with, or distort, the learner's message? (Thornbury, 1999, p.115). In the case of the use of possessive structures by EFL learners, any of the two most frequent errors described above would not cause serious problems as regards intelligibility, and perhaps in some cases they would even go unnoticed among NNS. However, they could distract or make the message a bit awkward for NS.

Finally, there are many complex decisions that teachers have to make when monitoring learner production. Although the way teachers respond to error tend to be more often intuitive than consciously considered, reflecting upon their attitudes towards error as well as adopting different feedback alternatives become pedagogical strategies that might prove fruitful.

Considerations for an Effective Teaching of Grammar

First of all, I will refer to the way in which attributive possessive structures are present in most grammar books. In general, the use of categories has been present in most course and grammar books, although simplified according to the language level. For example, in materials for elementary levels, it can be found that *'s* 'is commonly used for people, and *of* is used for things and places' (Murphy, 1997, p. 134). However, in the same book series but aimed at an intermediate level, it is found that *'s* is used 'for people or animals and *of* is used for ideas, things and organizations, together with many more examples and exceptions' (Murphy, 2004, p. 162).

Secondly, I would like to introduce a definition of the concept of teaching grammar as provided by Larsen-Freeman (1991, p. 280): 'Teaching grammar means enabling language students to use linguistic forms accurately, meaningfully and appropriately.' In order to do so, Larsen-Freeman (1991) proposes a framework of reference which includes three interconnected dimensions of language: the form of structures (how a particular grammar structure is constructed), their semantics (what the grammar structures mean, lexically or grammatically), and the pragmatic conditions governing their use (the study of those relations between language and context that are encoded in the structure of a language).

By organizing grammar contents considering the three dimensions of language teachers can easily identify where the challenge will lie for their students. Then, for each grammar content they are about to teach, teachers should think about which of the three dimensions of language is likely to offer the greatest challenge for their students and provide them with different tasks to tackle it. For instance, considering the teaching practice I described before, I think that the three dimensions of language would cause some difficulties for learners, although as their level is pre-intermediate, they are probably familiarized with the form and meaning of the structures, so perhaps the pragmatic dimension would be the most challenging at this stage. However, as regards form, the adding of apostrophe plus *s* or apostrophe alone after plural nouns ending in *s* as well as aspects of *'s* pronunciation according to different ending sounds could constitute problematic issues. Considering meaning, some distinctions about the relations between the two nouns involved in the structure could also cause trouble. Finally, as I said before, the distinction between *'s* and *of* structures and when to use each would constitute the biggest challenge from a pragmatic point of view.

This idea of identifying the challenge presented by some grammar contents is related to the concept of consciousness-raising (CR), which, according to Thornbury (1999) is essential for successful grammar teaching within a communicative language framework. Ellis (2002) makes a useful distinction between CR and mere 'practice'. The main difference is that CR does not involve the learner in repeated production. This is because 'the aim of CR is not to enable learners to perform a structure correctly but to help them know more about it' (Ellis, 2002, p.169). It is only after CR that effective, contextualized practice will result useful. However, as an inevitable part of the language learning process, learners make mistakes. It is then that teachers have to develop pedagogical tools to deal with those errors in an effective way.

'Attitudes to error run deep and lie at the heart of teachers' intuitions about language learning' (Thornbury, 1999, p.116). On the one hand, there are people who still believe that errors are contagious. On the other hand, many teachers believe that to correct errors is a form of interference, especially in fluency activities. These different views are

reflected on the shifts of thinking among researchers, who see errors as being evidence of developmental processes rather than the result of bad habit formation. Thus, current methodology is much more tolerant of error. However, some studies about learners whose language development has fossilized suggest that the lack of negative feedback (also called 'correction', which occurs when learners are told that they cannot say something) may have been a factor. Thus, if the only messages learners get are positive (learners are told when they are right), it may be the case that there is no incentive to restructure their mental grammar.

I think that we need to find a balance between negative and positive feedback, which can be reached if we give learners clear messages about their errors. So the question is: what options do teachers have when faced with a student's error? It will depend, above all, on the type of error, the type of activity and the type of learner, but teachers can always make use of a wide range of strategies. Self-correction and peer correction, clarification requests, echoing mistakes with a quizzical intonation, using finger-coding, gestures and drawings, elicitation, reactive teaching and reformulation, among others, are useful techniques (Thurnbury, 1999, pp. 117-119).

