



Cultural Awareness in ELT

XXXII FAAPI CONFERENCE
CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS
•SELECTIONS•

20-21-22 September 2007
Jujuy-Argentina



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Much has been written over the last few decades on the use of English as a language for international communication. We take it for granted in professional, academic and business worlds that knowledge of English is a key skill for success. This practical approach is however only part of the story of the development of the English language and other foreign language teaching methodologies around the globe.

Teachers are the first to understand the power of a foreign language to broaden the minds of their students. The British Council also knows this well, and we emphasise the teaching of cultural awareness in the resources we offer teachers and learners. This takes language learning beyond the purely practical, extending its benefits to issues such as cultural understanding and diversity. As has been the tradition of FAAPI conferences over the years, your chosen theme is a topical one, addressing an area of priority to education authorities in many countries including Argentina and the UK.

The development of teachers associations is another topic covered by your meeting. We at the British Council are pleased to have worked with FAAPI over the years, and to have given the opportunity to members of FAAPI to share experience with leaders of English teacher associations from other parts of the world. Conferences such as FAAPI 2007 are a vital part of the debate on where English and foreign language teaching is heading. I know that the knowledge shared at this meeting will have impact beyond the conference itself, not least in classrooms around Argentina.

Martin Fryer
Director
British Council
Argentina

On behalf of FAAPI, I invite you to enjoy these Proceedings which come to you through the generosity of the British Council in the hope they will help you fulfill those educational issues which reach out well beyond mere language teaching and help strengthen bonds across cultures.

The word Culture has always played an important role in the language of education, especially because of the scope of its polysemy comprehending disparate assessment of levels of education, especially that of those who appreciate aesthetic values and/ or higher ethical codes; their transmission through different means; and many other shades of meaning closely linked with and deriving from them. To us, as teachers of English as a foreign, second or international language, in a world increasingly interconnected using it as lingua franca, the need to approach it from the sociolinguistic point of view of the set of values, customs, beliefs, traditions, social practices shared by groups of people of varied ethnic and geographical origin, becomes paramount as the target of communicative competence.

Over the last decades the widening scope of psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, discourse analysis has helped supersede the vision of culture as the realm of the highbrow enjoying classical literature by the sheer delight of getting chances to interact with “authentic material”, a notion which poses another kind of challenge. The immense variety of registers, dialects, jargon and slang with their corresponding accents and differences, and of means through which we receive them, may overwhelm us but may also prod us on to respond by honing our linguistic skills for better understanding. And in so doing, becoming better communicators not only in the classroom but also in our personal lives, better listeners than tellers and, thus, more critical thinkers.

In a brief reflexive overview of such important contributions to the subject of language teaching and learning and culture- as those of Vigostky, Saussure, Chomsky, Widdowson, Austen, Sinclair, Cook, Byram, to name but a few- we come to the conclusion that though English has become more accessible through the incredible marvel of the telecommunication revolution, the

challenge to further our professional development on the subject is anything but daunting, for it beckons us on to better understanding across cultures, something that the world needs now more than ever. However, the very topic of this Conference serves as a warning, for you can become aware of cultural traits, signs, values and the like, but you cannot teach it since its range of variation would always be puzzling and whoever thought something as elusive, subtle and dynamic as Culture can be cut out and shared out in little portions, could suddenly realize that he is speaking of something that no longer holds as true.

In his foreword to *“Cultural Awareness”, by Barry Tomalin & Susan Stempleski*, one of the titles in the Resource Books for Teachers, 1993 OUP Series, the Editor, Alan Maley states,

“The title is not without significance. It remains doubtful whether culture, high or low, can really be taught, though generations of learners have been taught **about** culture. This book intends to show that what we can do is **to raise awareness of cultural factors. In so doing we shall aim to sharpen observation, encourage critical thinking about cultural stereotypes, and develop tolerance. These are educational issues which reach out well beyond mere language teaching. Cultural awareness-raising is an aspect of values education. As such it offers a welcome opportunity for transcending the often narrow limits of language teaching.** “.... and he ends with **“Perhaps the most valuable message is that, while cultures may differ, people none the less share a common humanity.”**

This year, Conference attendees will no doubt have many chances to exercise their keen perception of the local culture as FAAPI XXXII Conference is being held in the northwestern province of Jujuy, an important seat of highland Andean aboriginal culture. Furthermore, we hope these Proceedings will become not only a useful reference book for them but the cherished reminder of unforgettable moments in the process of their professional career development, as well. .

Dear Readers,

For its 32nd Annual Conference, FAAPI is back in Jujuy for the first time since 1985, when a record attendance of 340 teachers met for a five day seminar on *Applied Linguistics* in this same city. Even back then, special care was taken to provide attendees with an insight of our local customs and traditions: there was a 24 hour break in between and a float of buses took teachers and speakers to visit the Quebrada de Humahuaca, recently declared World Heritage site.

What to expect then, of this new edition of the conference held in a province where you can actually *breathe* culture anywhere you go?... And during a time when another special event such as “Fiesta Nacional de los Estudiantes” takes place too? During a month when we also celebrate Teachers’ Day? ... And the beginning of spring? Could you ask for more? Nothing but the best! Students, teachers, the perfect time of the year, an eagerness to learn and a passion for professional growth were and forever will be the key ingredients for the FAAPI Conferences.

Why “Cultural Awareness in ELT”? Because we wanted to provide an opportunity for participants to reexamine the relationship between culture, language teaching and learning, to focus on the role of cultural factors and to raise awareness on the importance of the influence of culture (both, the foreign and local ones) in the teaching and learning process. But above all, because we believed and still do, it was the right choice and the right time to show the world who we, teachers of English in Jujuy are, where we come from and where we are heading to, to share with you the magnificent landscapes of our province and our rich cultural background and finally, to give you a taste of something we feel very proud of: the warmth of our people.

We are sure that the selection of papers included in these Proceedings will make a useful contribution to the understanding of culture within the context of language teaching and learning, stimulate your intellectual curiosity and help challenge stereotyped images of our own as well as those of other people’s society. After reading them you will realize they definitely fulfill the established goals and what is more, they set new standards for our everyday work.

On behalf of AJPI - Asociación Jujeña de Profesores de Inglés,-I would like to thank the British Council for their generous financial support towards the publication of these Proceedings. We hope you enjoy them and that they will bring back good memories of FAAPI Conference 2007 in Jujuy.

Sincerely,

Marcela Burgos Pawlak
AJPI President
Chair of Organizing Committee
XXXII FAAPI Conference

CONTENTS

PLENARIES AND SEMI-PLENARIES

- | Intercultural Competence in the Context of the Internationalisation of Education
Michael Byram - Daniel Fernández

Con formato: Fuente: Sin
Negrita

- | “La ñata contra el vidrio” or Outside Looking In
Claudia Mónica Ferradas

Con formato: Fuente: Sin
Negrita, Cursiva

- ‘Deprived of history’: The Literature of Immigration and Exile
Allan Pulverness

PAPERS

- A Cross-cultural Reading of Dictatorship as a Path to Empowerment
Mariel Amez

- Cultural Innovation in Primary School. Teaching English from an Intercultural
Perspective
Silvana Barboni - Griselda Beacon - Melina Porto

- English in State Primary Schools in the Province of Tucumán, a Cultural Experience
Adriana Barrionuevo

- What do we Teach When we Teach Literature?
María E. Lizárraga

- Intercultural Reflection in EFL Coursebooks
Mario López Barrios - Elsa Villanueva de Debat

- Intercultural Communication and Socio-Cultural Restrictions Across Language
Variables
Fabián Negrelli, Martín - Capell - Cecilia Ferreras

- Verb Tenses in Form-focused and Meaning-focused Tasks
María Belén Oliva

- Foreign Language Education, Identity and Culture: A Pedagogic Proposal Based on
Lexical Phrases
Melina Porto

- Teacher Association Bonds across Cultures
Gabriela N. Tavella – Norma Beatriz Boetsch

- A Beginners’ Journey into Cultural Awareness

Oriel E. Villagarcía

WORKSHOPS

Intercultural Resource Pack. Latin American Perspective
Andrea Assenti del Río

Integrating Geography and Literature: A One Way Road to Cultural Awareness
Silvana Barboni – Ana María Cendoya

Poetry as a Mirror of Human Experience: Practical Techniques for Reflection and Linguistic Development
Marina Cantarutti

Stuck in the Middle: A Glimpse at Second-Generation Americans through Poetry
Shana Khader

Teaching Materials for Creative Teachers
Beatriz Koessler de Pena Lima

Nurturing Our Students' Sense of Self and Community: A Critical Approach to Selecting Cultural Content
Carlos Lizárraga - Jaime Cook – Adela Tineo

Weblogging our Way to Self-exploration and Global Awareness
Carlos A. Lizarraga - Andrea C. Galván - Alina Terán Griet

Towards the Development of Reading Skills: How Alcohol Ads Work on Our Minds
Sara I. López

Oh to See Ourselves as Others See us.
Sheila Misdorp

Cultural Awareness in the EFL Classroom- Towards a Closer Understanding of the Target Language Community.
Adriana M. Orozco - Virginia Casale de Lombarda

Nurturing our students' sense of self and community: Video production and other e-Projects made possible
Omar H. Reinoso - Alicia Prebisch - Carlos Lizarraga

Let's Have a Bit of Culture! Teaching More than Meets the Eye.
Mónica Rodríguez Sammartino - María Inés de Zabaleta

Breaking Barriers: Singing *beyond* Borders
Silvia Alejandra Schnitzler

Nurturing Our Students' Sense of Self and Community:
Acting, Learning and Personal Growth

Alina Terán Griet - Elvira J. Llobeta - Silvia Granado - Carlos A. Lizarraga

DEMONSTRATIONS

Enter Sandman: Intercultural Explorations in the Classroom

María del Pilar Martínez Linares

Culturally-Responsive Literacy Instruction: A Practical Application for Foreign Language Educators

Melina Porto

Project your Work to your Community

Silvia Alejandra Schnitzler

The screenshot shows a web browser window titled "Resources for Teaching - English - British Council, United Kingdom". The address bar shows "http://www.britishcouncil.org/english/resources.htm". The main heading is "British Council resources for ELT professionals". Below this, a paragraph states: "From practical tips to lesson plans and downloadable activities, the British Council offers teachers a wide range of resources to support their work on a daily basis." On the left, there is a "Search" button and a dropdown menu labeled "Activities" with a list of categories: Articles, Contacts, Collaborative projects, Examination boards, Globalisation, Ideas, Information, Language schools, Lesson plans, Links, Materials, Methodology, Networks, News, Online help, Publishers, Research, Skills, Thoughts, and Tips. To the right of the menu, there are three sections: "SearchEnglish" with a search bar and a description: "A gateway to news about English language teaching from around the world, information about research, methodology and materials and a network of people working in English language teaching."; "LearnEnglish" with a description: "Complete online help for English learners at all levels."; and "Teaching English" with a description: "Teachers' articles on different aspects of teaching, practical class activities to download and a possibility of sharing your ideas and thoughts with other teachers." Below these is the "LanguageAssistant" section with a description: "This site is for British Council language assistants. It has tips, materials and links to help them with their teaching in Argentina and 20 other countries. And there is lots for any teacher of English." At the bottom, there is the "ELTeCS" section with a description: "The English Language contacts scheme promotes networking between ELT professionals across the world, helping people to collaborate on projects, share information, skills and materials, and get in touch with English language schools, publishers and examination boards." The footer contains the text: "You will find links to all of these at www.britishcouncil.org/learning-elt-resources.htm" and the British Council logo.