Conclusion

Argentinian EFL learners generally find it difficult to decide which kind of possessive structure is more acceptable for different instances of attributive possession. As a result, two main consequences arise: the overuse of *of* structures and the absence of *'s* possessive ones. Those errors can be explained through the concepts of L1 interference and the development of interlanguage.

As regards grammar teaching, a general four-stage process could be implemented in order to help students acquire the grammatical knowledge needed for effective communication and tackle difficulties with the use of possessive structures: identify a potential challenge through the consideration of form, meaning and use of the grammar content; help students know more about the grammar structures (CR) and provide learners with instances of meaningful practice; and deal with errors in a constructive way by making use of different feedback strategies.

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Appendix 1.

Observations:

I used *italics* for examples in English and Spanish.

An English translation was added between parentheses after Spanish examples to clarify meaning.

Abbreviations:

CR: consciousness-raising

L1: first language

L2: target language

N: noun

NP: noun phrase

PM: possessum

PP: prepositional phrase

PR: possessor

Symbols:

(*) used before unacceptable expressions

(?) used before expressions when native speakers are unsure about acceptability, showing a marginal use

Informal assessment tools in kindergarten

Sarah Hillyard*

Colegio San Martín de Tours, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Abstract

In all contexts, assessment is intended to inform and improve learning and teaching. Because of the characteristics of very young learners and of the teaching and learning process in kindergarten, assessment should be carried out in normal everyday activities while learning is happening. Therefore, it is essential for assessment tools to allow for continuous and on-going assessment as children develop and demonstrate their achievements over time. This article explores the principles of assessment and examines an informal assessment tool for carrying out observations that is suitable for assessing very young learners in EFL contexts.

Keywords: assessment; kindergarten; observation; EFL (English as a Foreign Language).

Resumen

En todo contexto, la evaluación tiene el objeto de informar y mejorar el aprendizaje y la enseñanza. Debido a las características de los niños y del proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje en el jardín de infantes, la evaluación debe llevarse a cabo durante actividades cotidianas normales mientras que el aprendizaje está ocurriendo. Por lo tanto, es esencial que los instrumentos de evaluación permitan una evaluación continua y permanente ya que los niños van desarrollando y demostrando sus logros a lo largo del tiempo. Este artículo presenta los principios de evaluación y examina una herramienta de evaluación informal para realizar observaciones que es adecuada para la evaluación del aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera en el jardín de infantes.

Palabras clave: evaluación; Jardín de Infantes; observación; ILE (Inglés como Lengua Extranjera).

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* Corresponding author, e-mail: shillyard@gmail.com

ASSESSMENT IS A fundamental component of the teaching and learning cycle. It is intended to inform and improve not only learning, but also teaching practices. Learning in kindergarten is active and therefore, assessment should be carried out *while* learning is happening, rather than as a "snapshot" of a final product or independent activity. Hence, assessment tools need to be clear, comprehensive and on-going so as to provide as much information as possible to the teacher to thoroughly comprehend both the learning and the teaching process. As children require ample time and a variety of learning opportunities to develop and demonstrate their achievements, assessment should be taken as a continuous process in natural instructional encounters.

This article first sets forth the principles of assessment applied to very young learners. Secondly, an assessment by observation method is identified as particularly suitable as a tool for assessing young learners in EFL contexts. Subsequently, a "continuum chart" (an informal observation tool, designed for very young learner classrooms) is presented, which reflects the different core principles of assessment.

Very Young Learners

Very young learners are considered in this article as students who have not yet started their primary education, meaning children of the age of three to five, who are still developing literacy in their first language. At this level, children are very energetic and enthusiastic and so classroom activities include physical exercise, games, oral interaction, group work, arts and crafts, songs, rhymes and drama activities. Children at this age can feel insecure and emotionally unstable so teachers need to be ready to praise students' efforts and offer encouragement (Roth, 1998).

Assessment and Evaluation

For the purpose of clarification, assessment and evaluation need to be differentiated. Evaluation is used by many specialists as a broader notion and as a systematic study of the different components of a course to judge its success or cost-effectiveness (Harris & McCann, 1994). The components that may be studied are syllabus objectives, course design, materials, methodology, teacher performance, lessons, programmes or skills, as well as assessment itself (Cameron, 2001).