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From practical tips to lesson plans and downloadable activities, the British Council offers teachers a wide range of resources to support their work on a daily basis.

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Complete online help for English learners at all levels.

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BRITISH COUNCIL

‘Deprived of history’: the Literature of Immigration and Exile

Learning a foreign language is an experience very much like that of the immigrant, feeling strange and learning to accept difference. The move into another language, like the move into another culture, means losing contact with the familiar. The new language forces the learner to look at the most familiar objects and events with fresh eyes, so that the process of learning also becomes one of re-learning. Literature – especially in narratives of exile and immigration, but also in genres such as satire, science fiction and fantasy – is rich in examples of texts that achieve this change of focus and can provide imaginative ways of ‘reading’ the strange experience of foreign language learning.

Third places

Claire Kramsch (1993) describes recent immigrants as occupying ‘third places’, no longer belonging to the culture they have come from, nor yet to the new culture. Kramsch takes this as a metaphor for the experience of the language learner, moving uncertainly from one language-world into another. She makes the point that it would be misleading to think of this in terms of ‘sitting on the fence’, and insists on the idea of ‘third places’ – no man’s lands, whose inhabitants are in the process of cultural and linguistic immigration, an experience that can be at the same time “elating and [...] deeply troubling”.

Deprived of history

In Meera Syal’s novel, *Anita and Me* (1997) the narrator, Meena, recalls the events of her childhood, as the daughter of the only Asian family in a Midlands mining village. The book opens with her account of her parents’ arrival in England:

I do not have many memories of my very early childhood, apart from the obvious ones, of course. You know, my windswept, bewildered parents in their dusty Indian village garb standing in the open doorway of a 747, blinking back tears of gratitude and heartbreak as the fog cleared to reveal the sign they had been waiting for, dreaming of, the sign planted in tarmac and emblazoned in triumphant hues of red, blue and white, the sign that said simply, WELCOME TO BRITAIN.

We gradually realise that Meena is an unreliable narrator, fabricating a story. Her tale, embellished with comic exaggerations of immigrant stereotypes, is revealed as a deliberate narrative trick. It is:

...the alternative version I trot out in job interview situations or [...] to impress middle-class white boys who come sniffing round, excited by the thought of wearing a colonial maiden as a trinket on their arm.

She goes on to recount her actual earliest memory – the first time she understood the punchline to a joke in a TV variety show. The joke is a *double entendre*, and this leads her to her own punchline:

I’ve always been a sucker for a good double entendre; the gap between what is said and what is thought, what is stated and what is implied, is a place in which I have always found myself. I’m not really a liar, I just learned very early on that those of us deprived of history sometimes need to turn to mythology to feel complete, to belong.

Meena is in a 'third place' – with one foot in her parents' traditional Punjabi household and the other in school and on the streets of an English village. The idea that someone who is culturally relocated (and thus 'deprived of history') might resort to a kind of mythology, so as to gain a sense of belonging, resembles the way that many learners, not yet feeling 'at home' in the foreign language, assert their foreignness, project an exaggerated image of themselves and reject any efforts from their teachers to improve their accents, insistently keeping the new language – and the new culture – at a safe distance.

Dreams of leaving

The feelings involved in the passage from one culture to another do not begin at the moment of arrival, but with the impulse to leave familiar surroundings and re-situate oneself. A voluntary departure prompts the protagonist of Geoff Dyer's novel *Paris Trance* (1988) to reflect on the way that expatriates can replace their true history with a mythic identity:

Yes, he could go back to England – and it was that phrase that made him stay. [...] And yet, at the same time, he thought constantly about going back to England. Returning was a tormenting possibility, simultaneously to be resisted and to draw strength from. How comforting to have been forced into total exile, forbidden to return on pain of death. To know that there was no choice but to begin a new life, to learn a new language, to start over definitively and construct a mythic, idealised vision of the homeland that could never be challenged or undermined by experience.

When we make the journey into another culture, whether in reality, or in the virtual reality of the language classroom, our sense of ourselves is altered. Dyer's protagonist embraces this change, not knowing yet how he will be transformed, but sure that the past will eventually be mythologised. "To learn a new language" is never simply a matter of acquiring an alternative means of encoding ideas, feelings and experiences. It always implies the formation of an L2 persona, a way of responding to new experience, which also revives and re-fashions past experience. The language learner does not make such a dramatic move into a state of exile, but does undergo what Michael Byram (1990: 19) calls "a modification of monocultural awareness". From the outset, grappling with syntax and lexis, with phonology and orthography, to the later stages of acquisition, responding to nuance and connotation, and manipulating different discourse structures, the learner experiences a process of adjustment, in which his/her way of constructing the world is transformed. Learners acquire a perspective which does not supplant their base identity, but modifies it to form another identity, one that is neither 'here' nor 'there', but somewhere between.

The shock of the new

One reaction to 'the shock of the new' is paranoia, where one feels threatened not by any explicit acts of aggression, but by one's own fears and anxieties. In Timothy Mo's novel *Sour Sweet* (1982), the protagonist, Chen experiences this kind of uneasiness:

That English people had competed for the flat which he now occupied made Chen feel more rather than less of a foreigner; it made him feel like a gatecrasher who had stayed too long and been identified. He had no tangible reason to feel like this. No one had yet assaulted, insulted, so much as looked twice at him. But Chen knew, felt in his bones, could sense it between his shoulder-blades as he walked past emptying public houses on his day off; in the shrinking of his scalp as he heard bottles rolling in the gutter; in a descending silence at a dark bus stop and its subsequent lifting; in an unspoken complicity between himself and others like him, not necessarily of his race.

These sensations of feeling ‘out of place’, of unspoken resentment perceived through some sixth sense, of being visibly or audibly different, are similar to the discomfort that learners may experience at putting on the ‘borrowed robes’ of the foreign language, feeling that they are ‘interlopers’. Again, the process of entry of the immigrant into another society offers an image of cultural transition that mirrors the process of entry of the learner into another way of being in language.

A period of adjustment

The shock of arrival in a new culture is succeeded by a period of adjustment, which may be short-lived and relatively painless, or may extend over many months or years. Some less fortunate exiles may never wholly adjust, or may cling to the consolations of the past and resist pressure to adopt different ways of being in their new cultural surroundings.

Acceptance or rejection of a new language is one of the major tensions for the newly-arrived immigrant, and again this provides a strong analogy with the motivation of the language learner. But Kramsch’s notion of ‘third places’ suggests a strategy that may resolve the dilemma – being oneself in another language. This neither abandons an old linguistic identity nor embraces a new one, but creates a hybrid, hyphenated identity, which may transform the language. A number of British writers are finding this kind of voice, asserting new kinds of cultural identity, and at the same time enriching the culture they are writing into.

For the immigrant, as for the learner, linguistic adjustment may create a gulf between things in the world and the language available to refer to them. Eva Hoffman has written eloquently about this in her memoir, *Lost in Translation* (1989):

The words I learn now don’t stand for things in the same way they did in my native tongue. “River” in Polish was a vital sound, energized with the essence of riverhood, of my rivers, of my being immersed in rivers. “River” in English is cold – a word without an aura. It has no accumulated associations for me, and it does not give off the radiating haze of connotation. It does not evoke.

Hoffman recaptures her initial resistance to the new language, and her insight reminds us how uncomfortable a new language can feel.

Many writers, however, testify to moments of linguistic epiphany. Alice Kaplan writes in her memoir *French Lessons* (1993) about a tiny, but highly significant, breakthrough moment in her appropriation of a crucial sound in French:

It happened over months but it felt like it happened in one class. I opened my mouth and I opened up; it slid out, smooth and plush, a French “r”. It was the sound my cat makes when she wants to go out: between a purr and a meouw, a gurgling deep in the throat. It wasn’t loud, it didn’t interrupt the other sounds. It was smooth, and suave. It felt – relaxed. It felt normal! I had it. With this “r” I could speak French, I wouldn’t be screaming my Americanness every time I spoke. “R” was my passport.

Here’s another such small victory over linguistic strangeness, from Monica Ali’s novel *Brick Lane* (2003):

It rained then. And in spite of the rain, and the wind which whipped it into her face, and in spite of the pain in her ankle and arm, and her bladder, and in spite of the fact that she was lost and cold and stupid, she began to feel a little pleased. She had spoken, in English, to a stranger, and she had been understood and acknowledged. It was very little. But it was something.

Alice Kaplan writes about an in-country classroom experience, while Eva Hoffman and Monica Ali describe the more extensive experience of immigration into another language.

But all three underline the personal nature of foreign language acquisition – a process that goes much deeper than is ever acknowledged by the majority of language teaching methods and materials. These idiosyncratic responses to the resonance of words, the articulation of sounds and the social function of language are valuable precisely because they are so idiosyncratic. They touch upon feelings that will be familiar to anyone who has experienced a similar linguistic border crossing, and that would surely be recognised by students embarking on the same kind of journey.

Conclusion

Narratives of immigration and exile, of assimilation and cultural separatism, of settling in and displacement, can offer revealing insights to language learners, who experience many of the same delights and the same tensions, in their passage into a new language. Literary accounts of adjustment and accommodation to new cultural surroundings can perform a vital function in the language classroom. As well as conveying the complex nature of contemporary cultural hybridity, and the category error of viewing cultures as essentialist, they exemplify states of being in ‘third places’ that speak directly to the language learner’s experience. In these texts, learners can discover narratives of hope and survival, of accommodation and negotiation, which have the potential to touch the unarticulated – and often unacknowledged – struggle to establish their own ‘third places’.

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Intercultural Competence in the Context of the Internationalisation of Education

Con formato: Fuente: 11 pt

Daniel Fernández
Universidad Nacional del Litoral

Con formato: Derecha

Con formato: Fuente: 10 pt,
Cursiva

Michael Byram
University of Durham

Con formato: Fuente: 11 pt

Con formato: Fuente: 11 pt,
Español (España - alfab.
internacional)

“Sinto que me jogaram em um ambiente novo e que somente eu tenho que me adaptar a tudo...” Kamila

Con formato: Fuente: 10 pt,
Cursiva

Con formato: Fuente: 11 pt

Introduction

Con formato: Fuente: 11 pt,
Cursiva

Internationalisation has become an integral feature of universities' corporate planning. This phenomenon impacts on different aspects of university life and asks for inter as well as intra institutional cooperation to create new international contexts and maintain and enhance the already existing ones.

Con formato: Fuente: 11 pt

The process of internationalisation of education involves not only teachers, students and researchers but administration staff as well. These agents need to amalgamate collaborative efforts to meet the demands of target groups that are becoming more and more demanding as they become more and more diverse in nationality. The development and implementation of international schemes within the national educational system is giving rise to innovative international academic programmes and recruitment strategies.

In this paper we explore the comments made by teachers from other countries visiting Universidad Nacional del Litoral in 2007 and analyse the concepts that seem to underlie what they say. The analysis shows the process of internationalisation is reciprocal in that it asks for openness and tolerance at both ends: guests and hosts. In order to systematise approaches to the preparation of teacher and others for international experience, we draw on the theoretical basis of Intercultural Communicative Competence and we elaborate on possible practices in the training of teachers.

On being international

What does being international mean? Can one meaningfully refer to 'being international' as a competence? If so, is it a stable competence or does it change every time a new international experience is added? How does a stable national attitude go together with a more fluctuating international perspective? Is being international synonymous with being hybrid? Is hybridity perceived and/or experienced as positive or negative or neutral? These and other questions are raised by the phenomenon of internationalisation in education – as they are in other spheres such as international business. But this is beyond our focus on this occasion.

Becoming international implies developing an intricate process of adjustment, accommodation, and integration or immersion, and ought to involve making conscious choices about some or all of these. This process, which is basically attitudinal, is generally seen as in the hands of the migratory figure, the visiting scholars or students, who need to be ready to undergo something like a metamorphosis every time they visit a new milieu. In this paper we argue that the process of accommodation and adjustment neither is nor should be unilateral. Rather it is a two-party endeavour in which newcomers bring, as part of their luggage, their life and professional experience, and they need appropriate contexts to unpack and share their load so that the endeavour becomes enriching at both ends. Taking for granted that the host institution is ready to receive visitors, is more often than not a mistake. What is needed, we suggest, is the ability to cope with and benefit from the difficulties of

internationalisation, an ability which we shall call 'Intercultural Teacher Competence' (IcTC) and which emerges as a process of shared responsibility and mutual tolerance.

An anecdote (from Fernández): Every year, at the beginning of our academic term, a meeting is held at UNL to welcome all visiting students and teachers. The meeting takes a whole morning and during three or four solid hours, visitors from most diverse international institutions are exposed to long, well-intended power point-illustrated speeches from authorities and people in charge of international academic relations which are meant to help the audience find their way into UNL. My turn in the row of speeches generally comes last (I always make a point of it) and the first thing I say when I address my foreign audience is "Take a piece of paper and answer the following questions about the information you have just received" (Or maybe I should say "you have been given", because reception is dubious). The reader can imagine their reaction: Bewilderment and, after my smile, loud laughter. Obviously, visitors are being addressed as thinking beings who need knowledge – institutional information, when in fact at this point in time, they are above all sentient beings whose emotions – anxieties and excitement – are dominant but not addressed.

How is this anecdote relevant? It shows that very often, even people who have read a lot about intercultural issues and have visited other institutions with the purpose of establishing agreements and developing recruitment strategies, but have not experienced the process themselves, ignore at least part of what being international entails and, what is more, they seem to overlook the importance language has in the process. To be more precise, they do not see the relevance of Intercultural communicative Competence.

International voices

In order to understand better the experience of being international, we shall present data from six international visitors collected at Universidad Nacional del Litoral in 2007. The data were collected at the end of a four month stay at the university. Visitors were asked to write about their international experience during the exchange, focussing on cultural similarities and differences as well as on local attitudes they perceived as different, positive or negative. They were told they could write in the language they preferred. It's worth noticing that only one Brazilian teacher opted for Spanish. the rest used their L1.

Some considerations on the analysis of teachers' narratives and statements

Our analysis of teachers' narratives, statements and practices incorporates two complementary approaches: ethnographic observations and discourse analysis (DA) of the responses to ethnographic interviews. In this paper we report briefly only on some of the results obtained from the analysis of teachers' discourses, more specifically, their comments. Analysing discourse implies bearing in mind:

- (a) Where do we look at discourses from?
- (b) Where have they been produced?
- (c) How do teachers word perceptions of themselves and their practices? When they word their experiences in a foreign language, do they mean what they say?
- (d) How are beliefs and assumptions articulated?
- (e) How do subjectivity and the weight of experiential knowledge impact on discourse interpretation?

Questions (a) and (b) relate to the contextualisation of discourse. Questions (c) and (b) deal with linguistic issues and question (e) touches upon research evaluation (See Woods, 1996 on this issue). It is also necessary to say that with the limited selected data presented in this paper, no generalisations are possible, and our purpose is above all to raise awareness of the issues through these bases with a view to further research.

How is the analysis carried out?

To begin with, it is necessary to set up some categories. This does not mean, however, that divisions and classes are clear cut as many features coexist in one same

comment. Our division is simply methodological and is meant to systematise the data. In our case, these are action-bound and scheme-bound (Scheme as metaphorical matrix. See Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Thomas, 1967). The former refer to more immediate, here-and-now appreciations generally related with practice. They are mainly based on experiential knowledge and may either be localised or generalised according to whether they relate to the immediate or a wider context. Here is, for instance, a comment made by a French teacher on an event observed during a visit to a local school.

1. Nous sommes surprises par l'intervention disciplinaire d'une personne de l'école pendant une activité et sans consultation préalable de l'enseignant titulaire. Le fond du problème est que l'intervention a, finalement, plus perturbé l'activité que le comportement déviant de l'enfant.

In the second category, there is generally an underlying construct which gives rise to the comments. Comments in this category are mainly based on declarative or validated theoretical knowledge, (See elements in bold type)

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*2. L'avancée dans les apprentissages me semble mineure et une rapide évaluation individuelle me confirme cette impression de **l'ineffectivité de la transmission**.*

*3. Le plus surprenant de cette matinée est la cérémonie du lever du drapeau (...) en France c'est inimaginable, rien que pour **mettre dans les programme les symboles de la République et l'hymne national**, ça a été toute une histoire.*

There is another classification which has to do with the ways in which the ideas have been verbalised. These include:

Overt comparison/contrast:

*4. **En Brasil** los alumnos de una misma clase tienen parte de su vida privada también similar y unida¹*

*5. Un certain nombre d'élèves semblent assez insolente et pas très respectueux des adultes, mais malgré cela se mettent au travail quand une tâche est exigée d'eux. Les élèves au niveau des activités quotidiennes **semblent beaucoup moins encadrés qu'en France**.*

*6. Las clases **acá** me parecen más eficientes y ordenadas. Pero también pienso que acá el entorno es tan disciplinado que en parte inhibe la participación durante las clases y la espontaneidad de los alumnos.*

*7. Beaucoup de bruit, de bavardages, de déplacements dans la classe **en comparaison avec la France**. Cependant, nous n'avons pas l'habitude de côtoyer les enfants de cet âge, puisqu'ils font parti de l'enseignement secondaire **en France**.*

*8. La seule menace qu'utilisent systématiquement les enseignants est le recours à la directrice. **En France**, le recours au directeur est l'ultime carte à jouer dans un conflit avec un enfant.*

*9. Le goûter est collectif et fourni par l'école. Les biscuits salés ou sucrés ne nous paraissent pas très équilibrés et assez rébarbatif à la longue. On dénote toutefois une production de déchets bien moindre que celle des goûters individuels fréquents **en France**.*

¹ From a Brazilian teacher writing in Spanish

Embeddedness and/or functional metaphors (mental processes with a metapragmatic or disjunctive function):

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10. ***Parece-me** que os alunos aqui não são formados de forma a aprender a lidar com um ambiente de incertezas por conta própria, porque não lhes cobram saber criar a própria idéia a partir dos conceitos, eles somente têm de saber o que esta nos livros e agir nessa realidade que se apresenta. Eles não aprendem **que são também um agente do mundo e que podem mudar a realidade de alguma forma.***

11. *Enfim, falando no geral, a idéia do que é um intercambio não **me parece estar clara** para os alunos, professores, para a faculdade e menos ainda a universidade. **Sinto que** me jogaram em um ambiente novo e que somente eu tenho que me adaptar a tudo. Não existe um ambiente de troca que suscita um intercambio. Ninguém esta interessado em saber **como as coisas funcionam no Brasil**, o que eu sei, **quais as diferencias, em como vamos lidar com as barreiras e limitações** que eu encontro. Somente eu tenho que me esforçar para entrar na cultura argentina e isso é uma coisa muito difícil. Todas as relações que eu tive até agora com os argentinos são superficiais.*

12. ***Esse é o meu ponto de vista** sobre o que eu estou vivendo. São apenas 4 meses que se passaram e pode ser que minha visão sobre algumas coisas tenha sido preconceituosa por eu não ter tido tempo suficiente de viver para conhecer como funciona. Mas o tempo do intercambio é esse, assim que é isso o que eu posso dizer.*

Further categorisations and interpretations could be developed if the use of evaluative language were considered. In our work, this is studied from an Appraisal Theory perspective. Appraisal Theory explores the negotiation of attitudes. As Martin and Rose (2003) explain

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Appraisal is concerned with evaluation: the kinds of attitudes that are negotiated in a text, the strength of the feeling involved and the ways in which values are sourced and readers aligned (p. 22).

Herein we simply highlight in bold type words and expressions to be taken into consideration for the analysis of attitudes, but do not interpret them. The items we have selected belong into the different categories of appraisal put forward by Martin and Rose: Attitude, Amplification and Source and the attitudinal subcategories: affect, judgement and appreciation.

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13. *Los alumnos tienen **mucho más respeto** por el profesor y los otros alumnos de que en mis clases en Brasil*

14. *En las primeras clases **extrañé mucho** el comportamiento de los alumnos. Tomando notas, con sus carpetas y sentados con postura en las sillas. **Estaba acostumbrada** llegar a clase todos charlando fuerte, riendo, y con el **profesor suplicando silencio**. Es común en mis clases que cuando **el tema es aburrido** y hay materiales disponibles a los alumnos, que solamente pocos alumnos permanezcan en clase.*

15. *Na Argentina o que me parece é que **o professor é uma figura mais distante**, que sabe tudo e não pode ser questionado.*

16. *Alem disso, **na sala de aula às vezes me sentia como uma pessoa que tinha uma doença contagiosa**. Era eu me sentar em uma fila de cadeiras, que se a sala fosse grande o suficiente **ninguém se sentava do meu lado**. Alem disso **varias vezes sinto***

um preconceito de como se o ensino na argentina fosse melhor que o do Brasil, tanto por parte dos alunos, quanto de alguns professores e como se eu não entendesse nada que todos diziam.

To report in detail on the results obtained so far would exceed the constraints of this paper. Our comments are then limited to what we consider some of the most relevant aspects.

As far as action bound comments are concerned, these seem to be generally connected with classroom management issues, classrooms routines, and keeping in tune with the target educational system or institution (See (5), (7), (14) above, for example). The way teachers interact with their students is a recurrent topic. This is consequential in so far it impacts on classroom dynamics. Comments underlain by schema or conceptualisations are also frequent. In our data (2), (3) and (10) are clear examples. In them the concept of education as transmission and the value assigned to national symbols crop up. It is understood that these underlying constructs scaffold and, up to a certain extent, determine the way in which teachers will participate and carry out educational actions.

Most evaluative comments are introduced by grammatical metaphors (Halliday, 2004) realised through reduced mental clauses denoting processes of thinking, believing, etc. (See, for example, (6), (10)). These metaphoric constructions seem to have a metapragmatic or hedging role meant to mitigate judgement based on experiential knowledge (perception) rather than on validated theories. Another way of politely mitigating judgement is by utilising interpersonal adjuncts (Mood or Comment) with a disjunctive function either fronting the clause or at some point in its MOOD structure (11). Contrast is set up by thematising spatial and temporal circumstances.

The examples we have presented show that most comments construe and elaborate on pedagogical practices, institutional and classroom managerial issues, and judgemental and evaluative attitudes of ways of being in a new milieu – *savoir être*, *savoir s'engager* and *savoir comprendre* (Byram, 1997)

On Intercultural Communicative Competence

17. Quanto ao espanhol, se comunicar oralmente e entender o que as pessoas dizem é fácil. O problema é argumentar em espanhol e memorizar. É muito fácil ler e entender, mas para eu guardar o que eu li, com o vocabulário que querem que eu saiba é muito difícil. E esse é outro ponto, porque a forma de cobrança de conteúdo no Brasil é bem diferente da forma como acontece aqui. Não temos que decorar as coisas e dizer com as palavras do livro. Temos sim que saber, mas temos de saber mais como usar, quando usar o conteúdo que aprendemos.