Therefore, assessment is just one component in the evaluation of a course and refers to the "general process of monitoring or keeping track of the learners' progress" (Rea-Dickins, 2000). When dealing with assessment, formal assessment is distinguished from informal assessment. Testing is widely used by EFL teachers as one of the main instruments of formal assessment (Cameron, 2001). Tests are carried out under formal exam conditions, composed of specially designed exercises for testing language competencies (Allan, 1996) and measure a sample of an individual learner's performance

or knowledge in a given domain within a specific timeframe (Brown, 1994). Considering the characteristics of very young learners mentioned above, it is suggested that informal assessment is more appropriate at this level.

When informally assessing young learners, a specific task is not necessarily needed, nor a percentage or mark (Brewster, Ellis & Girard, 2002). This type of assessment may be based on a teacher's subjective opinion from intuition or continuous observation of students' skills, level or knowledge (Smith, 1995) and may include certain aspects of the learning process which cannot be tested formally, such as attitude and cooperation (Brewster et al., 2002). It seems reasonable to use informal types of assessment in the very young learner context (rather than formal assessment) as non-linguistic factors are an essential part of children's learning. Therefore, this article will deal with an informal assessment method, namely assessment by observation, for which an understanding of the principles underpinning assessment is needed.

Principles of Assessment

This section explores the core principles of assessment of children's learning, such as *reliability*, *validity*, *fairness*, *washback*, *accountability* and *practicality*. The sample assessment tool at the end of this article was designed to portray these six core principles.

According to Harris and McCann (1994, p. 89) assessment methods must meet the criterion of being *reliable*, which means that they are consistent and 'that under the same conditions and with the same student performance the assessment procedure would produce the same results'. Clear criteria and instructions must be established to increase the degree of reliability (Cameron, 2001). For instance, traditional paper-and-pencil tests are usually the most reliable formal assessment technique although they only measure one aspect of a skill and thus provide a "snapshot" of the learner's performance (Brewster et al., 2002). Reliable informal assessment techniques include tools for classroom observation, which describe many different aspects related to the age group and cognitive development of children.

Although *validity* is often applied to testing, any form of assessment must reach this criterion: it must 'measure what it intends to measure and not something different' (Harris & McCann, 1994, p. 89). The most valid assessment methods are those that enable the collection of a vast array of student performance descriptions or aspects of a skill (Cameron, 2001). Smith (1995) suggests that, at this level, assessment should emphasize validity more than reliability as most of the work done in very young learner classrooms cannot be measured in the statistical manner that is needed to make assessment reliable. The tool needs to outline the knowledge, skills and abilities that children are hopefully developing, continuously and in an on-going manner (in contrast to expecting clear-cut results).

To reach the principle of *fairness* it is necessary to provide different opportunities for assessment through various methods and allow children the chance to show what they have learnt and what they can do to their best advantage in familiar tasks (Cameron, 2001). Perhaps, although it may depend on the context, assessment opportunities in kindergarten include games, songs, rhymes, stories, arts and crafts and drama activities that are used as everyday teaching and learning strategies. Cameron (2001) uses the term "congruent", to explain that assessment should fit comfortably with learners' classroom experience and thus, teachers should use "non-invasive" methods. Therefore, by using activities that are familiar to learners, they are assessed on the basis of what and how they have been taught, implying that it should be an 'interactional, rather than an isolated, solo experience' (Cameron, 2001, p. 220). As far as possible, teachers should be able to assess most of their students in everyday lessons, avoiding the need to isolate students to assess them individually. However, considering the number of children in some classrooms, it may be difficult to assess all students in the group, in which case a smaller group of children may be selected to be observed (Cameron, 2001).

Accountability may be defined as 'the responsibility we have as teachers to be able to explain the rationale behind our assessment techniques to students, parents and institutions' (Harris & McCann, 1994, p. 89). This includes reporting and explaining to these key stakeholders what progress has or has not been made and why (Harris & McCann, 1994).