We have already referred to the centrality of language in international processes. However this is an issue which seems to be only in the minds of language specialists. It is necessary to remark that when we talk about language, we do not refer only to the role of indexicality in semantics (Relation between context and literal meaning) but also to language as the manifestation of identity and affiliation, and as a means of knowledge construction. There seem to be two areas international agents find particularly difficult to come to grips with:

- (a) The language used to designate institutional spaces and procedures (Indexical/Semantic meaning)
- (b) The match between form and illocutionary force meant and form and illocutionary force expected and perceived in institutionalised communicative events (Pragmatic meaning)

Our argument is that in order to cope with such difficulties, international visitors need to develop Intercultural Communicative Competence, which is, as Fig.1 shows, an

extremely inclusive complex phenomenon as it results from the amalgamation of many other competences

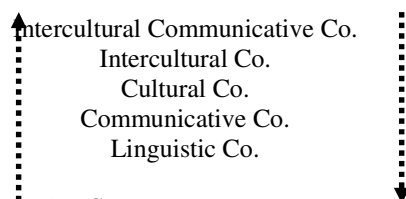


Fig. 1. Intercultural Communicative Competence

The centrality of language

Conceptual and linguistic relativism

It is not difficult to demonstrate that all discourse among people of different languages, including the political, creates linguistic and conceptual complexities which cannot be overlooked. Let us do this by considering the word 'school' itself, and focus on European languages. By using a French-English dictionary, one finds immediate equivalent 'école' (as well as 'bande, troupe (of whales etc)') but there are other terms, 'collège', 'maternelle', 'lycée' which all have very specific connotations and 'maternelle' for example would not be included in the general concept of 'school' in British English. The same point could be made for German, Spanish and other languages.

The preliminary conclusion from these examples is that there can be considerable difficulty in understanding the word 'school' if one speaks French, that the concept of 'maternelle' cannot be fully understood by a speaker of British English, and that speakers of other language would have difficulties depending on their own connotations of what happens in a building where adults are inducting young people and children into the world of knowledge and experience.

It is at this point that the concept of mediation is important. Given the problems of translation there is a need for interpretation and mediation which pre-supposes an intercultural communicative competence and a social position for the language learner/mediator which permits them to interact with speakers of other languages on equal terms.

This quickly leads to the position of linguistic relativism, attributed in the German-speaking world to Humboldt and in the anglophone world to Whorf and Sapir. This view, that language determines and limits thought, has been much debated and often ridiculed. There is however empirical work which supports it. Levinson (1997) argues that semantic representations in language are not homomorphic with conceptual representations. They are nonetheless in some proximity to each other and conceptual representations are influenced by semantic representations. If this were not the case 'memories will be unretrievable or uncodable in language, and the speaker will have nothing to talk about' (ibid.: 39). He draws on empirical work with speakers of a language which does not conceptualise space egocentrically i.e. in relation to the person, using 'left', 'right', 'in front', 'behind' etc., but absolutely in relation to the topography of their environment 'north of', 'south of' etc. His argument is that if people had conceptual representations in terms of absolute positions and a language which used egocentric representations then there would be no inter-translatability between the conceptual and linguistic systems for the individual, who would then have 'nothing to talk about'.

So when visitors from one education system experience another education system – whether school or university – they experience a sense of unease about what they see happening because 'school' or 'university' for them is different. That unease is both cognitive and affective. They have difficulty in comprehending what is happening because it does not fit their concepts and because their own socialisation in 'school' has created a sense of what is 'natural' or 'normal' and that sense is under attack from the 'unnatural' and

‘abnormal’. It is here that the other elements of ICC – in addition to the purely linguistic – come into play: the ability to decentre, to suspend disbelief and take another perspective (*savoir être*), to compare and contrast concepts and experiences (*savoir comprendre*) and to be conscious of the evaluations and judgements one is making (*savoir s’engager*).

Future investigative lines

Evidently, the phenomenon we are exploring is extremely complex. There are questions which ask for further research. There are still issues we know can contribute to the conceptualisation of Intercultural Communicative Competence, and practices that may help to soothe the integration of migrant teachers into new contexts. Here in, we present an abbreviated list and elaborate briefly on two of them: Cultural awareness in teacher education and *in situ* learning.

1. Are all agents involved in international activities aware of what interculturality and intercultural education entail?
2. Should they all share the same concerns?
3. How does the institutional language policy fit into the institutional international policy?
4. Is cultural consciousness raising enough to bring about a change?
5. How can educators and foreign language teachers help in the process?
6. Does cultural awareness guarantee attitudinal changes?
7. Would *in situ* training help?

Possible routes

As we have already pointed out, the analysis of international voices shows that what is being done is not enough; that some kind of action has to be taken. International meetings cannot get restricted to dealing with recruiting, budgeting and administrative managerial issues. We need to integrate ICC with teacher education curricula and create and develop programmes for those involved in it.

Awareness in teacher education. Sources for teacher training for intercultural competence

Consider the elements of intercultural competence, the five ‘*savoirs*’ and the disciplines which they rely on, with some texts which might be useful in teacher training². The specific chapters identified might be used in courses where teachers are to read original texts for themselves:

Savoir être: curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one’s own.

Attitudes to other countries and people are formed early, and the work of social psychology is important here. Fortunately, in Europe at least, there has been substantial work by Barrett and colleagues in recent years, which makes theory and empirical findings available for language teachers.

Text:

Barrett, *Children’s knowledge, beliefs and feelings about nations and national groups*. Chap 4: Children’s knowledge, beliefs and feelings about nations and states construed as historical and cultural communities; Chap 6: The development of children’s subjective identifications with their own nation and state.

² Much of the proposal here is based on a module Byram taught at the University of Durham as part of an MA course in ‘Teaching Japanese as a Second Language’ and another module at the University of Jaen (Spain) taught by Mari-Carmen Mendez Garcia in a PhD course for teachers of English as a foreign language.

The formation of attitudes is part of the broader process of socialisation into a national identity, among others, and the creation and maintenance of groups and their boundaries is fundamental to socialisation.

Texts:

Tajfel: *Human Groups and social Categories. Studies in social psychology*. Chap 13: The achievement of group differentiation. Barth: *Ethnic groups and boundaries*. Introduction.

Because attitudes are not only formed early but are subject to many influences in a society, not least the historical relationships of a society with other countries and peoples, the teacher needs to understand if and how attitudes can be changed 'Prejudice' and 'stereotype' are crucial concepts discussed in social psychology since Allport. Texts:

Allport: *The Nature of Prejudice*. Chap 1: What is the problem; Chap 2: The normality of prejudgment; Chap 17 Conforming. Stangor and Scaller: Stereotypes as individual and collective representations. Eberhardt and Fiske: Motivating individuals to change: what is a target to do?

Savoir comprendre: ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents or events from one's own.

A comparative understanding of texts of all levels in other countries refers to the importance of learning how texts which might appear similar, have different functions and hence have different meanings. At the same time, texts differ in structure and rhetorical impact. Cultural studies is an interdisciplinary area of study which pursues the hermeneutics of texts and contexts. Discourse and conversation analysis focus on close textual analysis and are important in the relationship of language learning and learning intercultural competence.

Texts:

Kramsch: *Context and culture in language teaching*. Chap 7: Teaching language along the fault line. Kramsch: From practice to theory and back again.

Savours: *knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction.*

If learners are to acquire a body of knowledge about, say, Germany, then teacher trainers need to be familiar with the debate about the nature of knowledge about beliefs, values and behaviours, in particular the question of boundary-marking phenomena. There are many possibilities here and teachers of German will have their own favourites but the following text is particularly interesting: Sommer: *Leben in Deutschland*

A second kind of knowledge, about the nature of personal interaction, will be drawn from sociology, notably from the analysis of personal interaction and the influence of linguistic and social norms.

Texts:

Goffman: *Behavior in public places*. Chap 6 Face engagements. Goffman: *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Chap 1 Performances

Savoir apprendre / Savoir faire: ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction.

The ability to investigate a new environment, whether localised and restricted like a small village or a school, or a large scale entity such as a national group, is pre-eminently represented in the work of ethnographers. Examples of the working methods can be found in some ethnographic descriptions of communities, large and small, and there are collections of accounts of methods used.

Texts:

Agar: *The Professional Stranger. An informal introduction to ethnography*. Chap 4 Ethnography. Spradley: *The ethnographic interview*. Chap 2: Language and fieldwork; Chap 3: Informants.

Burgess: *The Research Process in Educational Settings: ten case studies*. Chap 2: The researcher exposed: a natural history (Hammersley).

The application to language learning has been investigated for advanced learners but also experimented with young learners with less language competence.

Texts:

Roberts *et al.*: *Language learners as ethnographers* Part II The Ealing ethnography project. Snow and Byram: *Crossing frontiers. The school study visit abroad*.

When learners have the opportunity for a period of residence – whether study or work or tourism – immersion in a new environment can be very demanding. The field of study here can be encapsulated in the notion of ‘culture shock’ and there has been a recent focus on the experience of students and how to investigate and profit from residence.

Texts:

Ward *et al.*: *The psychology of culture shock*. Chap 2 Intercultural contact: processes And outcomes

Byram and Feng: *Living and studying abroad*. Chap 3 Recording the journey: diaries of Irish students in Japan (Pearson-Evans) and Chap 4 The one less travelled by The experience of Chinese students in a UK university. (Burnett and Gardner)

Savoir s’engager: an ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one’s own and other cultures and countries.

This, the most educationally significant of the *savoirs*, takes us into the relationship of language teaching and learning with the general purposes of an education system. It thus opens up the questions of educational philosophy and traditions which differ from one country to the next. Within a European tradition, all education but especially higher education, encourages learners to question constantly the learning they are offered and the society in which they live. In its broadest and fullest sense this is political education /politische Bildung or ‘education for democracy’.

Texts:

Barnett: *Higher education: a critical business*. Chap 1: Conditions of critical thinking; Chap 6: Critical action..

Political education and education for democracy has also been discussed with particular reference to language learning.

Texts:

Guilherme: *Critical citizens for an intercultural world. Foreign language education as cultural politics*. Chap 3 The critical dimension in foreign culture education

Byram: Chap 10 Language education, political education and intercultural citizenship.