Furthermore, assessment techniques may have a *washback* effect, defined by Harris and McCann (1994, p. 93) as 'the influence of assessment on both teaching and learning'. On the one hand, the demands of assessment may place stress on teachers and learners, rush the learning process to cover the syllabus and restrict classroom activity to preparation for assessment, thus building up negative washback (Cameron, 2001). On the other hand, assessment may be a great motivating force; teachers determine student's strengths and needs, constructive feedback supports further learning and teachers use assessment results to plan future lessons (Cameron, 2001).

Any assessment approach should be *practical* in terms of physical resources, time constraints, financial limitations, administration and scoring (Brown, 1994). Impracticality may perhaps be reduced in kindergarten settings if assessment is to use ordinary everyday activities, as there is no extra preparation involved. However, in the case of informal observation tools, they may be time consuming for teachers to design and carry out (unless preparation time is reduced by using a sample, like the one below, as a basis to construct a new tool for the teacher's specific context).

Types of Assessment

As Cameron (2001, p. 220) states 'assessment is more than testing'. In kindergarten

settings it is not enough to use the type of assessment used with older children and adults which is often of a summative nature. Tests and products of students' work are usually limited to assessing structures of the language, vocabulary or functions, and do not take the development of the individual into account (Smith, 1995). The greatest difference when assessing very young learners is in the way they learn. Knowledge is constructed and expressed in experiential, interactive, concrete and hands-on ways: through songs, dances, drama activities, movement and so forth. Essential in very young learner classrooms are also non-linguistic goals, which may include aspects such as the development of fine and gross motor skills, attitude, effort and participation.

Cameron (2001) explains that teachers assess their students continuously, by intuition and observation in normal classroom conditions. These alternative assessment methods can become supportive of the teaching and learning process (Cameron, 2001) and do not only take linguistic factors into consideration, but also non-linguistic factors (Harris & McCann, 1994). Brown (1994) mentions "performance-based assessment" in which students are assessed during performance in various tasks, such as hands-on projects.

Everything that happens in a classroom is potential evidence of student learning. Data, whether linguistic or non-linguistic, can be collected using informal strategies which include photographs, videotapes, tape recordings, conferencing, portfolio assessment and observations. Each of these methods can be used simultaneously together with any other tool to collect further data on student learning.

On-going informal assessment methods, like the ones mentioned above, are considered to be of a formative nature (as opposed to summative) (Cameron, 2001). By monitoring and recording students' progress, individual learner's needs are identified and future learning targets can be established (Brewster et al., 2002). This means that assessment at this level should focus on the process rather than the product, following Smith's (1995, p. 4) statement that young learners 'have the privilege and right to be a product in process'. Assessment by observation clearly focuses on the students' progress.

Assessment by Observation

In informal assessment conditions children do not feel threatened as everyday classroom activities become assessment tasks (Cameron, 2001). It is important for children to be observed and assessed as they learn because very young learners demonstrate their understanding and learning by doing, showing and telling. Observation is a useful assessment tool because it does not disturb ordinary classroom activities. Therefore, students should not be aware that they are being assessed and possible feelings of anxiety or stress are reduced (Brown, 1994).

As it is easy to fall into the trap of relying solely on rough impressions, it is advisable

to establish clear criteria for the observation to become systematic. These observations provide important information to be used as feedback to modify or plan subsequent lessons, what Cameron (2001, p. 231) calls a 'continuous process of *observe-notice-adjust teaching*'.

A record-keeping tool may be a checklist of pre-defined clear assessment criteria that students are to achieve during a unit of work, a term or an academic year, in the form of target performance statements (Cameron, 2001). Although a yes/no or pass/fail system may be used, a more descriptive system may be useful in which students can be seen to improve along a continuum to different degrees by using band scales or by using a "Continuum Chart" which is completed over time to show each learner's progress (Brewster et al., 2002). This may be enriched with a recording notebook or teacher journal in which comments are written about each student.

Sample Assessment Tool: The "Continuum Chart"

An informal assessment tool (Appendix 1) has been designed for a class of 25, five year old learners, learning English as a foreign language in the city of Buenos Aires, Argentina. These kindergarten children have been learning English for two years, since the age of three, for about two hours and a half a week. At the age of five they extend their English lessons to eight hours a week.

This type of alternative assessment is based on observation of students in normal classroom activities as an ongoing process, or what Brown (1994) calls "performance-based" assessment. This particular format is what Brewster at al. (2002) describe as a "continuum chart" which is to be filled in over time. This tool was designed to fulfil the six core principles of assessment outlined earlier.