In situ learning

In situ learning, also referred to as Situated Learning or Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP) (Lave and Wenger, 1991-2006) focuses on learning and the social contexts in which learning occurs. Learning is seen as a process of coparticipation rather than a process of acquisition of propositional knowledge. The focus is shifted then from cognitive processes and conceptual structures to social engagements that provide a proper actional context for the process to develop. LPP implies working with experts *with limited responsibility for the ultimate product as a whole* (p.14). It is then a social act, not a one mind act, in which learning gets distributed among coparticipants. Assuming participating roles in expert performances implies concentrating on the integration of structure and concept, beliefs and action. In LPP, learning is community oriented. Lave and Wenger explain:

...learning really does consist in the development of portable interactive skills, it can take place even when coparticipants fail to share a common code. The apprentice’s ability to understand the master performance depends not on their possessing the same representation of it, or of the objects it entails, but rather on their engaging in the performance in congruent ways (p.21)

This perspective puts forward a concept of Internationalisation that differs from the idea elaborated by Paige *et al*:

The process of acquiring the culture-specific and culture-general knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for effective communication and interactions with individuals from other cultures. It is a dynamic, developmental, and on-going process which engages [the learner] cognitively, behaviourally, and affectively (2003:177)

Similarly, Liddicoat *et al* (2003) see Intercultural Education as a dynamic approach to learning and/or teaching which implies transformation of the self and contributes to the development and enhancement of communicative skills and knowledge enrichment in multilingual and intercultural contexts. Thus *Intercultural* appears as an interdisciplinary notion concerning the contextualisation of academic practices. It implies a reflective, self-awareness process which leads to the confrontation and evaluation of belief systems³

In LPP, peripherality emerges as opposed to decontextualisation, irrelevance and unrelatedness. It embraces key concepts such as person-in-practice, human agency (Giddens, 1979; Bourdieu, 1977), sociocultural community membership, community of practice and identity. This view of learning does not deny the value of programmed instruction, but it highlights the relevance of reflection, knowledge-in-practice and understanding through growing involvement. Lave and Wenger explain they

...place emphasis on connecting issues of sociocultural transformation with the changing relations between newcomers and old-timers in the context of a changing shared practice (p.49)

And sustain that

An extended period of legitimate peripherality provides learners with opportunities to make the culture of practice theirs (p.95)

From an LPP perspective, international agents would assume different roles while developing their situated practices. There is a period of **status subordinate**, which may get started in their own teaching contexts with some consciousness-raising practices and get rounded up in the foreign milieu. There is then the stage of **learning practitioner**, which implies responsibility in minor practices. This is followed by the role of **aspiring expert**, with more responsibility, different role relations and interactive involvement. Finally the status of **international practitioner** is reached. This means being interculturally and communicatively competent, which we define as being informed and having empirically validated expertise to develop effective professional practices. Jordan (1989) explains that in order to assume these roles and become a legitimate participant in a given community, it is necessary to learn to use language as full participants do. This once more explains the relevance and value of language in the process.

To conclude, we would like to complete the quote we headed this paper with, and leave it to the audience as more food for thought.

“...Somente eu tenho que me esforçar para entrar na cultura argentina e isso é uma coisa muito difícil. Todas as relações que eu tive até agora com os argentinos são superficiais.” Kamila

³ For a thorough treatment of this topic see Learning from the Literature: An Orientation To Internationalisation. At <http://www.unisanet.unisa.edu.au/>

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“La ñata contra el vidrio” or Outside Looking In

Claudia Mónica Ferradas

Abstract

Just like the persona in the famous tango “Cafetín de Buenos Aires” learners often find themselves outside looking in, wishing they could belong to the world they learn about in their textbooks. Standing on the periphery, as if looking through a glass pane, they learn about and long for the centre, a “first world” that is out of reach and expresses itself in English. This presentation will explore how literatures written in “world englishes” can contribute to developing intercultural competence, presenting a more diverse view of the English-speaking world and, above all, empowering students to express their own identity in English.

Summary

*De chiquilín te miraba de afuera
como esas cosas que nunca se alcanzan,
la ñata contra el vidrio
en un azul de frío
que sólo fue después, viviendo, igual al mío.*

In the famous tango “Cafetín de Buenos Aires”, composed by Enrique Santos Discépolo in 1948, a young boy finds himself outside looking in. For the boy, the café is a forbidden world out of reach, a longed-for space he craves to belong to. The motif is also present in the English literary canon: in chapter 6 of *Wuthering Heights*, Heathcliff and Cathy spy on the Lintons through the window of Thrushcross Grange as the Edgar and Isabella quarrel over their dog. The young Heathcliff, as opposed to the boy in the tango, does not long to belong to the world on the other side of the glass:

We laughed outright at the petted things. We did despise them. When would you catch me wishing to have what Catherine wanted, or find us by ourselves seeking entertainment in yelling, and sobbing, and rolling on the ground, divided by the whole room? I'd not exchange for a thousand lives my condition here for Edgar Linton's at Thrushcross Grange.

However, soon after this, Cathy is bitten by the Linton's dog. She is taken into the house while Heathcliff is left outside, alienated and despised. Finding a place in that world now becomes an ambition for the boy at the other side of the glass.

In the tango, the glass stands for the difference in age which separates the boy from the patrons drinking and gambling inside the café. The threshold is closed when age allows it. The price of maturity is disappointment and giving up the fight before even trying -but the prize is an invaluable group of friends. In Heathcliff's case, the price is self-enforced exile - the prize, fortune and property, and the possibility of revenge.

The symbol of the glass as threshold or rite of passage is expressed in representational texts both in the culture of origin and in the target culture. Similarly, learners often find themselves outside looking in, wishing they could belong to the world they learn about in their textbooks. Standing on the periphery, as if looking through a glass pane, they learn about and long for the centre, a “first world” that is out of reach and expresses itself in English.

Can our choice of materials and approaches allow our students to come into contact with the world on the other side of the glass with an attitude of interest and openness -but without an underlying feeling of inferiority? Can we encourage Heathcliff's critical attitude without

the subsequent resentment? In short, how can learners profit from the enriching experience of coming into contact with otherness by reflecting on their own values and identity and on the construction of their self-image?

Back in 2003, at the closing plenary of the FAAPI Conference in Salta, the presenter explored these questions in relationship to the inclusion of “post-colonial” texts in the ELT class (Ferradas, 2003). In 2006, in another plenary at the FAAPI conference, the presenter discussed the notion of the intercultural speaker (Ferradas, 2006) and the “savoirs” involved in intercultural competence (Byram, 1997). She explored ways in which a comparative approach to multicultural texts could contribute to the development of intercultural awareness by means of textual intervention (Pope, 1995).

This time, building upon the arguments presented in previous plenary sessions, the presenter explores texts in which Argentine reality is seen through the eyes of English-speaking visitors and settlers and wonders about the stereotypes at play and how they may influence the way Argentinians relate to English as a way of expressing their identity. This is done through various texts, among which the following can be highlighted to encourage reflection on these issues:

En route to Buenos Aires, an unidentified member of the groups of Scottish immigrants on board the *Symmetry* wrote a poetic account of his voyage using the pen name of ‘Tam’o Stirling’. As the boat nears South America, Tam comments on the speculations among his fellow passengers:

*They wondered what people the Argentines were,
Savage or civilised –colour, and figure,
And lasses resolved they would droon themselves ere
They’d gang without claes or be kissed by a nigger.*

(poem from Grierson, “The Voyage of the Symmetry” in Stewart, 2000)

- What information does this short text provide about the settlers?
- How meaningful is the variety of English used to derive conclusions from the text?
- Has this attitude towards Argentines changed since the mid XIXth century?
- Are Argentines likely to have similar views on other cultures?

These and other related questions are explored in the presentation and left open for discussion.

Can the text above be counteracted with texts such as the following? Or is the idealisation of the gaucho and his “china” a romantic construction whose outcome is the creation of further stereotypes? What clichés can be found in the text?

I had known her in her full bloom--an imposing woman, her eyes sparkling with intense fire and passion, who, despite her coarse features and dark skin, had a kind of strange wild beauty which attracted men. Unhappily she placed her affections on the wrong person, a dashing young gaucho who, albeit landless and poor in cattle, made a brave appearance, especially when mounted and when man and horse glittered with silver ornaments. I recalled how one of my last sights of her had been on a Sunday morning in summer when I had ridden to a spot on the plain where it was overgrown with giant thistles, standing about ten feet high, in full flower and filling the hot air with their perfume.

There, in a small open grassy space I had dismounted to watch a hawk, in hopes of finding its nest concealed somewhere among the thistles close by. And presently two persons came at a swift gallop by the narrow path through the thistles, and bursting out into that small open spot I saw that it was Cipriana, in a white dress, on a big bay horse, and her lover, who was leading the way. Catching sight of me they threw me a "Good morning" and galloped on, laughing gaily at the unexpected encounter. I

thought that in her white dress, with the hot sun shining on her, her face flushed with excitement, on her big spirited horse, she looked splendid that morning.

(from Hudson, W.H., *Far Away and Long Ago*, pp. 187 – 188)

The basic proposal underlying this presentation is to bring Anglo-Argentine texts and travel literature into ELT classes in Argentina to explore issues connected with the development of intercultural competence. Such texts can help us reflect on how the discourse of the past may have constructed identity and self-image among Argentines, as well as their views of the other. It is the presenter's contention that such reflection can lead to the meaningful use of English to express ones' own values as compared and contrasted with those of others. And a further step can be taken by reading how others see us today, those who are outside looking in as we go about our lives:

Plaza San Martín (tango)

John Bursnide (contemporary Scottish poet)

*I keep coming back
to the city I know from a dream:*

*no one at all on the street
and the land all around*

*haunted by winds
and the silt-coloured murmur*

of gauchos.

*Mostly, it's not like that
- there are people and buildings*

*women with flames in their eyes
and a river of boys*

*hoping for something more
than manhood
- a tango, say,*

*a dance they can sift from the night
or a song in the blood*

*that others could see
in the slow work we make*

of a lifetime.

*Mostly, it's guesswork and noise
like the business of home*

*but now and again
for moments that don't quite begin*

*a person can come to himself
on San Martín*

- a person not quite

the person I might have been

*and no more or less happy or true
than a stranger's childhood*

*- come to himself in the dawn
as a waking dream*

*and matching the shadows he knows
with the shadows he finds*

*in the garnet and star-tinted blooms
of the palos borrachos.*

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A Beginners' Journey into Cultural Awareness

Oriel E. Villagarcia

When I learned that this year's FAAPI Conference would deal with cultural awareness as its main subject, my original reaction was decidedly positive, as for the first time we would be tackling something which had apparently been left out in practically every FAAPI conference since its inception. Upon being invited to participate with a presentation, I thought that it might be appropriate to offer a paper on how we Argentine people see ourselves and how others see us. This, I thought might be the starting point for reflection on how our culture differs from others, and in particular how it differs from at least one major—so to speak—English speaking country.

My first steps in self discovery to determine what it means to be Argentinean took me to the reading of some authors such as *Aguinis (2001)*, *Ulanovsky (2003)*, *Lanata (2004)*, and *Abadi (2004)*. The picture that I found looked somber although familiar, abounding in our defects. I found it interesting that many of the words used to describe some of the negative traits that beset us are part and parcel of the Argentinean Spanish stock of words known—I suppose—to just about every single inhabitant of our land: *avivado*, *piola*, *trucho*, *turro*, *guacho*, *falluto*, *chanta*, *fanfa*, *gil*, to name a few. These are the words that are so hard to translate at the right level of speech, and which to our chagrin, we take for granted as somehow mirroring characteristics of many of the native inhabitants of Argentina.

I was torn as to whether to turn my presentation into giving an account of my readings of the sources I have mentioned above plus others which are available in the Internet, or to undertake a review of some lexical units where Spanish—at least the variety I am familiar with—and their English equivalents differ quite markedly in terms of their distribution, etc (*ir al grano* vs *cut to the chase*).

One good point made by some of the authors I have referred to was that if we are to redress our evils we are to face them and acknowledge them, rather than to accept them as belonging to our idiosyncrasy, or even worse, *celebrate them*. In this respect, I am reminded of Maradona's *hand of God* and how a vast majority of my fellow countrymen applauded his behaviour.

The question that came to my mind was whether this FAAPI's convention was the right forum to discuss our traits. I also debated whether some of the descriptions that I had read in different books portrayed the *average Argentine*, and I asked myself whether such a construct as *average Argentine* existed. I wondered whether if I were teaching in a secondary school in an English speaking country I would go into an analysis of those negative traits that seem to characterize us.

But then, what does it mean to be Argentinean? What are those unspoken—and often unbeknown to us—assumptions that guide our behaviour? How could they preclude communication with members of another culture, call it American, English or Australian? I did a search on the Internet and came across a web page giving a so called profile of Argentina peppered with inaccuracies (samples: *Most Argentines are primarily of European descent*. Actually, according to a report in *El Clarin*, 56% of Argentines have indigenous ancestors. *Honour is in all respects the be all and end all and it routinely affects life at home, in the community and in business*. What do the authors mean by honour? How do you reconcile rampant corruption in Argentina and mendacity with honour? *Initial greetings are formal and follow a set of protocols of greeting the oldest person first*. In which contexts? *Arrive 30 to 45 minutes later than invited to a dinner party...*Dinner party? My experience after living 30 years in Buenos Aires belies this statement.

Next, having lived and studied in the United States (and the United Kingdom) I wondered which were the *cultural issues* I would teach my students whether visiting or

not visiting the U.S., for instance. I turned to a whole book (*Moran, 2001*) and I regret to say I did not find it particularly helpful. For example, Moran talks about certain supposedly *American-valued character qualities...and attitudes such as self-reliance, healthy skepticism, forthrightness...*(*Moran, 2001, p.14*) and I wonder whether these are not rather *individual* characteristics, traits or attitudes also found in the Argentinean culture.

I remember being rather pleasantly surprised—in San Francisco-- at the way that the American executives of an airline handled a half an hour delay in delivering our luggage to the right carousel: they gave us mileage in compensation. I could not help thinking about the times I have waited for luggage in Argentine domestic flights without even a word of apology. I also remember being surprised at the fact that apparently in a number of towns in the U.S. people do not lock their doors, or if they do (and I wonder why) they leave them under the proverbial door mat right at the very entrance. And the memory of the incredible inefficiency of some clerks in the U.S. when I was trying to make a reservation for an airport shuttle comes to mind as well. Still, I wonder whether these ways of behaving are a manifestation of deep, unspoken patterns that can be taught.

I wonder how tourists visiting our country react to our by now well established custom of charging them different prices—from what they charge Argentine citizens-- in hotels and airline flights just because they come from abroad with either dollars or euros. Amazingly, tourist authorities in Argentina seem to turn a blind eye to that behavioural pattern.

In my journey through the realms of *cultural awareness* I also reflected about the culture that we teachers of English have created, or that society has assigned to us. Ours must be one of the few educational groups that thrive on workshops, presentations, conventions and conferences taking place on Saturdays, supposedly the day when most other educators take a rest. But then, not a few of those prospective participants ask you first of all whether *they will get a certificate*. It does not matter who is giving the presentation, whether a person with next to no qualifications except that he or she is a native speaker of English, but the requirement seems to be *obtaining a certificate*. Who do they submit these certificates to and how important are they and why remains a mystery to me.

I just mentioned the unqualified presenter whose only merit seems to be that he or she is a native speaker of English and who seems to be revered by his audience. But then, there is also the one that one who never set foot in a teacher training college but is called *profesor* by an unwary audience, or the one who includes in his biodata the fact that he/she is the author of a video for language teaching, when his/her only merit consists in having put on a video *tape* the printed page and the sound track of a book!

In the past few years our *culture*—those of us teaching English as a foreign language—started being the object of aggressive marketing campaigns which promised future attendees all sorts of benefits short of getting a spiritual rebirth, nirvana or the liberation of past lives karma. One such advertisement promised prospective attendees to a one day phonetic workshop *dramatic improvements* in their pronunciation. One wonders how bad the starting point of those participants would have to be for the *dramatic* changes to take place. Another ad claimed that the audience would have a chance to *rub shoulders with* (local) ELT gurus. I once called world famous Herbert Puchta a guru and got rapped over the knuckles by Puchta himself. Fortunately, I haven't seen this particular FAAPI conference advertised as a life-changing event (but then, everything changes one's life, as the very nature of existence on this plane is change).

So, where does all of this lead us? I do believe that at least some of the issues that I have referred to above have to be the object of analysis: what does it mean to be Argentinean, how does our language reflect our ways of being? What other *cultures* exist --in our country-- apart from the ones that we are immersed in? I am always shocked at the use of our language by some individuals who apparently cannot interact

among themselves without explicit references to the process of releasing gas from their bowels or a solid substance, and they go about *defecating* with laughter, hatred, anger, cold, hunger (rather paradoxical if you think of it, as how can you excrete something you never put in) or *breaking wind* when they are at a loose end, or when they claim they would never do something. But the words that tops it all is that one that makes reference to the *male testicles*! It would definitely be a bad sign for Argentina if we are known the world over for Maradona's *mano de Dios* and for being the country of the *boludos*.

Still, to resume the list of issues that I believe need to be addressed, I think we need to determine what it is exactly about the culture of at least one of the English speaking countries that we need to teach: certainly not the atrocities perpetrated by the president of a leading country in the name of self-defence while the rest of the world chooses to look the other way, but those ideals that may rescue mankind from the crisis the whole world seems to be going through, the respect toward religious *beliefs* and the admiration for their fine manifestations of art. Perhaps we can then live in a better world where we may fulfill the dreams of Martin Luther King and John Lennon about the whole of mankind walking together as brothers and sisters.

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A Cross-Cultural Reading of Dictatorship as a Path to Empowerment

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The role of Literature in Teacher Education programmes has suffered alterations owing to curricular reform. The passing of the new National Law of Education will probably lead to their assessment, and it is in this context that I wish to propose a further expansion of the canon to the deeper discussion that is bound to ensue.

The current CBCs for Teacher Education, while they clearly refer to the cultural dimension of the language, seem to do so from a "foreign-cultural approach" (Risager, p. 243), characterised by a concentration on and admiration of the target country. The references to the use of English as a language of international communication, apparently adhering to a "transcultural approach" (Risager, p. 248), fail, in my view, to encompass the culturally complex situation that such an approach entails.

On the other hand, the National Curriculum for England upholds the value of learning a foreign language since it "raises awareness of the multilingual and multi-cultural world and introduces an international dimension to pupils' learning, giving them an insight into their own culture and those of others". It explicitly states that students should be "taught about other countries and cultures by considering their own culture and comparing it with others".

Therefore, I would like to propose that Literature in Teacher Education provide opportunities for students to learn and reflect about their own society's assumptions and values, and thus critically question the mainstream culture into which they are socialised (Byram & Fleming, pp. 6-7). What is more, it can foster the perception of our national culture as partaking of features of other Latin American countries.

To exemplify such a proposal this paper focuses on a comparison between *The Autumn of the Patriarch* by Gabriel García Márquez and *1984* by George Orwell, two works which illustrate life under dictatorship in different cultural contexts. Both novels depict dictatorial regimes with a common origin: a new governing class emerges from civil war and its leaders struggle against one another until a sole tyrant remains; his power, however, is not absolute – foreign powers dominate the Latin American patriarch, the Party controls Big Brother.

Narrative structure and treatment of time

The Autumn of the Patriarch (AP) is a polyphonic novel in which over fifty monologues coalesce in a spiral structure to summarise various times and testimonies. All six chapters begin with the discovery of the patriarch's corpse, and events take place – or seem to take place – several times, thus introducing a cyclical conception of time. The first five chapters consist of a single paragraph, with long, convoluted sentences, and the last one, of only one sentence. Narrators change in mid-sentence, without punctuation to guide the reader, thereby recreating a complex and chaotic situation, where different views of reality are presented, and where whatever order the tyrant may have imposed disintegrates with him.

1984 does not exhibit a spiral structure, but it does reveal elements of mythical time. Unlike AP, however, this cycle has no foreseeable ending, as the tyranny is prolonged beyond the scope of the narrative. A third-person narrator focalises the description of this society through Winston Smith. His perspective is only complemented by extracts from Goldstein's Book, which Winston reads as the gospel of the opposition, and which he eventually finds out has been produced by the ruling power. The novel is divided in chapters, grouped in three books, dealing, mainly in chronological fashion, with the beginning of the protagonist's rebellion, his construction of a parallel universe through his love affair, and his punishment and submission. The description in Chapter VII of three of the former leaders of the Revolution, now considered traitors, and their annihilation shortly afterwards, is evoked in the last pages, when Winston, sitting at the same café table, plunges into a spiral of memories and imaginings that suggest his ending will be a repetition of their destruction.

The Appendix, an aseptic treatise on Newspeak, symbolizes the total victory of the regime. Control is absolute, and narrative and syntactic structure reflect that hegemony.

Hozven (1989) points out that “the dictator ‘devours’ the social time of the community by suppressing all associative links other than those which are not related to himself. He thus suppresses the social space of the community and prevents it from building its own psychic and juridic space.” This leads to a social and temporal paralysis in which the mythical, cyclical time of the dictator is the only option, thereby allowing his perpetuation in power.

In *AP*, the tyrant has made a point of destroying the past: he has inverted the colours of the country’s flag, modified the national holidays to suit his travel plans, removed disturbing statues and altered school textbooks to eliminate references to colonial times. In the end, “no había otra patria que la hecha por él a su imagen y semejanza con el espacio cambiado y el tiempo corregido por los designios de su voluntad absoluta” (p. 218).

In *1984* there are no copies of books printed before 1960, monuments and inscriptions have been modified systematically, children’s history books mingle medieval and Victorian scenes, and the population is persuaded that they have been at war from time immemorial when in fact one conflict succeeds another, with alternating enemies and allies. In sum, “All history was a palimpsest, scraped clean and re-inscribed exactly as often as was necessary” (p. 42).

Dehumanisation and loss of individuality

Both novels introduce the notion of dehumanisation either through constant references to animals or through lexical choices in the descriptions of people. In *AP*, the patriarch’s house is a huge zoo, whose human dwellers also exhibit animal features – especially the patriarch himself. His wife and only legitimate son are devoured by dogs, dogs he keeps after the event for fear of killing his family again in their entrails. Those who rebel against him are dismembered, thrown to the caimans or turned into salted meat. In *1984* proles and party members are likened to animals such as mice, frogs, beetles or rabbits, and they quack like ducks or bleat like sheep.

By the same token, citizens relinquish their individuality to lose themselves in the mob. In *AP* the suppression of individuality is clear in the descriptions of the house of the concubines, the seven-month babies, the soldiers, the lepers, the names discovered in slips of paper that have become meaningless to the senile dictator. They are all massified and objectified – their only quality is that they integrate the cast of the performance staged for the patriarch. Patricio Aragonés, his double, personalises this annihilation: his body deformed, his mind nullified, he is deprived of his own will and “devoured” by the tyrant.

In *1984* the loss of identity is oppressive, as the narrative centres on daily life. The overalls, the penetrating odour of cabbage and gin, the scanty rations, as well as the “Victory” trademark that applies to all goods imaginable – they all synecdochically illustrate the uniformity of this society. In the “Two Minutes Hate” consciousness is drowned, the destruction of the individual is consummated and all desires are replaced with those of the dictator. Winston, in the last lines, feels he has achieved perfection as he is possessed, “devoured”, by Big Brother, and relinquishes any personal desire.