With this assessment tool the teacher will be looking for evidence of the learning of linguistic and non-linguistic aspects by systematically observing students engaging in normal classroom activities. It contains four sections which include linguistic skills: listening, speaking, vocabulary and literacy skills with two to six descriptors in each. Non-linguistic factors include attitude, cooperativeness and effort and contain two to three descriptors in each. Each descriptor has a three point scale ranging from a statement describing a student who has difficulties to a more successful student in the area. One copy of the assessment tool is to be used for each student covering the whole academic school year.

This is intended to be a visual tool for the teacher, where each section is separated into smaller sections and the boxes are to be filled in following a colour code. When a student moves up the continuum chart and shows evidence of success in an area, the appropriate box is coloured in using a different colour for each term (although any other time-scale could be used) to differentiate learning and to detect learner progress

and changes over the year. There is space at the bottom for further comments where the teacher writes any other observations of the child's learning and another for comments on targets for further learning to identify points on which to improve. These may be useful as comments to provide to parents and can be transformed into comments for writing report cards.

Conclusion

For assessment to be effective in very young learner classrooms it should support learning and contribute to the teaching and learning process (Cameron, 2001). Its major function is to compile clear information on student learning from everyday situations and inform teaching to improve future learning. It is important that teachers use assessment continuously and on an on-going basis and that the selected assessment tool clearly shows the progress of the learner over time as a tracking device. It is suggested that teachers find authentic ways of assessing their students and adapt a tool or design their own recording tool to suit their style.

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Appendix 1.

Sample assessment tool - Continuum Chart

School: _____	Teacher: _____

Name of Student: _____Age: _____

Term 1 Date: _____   Colour code: ☐

Term 2 Date: _____   Colour code: ☐

LINGUISTIC FACTORS

Listening:

Cannot understand simple instructions		Has some difficulty understanding simple instructions		Understands simple instructions	

Cannot understand simple oral/narrative texts		Understands simple oral/narrative texts		Understands a variety of oral/narrative texts	

Cannot understand classroom language		Needs help to understand classroom language		Understands classroom language unaided	

Cannot listen and point to pictures described by the teacher		Listens and points to pictures described by the teacher with some difficulty		Listens and points to pictures described by the teacher	

Cannot listen to a description and draw or colour a picture appropriately		Listens to a description and draws or colours a picture with some assistance		Listens to a description and draws or colours a picture independently	

Cannot listen and sequence pictures		Has difficulty listening and sequencing pictures		Listens and sequences pictures with ease	

Speaking:

Does not participate in oral activities and does not communicate using oral language		Participates in some oral activities and uses familiar language		Participates in most oral activities and tries to use new language as well as familiar language	

Does not sing songs, say rhymes or poems from memory		Sings songs, says rhymes or poems from memory with difficulty		Sings songs, says rhymes or poems from memory	

Impossible to understand due to pronunciation issues		Has some pronunciation difficulties		Pronounces intelligibly	

Cannot ask questions using pre-fabricated phrases		Is able to ask questions using pre-fabricated phrases when helped		Asks questions using pre-fabricated phrases with ease and unaided	

Cannot answer questions using set phrases		Is able to answer questions using set phrases when helped		Answers questions by using set phrases	

Vocabulary:

Does not recognize spoken vocabulary		Recognizes spoken vocabulary with aid		Recognizes spoken vocabulary with ease and without assistance	

Does not use vocabulary		Does not use vocabulary appropriately at all times		Uses vocabulary appropriately	

Cannot answer questions concerning quantity		Answers questions concerning quantity up to number 10		Answers questions concerning quantity up to number 25	

Does not yet recognize colours		Recognizes some colours		Recognizes most colours	

Cannot form the plural of nouns		Forms the plural of nouns inconsistently		Forms the plural of nouns adequately	

Literacy skills:

Cannot decode any high-frequency words		Has some difficulty decoding high-frequency words		Can decode some high-frequency words	

Cannot retell a picture story in his/her own words		Can retell a picture story in his/her own words with assistance / prompting		Can retell a picture story in his/her own words independently	

NON-LINGUISTIC FACTORS

Attitude:

Does not participate in any activity		Only participates in activities of his/her interest		Participates actively in all class activities	