The obliteration of truth

In both works there are no certainties beyond the certainty of the regime, so the only sense of security can be achieved through total submission.

The question of truth permeates *AP*, even for the patriarch himself, as the destruction of spatial and temporal references alienate him, and his followers hide and change facts to please him, to control him or to protect themselves. He also knows that he is a victim of constant deceit, but he is willing to pay that price to remain in power. This subversion of truth affects his own identity and existence to the extent that at his death no one is certain that it is his corpse the one that is found. Once he is dead, however, the people manage to

recover their individuality “porque nosotros sabíamos quiénes éramos mientras él se quedó sin saberlo” (p. 343).

The protagonist of *1984* works at the Ministry of Truth, whose duties are described in detail. Newspapers, books, films, cartoons, even poems are carefully rewritten once and again to suit the needs of the Party. The earlier versions are destroyed and replaced with the new ones so that there is no evidence they ever existed. Political orthodoxy is embodied in “doublethink”. There are no certainties or accurate memories, not even of recent events. Winston “believes”, “thinks” but cannot “know” for certain when he was born, what happened to his family, when the regime started. There are frequent references to shadows and fog, which confuse everything. His only conviction is that one day he will be vaporised, annihilated, and will cease to exist in the past and in the future. Therefore, he clings to mystical truths, not supported by experience, such as the fact that the only hope lies in the proles. Through torture, O’Brien “teaches” him that “Whatever the party holds to be truth, *is* truth. It is impossible to see reality except by looking through the eyes of the Party” (p. 261)

Conclusion

It has been shown that both *The Autumn of the Patriarch* and *1984* construct their narrative structure in terms of the universe described and offer a mythical perspective of time. The dictatorial regimes set out to restore order after a war period, and consolidate themselves through the systematic destruction of individuality, humanity and truth.

The main contrasts between the novels lie in focalisation and the future that can be envisaged beyond the scope of the narrative. The central consciousness in *The Autumn of the Patriarch* is that of the dictator himself, but the reader cannot fully grasp the effects of tyranny on an individual. *1984* differs significantly, as the ubiquitous figure of the dictator is inscrutable whereas the impact on a single person is foregrounded. As regards the future, Orwell rules out the possibility of change, while García Márquez describes the death of the dictator and the apparent liberation of the people. However, the cyclical structure of the novel and the plots of the officials suggest that the patriarch will soon be succeeded by another dictator controlled by foreign powers.

What seems to single out this Latin American novel of dictatorship is the central role of the ridiculed figure of the despot, which implies that a liberating cultural identity can and should be constructed against it. I believe that this view of the tyrant as alien to the society which has produced it may doom us to repeat a history of domination. In contrast, if we identify ourselves with the victims of power as reflected in *1984*, we may shake off the paralysis and look forward to a different future.

This analysis has sought to exemplify the benefits of the inclusion of a transcultural approach to Literature in Teacher Education. It is my belief that such a perspective may have both cognitive and affective benefits by allowing the critical reassessment of the future teachers’ “taken-for-granted world”. Admittedly, Literature itself cannot be solely responsible for this goal, which would require the contribution of all the subjects in the curriculum. Hence, we should bear in mind that it is only when teachers develop their own intercultural competence that they will see the need to introduce it in their classrooms.

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Curricular Innovation in Primary School: Teaching English from an Intercultural perspective

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Abstract

The role of English as a language for international communication has determined the need for English speakers to become intercultural speakers. It is well acknowledged that the ability to interact with “others”, to recognize different “voices” in discourse and to express the self identity through literacy practices has become a key issue in ELT educational policies. Following the prescriptions of a new law of education, the province of Buenos Aires is developing a new curriculum design for English in primary school that aims at developing children’s intercultural competence in the English class. This paper describes how the new primary school curriculum design prescribes explicitly and implicitly the intercultural dimension in the class.

1. Introduction

The design of an English curriculum for primary school requires an analysis of what it means to teach English to children in the 21st century. English has become a language of international communication in a globalised world. There have been dramatic changes in the relationship established between language and culture. The cultural dimension has become the intercultural dimension (Byram et al., 2001: 5) since to speak English today requires the ability to interact with speakers of the language (who are not necessarily native speakers or who use English as a second language) and to create and interpret and meanings in different social, cultural and historical contexts (Kern, 2001).

Consequently, in order to recognize different “voices” in discourse, children need to be exposed to language learning experiences with a rich cultural component as from very early ages in language education. This is the reason why the English primary school curriculum needs to acknowledge intercultural competence as an aim by prescribing intercultural practices throughout its design.

This innovation has implications for the design of the document itself in the way its components are organized and developed. In order to present the teaching of language from an intercultural perspective, our task was to find ways in which this perspective was both explicitly and implicitly stated in the document. Explicit information was conveyed in the introductory part, the objectives and the teaching strategies presented (both explanation of teaching practices and examples provided). Implicit information was conveyed mainly through the organization and selection of content: language use, topics and text types.

2. Explicit treatment of intercultural issues

2.1. In the introduction

The document highlights the need to confront children with “otherness” to enrich children’s perspectives of the world and of their place and self identity in that context (Thisted et al., 2007). For that to take place, children need to interact with texts and people of other cultures. We understand culture as the knowledge and perception, thinking and action

schemes that are not presented as “given” but that are part of dynamic processes of symbolic production that characterize representations and practices of social groups (García Castaño y Granado Martínez, 1999). From this perspective, all social practices involve cultural meanings, and language mediates these meanings. This curriculum design explicitly recognizes the role of language as a vehicle, a symbol and a representation of culture (Kramsch, 1998) in its introduction when it states:

Desde una mirada más amplia, el contacto con la lengua extranjera confronta a los niños con la diferencia y permite el abordaje y la vivencia inevitable de lo otro, lo diferente, lo ajeno, lo diverso. Enseñarle inglés al niño es brindarle oportunidades para interactuar con textos y/o personas de otras culturas y así enriquecer su mirada del mundo, de su entorno socio-cultural y de su lugar en dicho contexto, fortaleciendo su propia identidad. La confrontación con lo diferente a través de la lengua extranjera estimula la toma de conciencia acerca de los principios que hacen posible la vida democrática, enfatizando los lazos comunes de la humanidad y todo aquello que une a los seres humanos.

2.2. In the pedagogic rationale

The pedagogic position that underlies this curriculum design presents good teaching as one that stimulates reflection on the social practices carried out through language. It is explicitly prescribed that teachers are to teach students to create and interpret discourse in primary school and in so doing they are expected to help students understand the different “voices” in discourse by considering the context in which language is used and the role of the participants in this interaction.

The curriculum design presents language as interaction in which spoken and written texts are used to mediate **meanings**, they are a trace of discourse activity since they are created to produce a series of reactions from the interlocutor. From very early ages children are expected to understand that to speak a language is to establish a negotiation of meanings by means of which convergence between intention and interpretation are looked for (Widdowson, 1984, 1990). The text of the document reads:

La enseñanza de inglés en la escuela primaria debe centrarse en la construcción de significados (meaning). En tal sentido, enseñar una lengua implica enseñar a crear e interpretar significados por medio de textos orales y escritos en contextos sociales, históricos y culturales específicos. Cuando un adulto le enseña la lengua al niño, lo que hace es ayudarlo a significar una intención comunicativa por medio de una determinada forma lingüística para que dicha intención sea entendida como tal por la comunidad de hablantes de la lengua que se enseña en un contexto particular.

2.3. In the general objectives

Communication as seen from a discourse perspective necessarily involves intercultural awareness since “Whenever we are engaged **in** interaction with others, we perceive and are perceived ourselves in terms of our social identities, one of which is our ethnic identity (Tajfel 1981)” (Byram et al., 2001: 7; Thisted et al., 2007). This is recognized and overtly expressed in the document when it states as main objectives of ELT in primary school:

- *Promover el desarrollo de la competencia intercultural y el fortalecimiento de la propia identidad cultural favoreciendo los procesos de integración social.*
- *Desarrollar prácticas del lenguaje centradas en la creación e interpretación de significados (meanings) atendiendo a las necesidades comunicativas de los niños.*

2.4. In the introduction and treatment of literature

We know that literature is a powerful tool to scaffold the language (Bruner, 1978). We also know that it is an excellent resource for intercultural content since it allows personal identification. Moreover, literature works in interface with language and allows students to interpret how the texts represent and symbolize the world they live in.

Therefore, the design of a new curriculum introduces literature in the English primary class as a means to learn both language and culture content in a very powerful way, placing literature as one of the three contexts in which language is learned. The text of the document refers to this when it reads:

La particularidad de los textos literarios de propiciar una identificación personal del lector con la situación planteada, los personajes y sus experiencias, los convierte en un espacio textual ideal para trabajar aspectos culturales. Los niños interpretan los textos a partir de cómo representan y simbolizan el mundo que los rodea, tanto a nivel personal y local, como social y global.

2.5. In the introduction and treatment of reflection activities

Reflection stages are prescribed for the primary classroom in our curriculum design. These stages are used to develop awareness in children so as to help them become autonomous learners. In the development of reflection for critical thinking and in consequence, for lifelong learning, cultural aspects are of primary importance in coherence with the rationale of the document. This is the reason why the text of the document mentions the development of attitudes, knowledge and skills for intercultural competence (Byram, 2000; Byram et al., 2001) through explicit reflection stages in the primary class by means of the following curricular prescription:

Por medio de actividades de reflexión que involucran aspectos lingüísticos, culturales, afectivos y actitudinales, el docente:

- a) Promoverá el interés y la motivación por aprender inglés.*
- b) Estimulará la toma de conciencia sobre lo que los niños pueden hacer con la lengua.*
- c) Brindará información de retroalimentación para que el niño siga aprendiendo y desarrollando actitudes positivas respecto de la lengua y de quienes la usan.*

Ejemplos de estas actividades son reflexionar sobre:

- a) Lo que se ha aprendido en las últimas clases para sistematizar el uso de la lengua.*
- b) El registro de la lengua que se usa, qué tipo de texto se utiliza para determinadas acciones, qué regla gramatical se pone en funcionamiento para llevar a cabo una cierta práctica del lenguaje.*
- c) los diversos contenidos lingüísticos que se usan según lo que se quiere decir*
- d) las diferentes maneras que personas de distintas culturas tienen para realizar las mismas actividades.*

En todos estos casos se involucra la afectividad de los niños en relación con el aprendizaje de la lengua y sus hablantes.

3. Implicit treatment of intercultural issues in content selection

Implicit information was conveyed mainly through the organization and selection of content: language use, topics and text types.

The topics were selected so that they allow for the treatment of social issues by means of contexts of language use that present a rich variety in terms of cultural and social aspects that

can be used to teach language. This is the case of contexts such as: *Las actividades humanas, la organización social, yo y mi mundo, mi barrio, mi ciudad, mi provincia, mi país*. In all cases intercultural content is strongly suggested through the language use selection that has been presented for each of the contexts. This language selection aims at working with diversity in the way people talk and live. For example, this is the case with the following selections in which diversity in terms of age and family organisation is presented.

*When I was five, I could ride my bike.
My grandma is very old. She reads books to me but she can't run or ride a bike, you know.* [frases que unen discurso]

*There are different families.
This is my family. It's a small family, but I'm happy.* [expansión]
There's my mum and my sister in my family. Pedro is living with us for some time. [información temporaria]

4. Conclusion

Curricular design that considers the cultural element as a central issue for language teaching requires the curricular designer to consider various dimensions by means of which intercultural aspects can be drawn. Through both explicitly and implicitly stated information, it is possible to write a document that prescribes an intercultural perspective in a school subject in coherence with the needs of our students as citizens of the 21st century (Starkey, 2007).