Seems to be uninterested in class activities		Is interested in some class activities		Always appears to be interested in class activities	

Does not show interest in the language		Seems to be interested in the language when praised		Shows a good attitude towards the language	

Cooperativeness:

Does not co-operate with members of class		Is generally cooperative with other members of class		Is always co-operative with teacher/peers	

Is only able to work alone		Sometimes works well in pairs/groups		Is able to work in pairs/groups with ease	

Effort:

Still needs encouragement to put in effort		Displays a reasonable effort		Works to the best of his/her ability	

Still needs encouragement to produce tidy and finished pieces of work		Generally completes pieces of work with care		Produces high quality finished pieces of work	

OTHER COMMENTS / OBSERVATIONS

_____

_____

_____

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TARGETS FOR FURTHER LEARNING

_____

_____

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Review of Triptico by David Riley

Triptico App

David Riley
Downloadable from http://www.triptico.co.uk/download
Price: Free. Individual or school subscriptions can be purchased for additional resources and bonus features.
Requirements: Adobe Air; Internet connection.

The main criticism levelled worldwide against IWBs (interactive whiteboards) is that they may reinforce traditional pedagogies by stimulating whole-class, teacher-centred teaching, particularly in the absence of initial educator training and textbook-independent teaching materials – see, for example, Koenraad (2008). With the rise in the use of IWBs in Argentina, many local teachers have felt the need to find IWB-compatible resources that will foster interactivity, creativity and contextualisation.

The *Triptico* suite sets out to provide teachers with tools to create "engaging interactive learning", as announced in their homepage. I first became acquainted with the "Word Magnets" resource in *Triptico Desktop Resources* (as it was then called) in 2011 through an online video demonstration by Russell Stannard. I was impressed by the range of classroom uses suggested, downloaded the app and started exploring the many other resources in this suite available free of charge.

In December 2012 *Triptico Plus* was launched. Many of the original (and some new) resources continue to be free to use in this version once the app is downloaded and installed, while individual or school subscriptions grant access to additional tools and features.

As I write (mid-January 2013) there are 12 free and 3 paid-up resources, classified and colour-coded into four groups: *tools*, *timers*, *selectors* and *quizzes* (Figure 1). Several can be run simultaneously in the classroom and, perhaps with the obvious exception of the timers, they allow for fast and easy customisation, through online input of data on the spot (which can be saved as a plain text file onto your hard drive), or upload of

a previously created file. The paid-up option enables the additional saving of materials on the "Triptico Cloud" for access from any computer after logging into your account.

Word Magnets is one of the most flexible of the resources, particularly when using the 42 backgrounds available, ranging from a split screen or Venn diagrams to geometrical shapes and flow charts. Text can be uploaded or keyed in, and then coloured, moved around the board or even deleted. Some classroom uses include colouring parts of speech, ordering words or sentences, creating timelines of events or mind maps, identifying (and correcting) mistakes and developing vocabulary. The *Triptico* website itself (Riley, 2013a) offers a detailed list.

Order Sorter is a resource to order words or sentences by dragging and dropping. While the class is ordering the items new ones can be added and existing ones can be deleted to reflect views put forward, and the final result can be saved as both an image and a text file. It seems a very good option to develop the speaking skill through supporting arguments to prioritise, and writing preparation for narratives through chronological arrangement of events, for instance. In Figure 2 the demo file has been used, illustrating the editing options.

Figure 2: Order Sorter

The three *timers* available (Figure 3) can be used simultaneously with any of the other resources or during any classroom activity to add an extra challenge and build a game-like atmosphere. All of them have sound and the *Circle timer* offers a choice of colours as well as the option to show numbers, hear the tick and alarm sound or not.

Figure 3: Timers

Student Group (Figure 4) also contributes to creating a playful atmosphere. Type in or upload a class roster (txt file), delete absent students, decide how many groups you want and with one click on "Select groups" the program will randomly group the students in no time by colour-coding the names. You can save the result in image form.

Figure 4: Student Group

Flip Selector recreates swipe cards. Running the mouse (or pencil or finger on IWBs) downwards on the screen will set the cards flipping randomly until one is chosen (the settings allow you to decide whether duplicates are possible). The same roster used for *Student Group* can be applied to select one student at a time. Alternatively, questions can be typed in or uploaded for random selection in oral work (Figure 5).
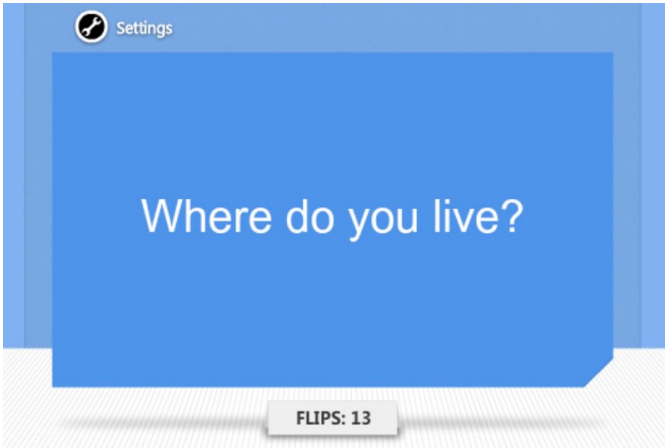

Figure 5: Flip Selector

Pin Board is another selector: tapping on the screen will send coloured balls rolling into labelled containers (both colours and labels are customisable). The author suggests using it to randomly decide on the activity to do next, to allocate points or to select groups. Yet it seems too time-consuming (the balls bounce rather slowly) to be effectively used in the classroom.
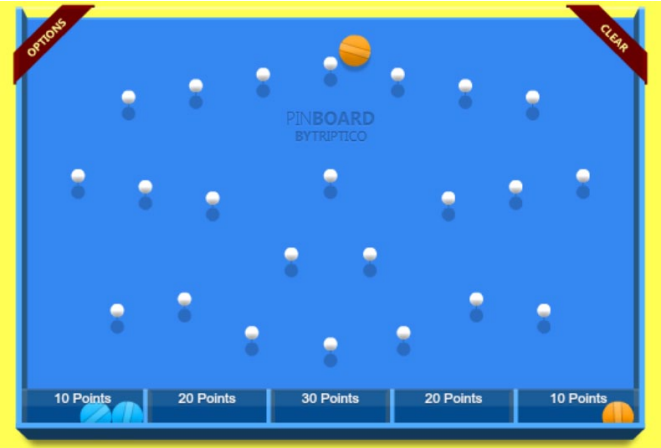

Figure 6: Pin Board

With *Text Spinner* you can create your own boards and draw circles on the screen to set the selector spinning. The label in each segment will be changed by pressing the "Refresh" button. Extra information can also be added to each segment. One activity I suggest for fluency (Figures 7a and 7b) is to write topics on the board. After spinning to get a topic, one student will deliver a one or two minute talk on it. If they are at a loss, they can click on "Info" to receive prompts (perhaps losing some points when they do if organized as a team competition).
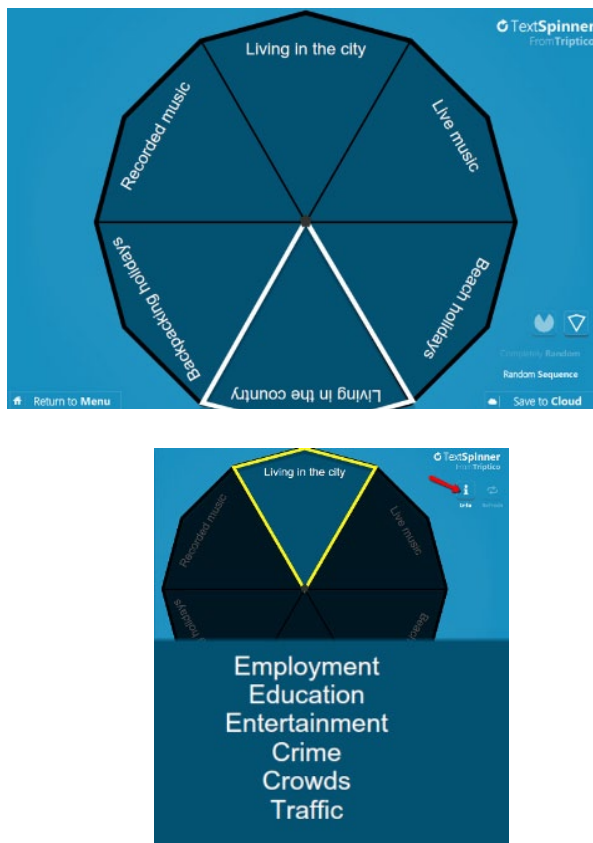
Figures 7a and 7b: Text Spinner

In *Find Ten* the board is created by typing the correct answers in the yellow squares and the incorrect ones in the purple ones: in both cases extra information can be added to be revealed after the choice has been made. The board can then be saved and uploaded at any time. The sound clips that accompany the right and wrong choices are typical of video games and are a real plus. In Figure 8 an activity has been designed to identify irregular verbs but the resource can be adapted for any topic and level.

Figure 8: Find Ten

Sliding Scores and *Score Tapper* allow you to choose the number of teams, assign them a colour and a name and decide the score values. The scores can be saved as a text file to resume the competition at a later date.
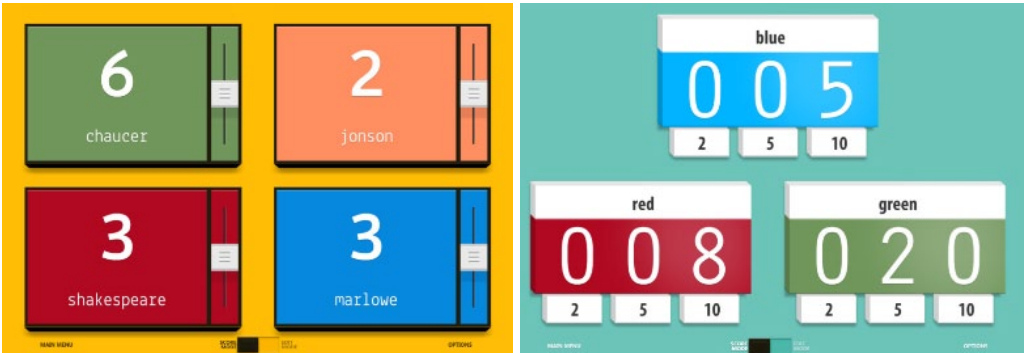

Figure 9: Sliding Scores and Score Tapper

In the *Triptico* website, author David Riley keeps a blog where he announces new elements and options available, including videos demonstrating the use of the resources and suggestions for classroom use. He also encourages feedback and requests from users via a contact form or Twitter and, judging from the case of "Hiragana Tiles" (Riley, 2013b), tries to respond to them quickly.

As this program runs on *Adobe Air*, it will work on both a *PC* and a *Mac* though not on an *iPad*. Yet the author promises to repackage the resources for tablet devices if his new commercial venture (*Triptico Plus*) is successful (Douch, 2013).

The only serious drawback I can find to this suite of resources is that it requires a permanent online connection to run, which may restrict its use in many countries and/or regions. As regards the fact that computer installation is necessary, which some teachers may not have administrator privileges to carry out, I expect this could be easily overcome since it is a one-time operation.

In sum, I consider *Triptico* would be a welcome addition to any EFL class, even without purchasing a subscription. It is straightforward in its use and control, requiring virtually no previous training for teachers other than a certain familiarity with the options available; it can be adapted to all levels, topics and ages; it enables advance preparation, reuse and sharing of materials (thus contributing to an eventual reduction of workload) and can contribute to the four roles of IWBs which Kennewell (2006) outlines: consultant, organiser, repository and facilitator. Moreover, even though *Triptico* is meant for the kinaesthetic options of an IWB, most of its functions will also work with a computer and a beamer, and will allow teachers to display their creativity in the design of interactive activities suited to their own individual contexts.

Mariel Amez

IES Olga Cossettini and ISPI San Bartolomé , Rosario, Argentina

mamez2222@gmail.com

Notes
1. New resources added by mid-February 2013.
2. Peachey (2009) and Stannard (2011) provide an extensive discussion of the applications of an earlier version of Triptico Word Magnets.
3. Paid-up features not included in this description.

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    Pp. v + 173

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2. We expect to return to you with the evaluators' comments in around 40-60 days.

3. If your manuscript is accepted with minor changes, you will be expected to resubmit your manuscript in 15 days.

4. If your manuscript is considered for 'revise and resubmit' (major corrections), you will be expected to resubmit your manuscript according to a time frame agreed with the editor.

FAAPI