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English at State Primary Schools in the Province of Tucumán: A Cultural Experience

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Abstract

The Ministry of Education of the province of Tucumán has just started implementing English in state primary schools. Cultural awareness is considered important in the foreign language lesson. The Ministry of Education has planned to include every state primary school in the programme. However, there are some problems concerning social factors in each setting. The aim of this paper is to present Tucumán's programme. As this is a recent and on-going project, only partial results can be discussed.

Introduction

By the end of the year 2006, the Ministry of Education of Tucumán, decided to include the study of English as a foreign language in state primary schools' curriculum. This decision was made on the basis of what the National Law of Education N° 26.206 states in Chapter II, art 27c and in response to a historical social demand.

Policy

The province of Tucumán is strongly working in the implementation of English as a foreign language in 4th, 5th and 6th year of every primary school in Tucumán (616 schools). Introducing English as a curricular subject in state primary schools is one of the many actions that the Ministry of Education is administrating in order to minimize the social differences that discriminate children from different socio-cultural backgrounds in our schools. Part of the problems that the group in charge of monitoring and evaluating the English programme is facing is the need of having knowledge about each school. We are aware of the fact that each institution differs in its needs and arrangements, so in order to obtain information, a small group of professionals are visiting the institutions and organizing teachers' meetings in which pedagogical as well as administrative issues are dealt with. The Ministry of Education has the responsibility of providing teacher training programmes, teaching material for every school, teacher consultations, as well as monitoring, accompanying and assessing the implementation of this programme. Nevertheless, we still need policies to lay down our considered responses to issues such as providing assistance to a wide range of students with special curriculum needs, the allocation of resources needed by teachers in developing their curriculum programme, the use of facilities, parents and community integration into the school, and so on.

In the context of state primary schools, we seek participation of the regional supervisors, heads of schools, teachers, students and parents. We try to maintain regular communication with the different protagonists of the foreign language programme following a pre-designed plan.

"Language planning must take full account of the socio-cultural context in which the planning is taking place" and any plan developed "must be flexible enough to readjust itself

to unexpected system linkages discovered during the evaluation phase” (Kennedy 1983:2 in Carson, 1999).

Cultural perspective

From a cultural perspective, the Ministry of Education tries to prepare students for the demands of the 21st century. In line with Le Lien (1995 in Corsson, 1999) we consider that the world is no longer a collection of isolated regions and cultures. On the contrary, it is a huge collective of interactive and interdependent communities. So, education in state primary schools of Tucumán is evolving in order to form part of the global culture, in which English plays a major role as a lingua franca.

Together with the language policy applied in the province of Tucumán, the Ministry of Education is trying to improve schools in an age of cultural and linguistic diversity. The intention is to help teachers and administrators to tackle issues of social justice, socio academic achievement, bilingualism, and multiculturalism in their schools, examining and implementing projects around language and literacy concerns. But, each school in our province can be considered a different context in which “constellations of social factors typically figure to influence learning outcomes” (Ellis, 1994: 3).

It is well known that the socio cultural element in learning is particularly sensitive in the EFL classroom because in acquiring a language, there is, to some extent, an appropriation of a cultural identity too. In Tucumán we are working on the basis that the students cannot learn a foreign language if they are not aware of the culture that uses that language. Besides, it is convenient for our students to know how that culture relates to his/her own first language/first culture. In this way we attempt to raise students’ awareness of their own culture, and in so doing, help them to interpret and understand other cultures. This practice implies a set of practices requiring knowledge, skills and attitudes on the part of the teachers. Intercultural learning can give the teacher an important role as an educator, helping children understand the world around them, and to better interact with that world. The interactive process between learners and the “global culture” therefore becomes the social product. As Connolly (2005) states, learning a language, learning through language and learning to be a particular person are closely related. The problem is that many of the teachers recently incorporated to the state system of education in Tucumán do not have enough expertise; thus, the need of providing our teachers with the necessary tools to deal with a foreign language from a cultural perspective. According to Ellis (1994) social factors have a major impact on L2 proficiency but probably do not influence it directly. Rather, their effect is mediated by a number of variables. One set of variables which have been found to be of major importance is learner attitudes. Social factors help to shape learners’ attitudes which in turn influence learning outcomes. Social factors also influence L2 learning indirectly in another way. They determine the learning opportunities which individual learners experience e.g. the learner’s socio-economic class and ethnic background may affect the nature and the extent of the input to which they are exposed. If we consider language classrooms that emphasize formal language learning, children that come from working-class homes are often less successful than those that come from middle –class homes. But we try to follow the socio-psychological model which emphasizes the role of students’ attitudes. The relationship between attitudes and L2 learning is almost certainly bi-directional and dynamic, and is likely to vary according to setting. In general, learners with positive attitudes towards their own ethnic identity and towards the target culture can be expected to develop a strong motivation and high levels of L2 proficiency while also maintaining their own L1. It is clear that the relationship between these different factors and L2 learning is extremely complex. It is widely recognized that what really determine L2 proficiency are the social conditions and attitudes associated with the variables mentioned before. All these factors interact among themselves, and their effect on learning depends to a large extent on the setting.

Hopefully, English in Tucumán will be learned in ...“top-down ways through the education system and bottom-up ways that respect grassroots creativity” (Phillipson in Ricento, 2000).

Conclusion

In Tucumán, the Ministry of Education, supervisory officers, principals, teachers, parents, special education advisory committees, students and education organisations share the implementation of English as a new subject in state primary schools. We understand that support, resources and teacher training are important for an effective implementation. This includes helping schools, principals and teachers meet the needs of all their students. The implementation of the language programme discussed in this work, is an ongoing process in which curriculum development, teacher training, monitoring, evaluation and renewal take time.

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Foreign Language Education, Identity, and Culture: a Pedagogic Proposal Based on Lexical Phrases.

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Abstract

In the framework of globalization, and from a theoretical perspective, the notion of culture is nowadays embraced as pedagogically and educationally relevant within foreign language education. However, how to accommodate issues related with the learners' identity in real classrooms in this context is not an easy matter for educators. This session will address issues of identity and culture in language teaching. It is suggested that a contrastive approach based on lexical phrases constitutes a viable pedagogic resolution for the classroom.

Foreign language and culture education

The general aim of foreign language education goes beyond the acquisition of linguistic, non-linguistic, cultural, etc. information and knowledge towards a fundamental transformation of the participants' actions and thoughts at a social and personal level (Chen, 2005). The integral development of learners as individuals takes place when human beings reconcile new and challenging ideas with their pre-existing beliefs and values through diverse reading and writing experiences which lead to the multifaceted development of the self (Bean & Moni, 2003; McCarthy, 2001). Conceived in these terms, foreign language education encourages learners to create, maintain, and/or develop their unique identities (Bean & Moni, 2003; McCarthy, 2001; McCarthy & Moje, 2002).

It is often assumed that "to acquire and use a foreign language is to enter another way of life, another rationality, another mode of behaviour" (Byram, 1988, 17), to acquire a different personality (Guiora & Acton, 1979). L2 learning is viewed "as a clash of consciousness" (Clarke, 1976, 382) - a distressing and confusing experience which may result in an "environmentally induced schizophrenia" (Clarke, 1976, 379). Learners, however, may be unwilling to assimilate and accept the cultural burden of the target language (Alptekin & Alptekin, 1984), preserving their "integrated cultural identities" (Maloof, Rubin & Neville Miller, 2006, 255). From this perspective, learning a foreign language does not mean losing one's identity and assuming new cultural roles, but having a clearly defined identity, a strong sense of self, a "healthy ego" (Guiora & Acton, 1979, 199).

Identity issues

Identity matters because it is an aspect of how humans make sense of the world and their experiences in it, including their experiences with reading and writing (McCarthy & Moje, 2002). Who students are in terms of ethnicity, gender, religion, social class, etc. influences how they interact, respond, and learn in classrooms (Chen, 2005). As identities shape people's textual and literate practices, their literate practices play a role in their identifications and positionings (McCarthy & Moje, 2002).

Because identity is fragmentary, multiple, hybrid, complex, fluid, shifting and contradictory, it is always possible to paint two or three different portraits of the same individual depending on the relationships and interactions in the person's life that one chooses to examine. The exploration of identity in the context of globalisation is an exploration of multiple identities at a local, national, and global level (Chen, 2005; Coetzee-Van Rooy, 2002; Dlasaka, 2003; Starkey, 2007), i.e. "the cultural dimensions of social identity" (Coetzee-Van Rooy, 2002, 65). "All learners have the capacity to develop identities

not only as national citizens but also as cosmopolitan citizens” (Starkey, 2007, 59), enacting multiple identities depending on aspects such as language, religion, ethnicity, culture, etc.

Personal life events play an important role in literacy development. In the course of life, personal experiences influence and transform a reader’s identity (Berg, 2003). As educators, we need to discover which life events and turning points in our learners’ lives make them choose or drop a certain literacy behavior, how far the choice of a specific literacy behavior represents a turning point in an individual’s life, and in which biographical aspects learners need to be assisted to ensure their full literacy development. This uncovering of identities makes teachers more sensitive to their learners’ needs in terms of their multicultural development. At the same time, engaging students (especially minority community pupils, or those not in the mainstream) in resisting the identities that are often cast for them is one of the responsibilities of educators in the 21st century (Berg, 2003; Chien-Hui Kuo, 2003).

Identity may shift as a result of reading new material within a particular context, in particular material that challenges some of one’s beliefs based on one’s social and cultural background (McCarthy & Moje, 2002). As language learning offers a new window on experience, learners are offered the possibility of perceiving things in new ways (Dlaska, 2003). If they find the new experience threatening, self-analysis may be a source of identity-based anxiety (Stroud & Wee, 2006) and stress, with accompanying feelings of insecurity and discomfort, and psychological and behavioural problems (Tong, Huang & McIntyre, 2006). Conversely, if they find the experience positively challenging, self-analysis may provide them with new insights into their identity (Byram 1988), a “new sense of self” (Tong, Huang & McIntyre, 2006, 203). From this perspective, language learning, literacy, and literacy practices are tools for representing and/or performing particular identities (McCarthy & Moje, 2002).

Cultural colonization and identity

Holly (1990) posits that English teaching might be a form of ideological and cultural colonization, i.e. a form of indoctrination. If English cannot be dissociated from the social, cultural, economic and political relations in which it exists (Pennycook & Coutand-Marin, 2003; Osler & Starkey, 2000; Starkey, 2007), the cultural norms and values of the English are transmitted and imposed as an expression of hegemony. In this case, the learners’ culture is “totally submerged” (Alptekin & Alptekin, 1984, 15), which constitutes a threat to the learners’ national identity. In this respect, Chien-Hui Kuo (2003, 223) warns us that “if multiculturalism cannot successfully create a space for subaltern groups, it simply becomes an accomplice to cultural imperialism.”

Contrastive analysis

A contrastive analysis might contribute to bringing different cultures into contact, making “connections and comparisons between cultures and communities” (Sercu, 2006; Starkey, 2007, 69). As learners observe the foreign culture and identify the points at variance with their own culture (Imhoof, 1968) - through the examination of the culture-specific dimension of the semantics of the L2 (Wierzbicka, 1992) -, they realize that the foreign language enshrines different values and beliefs. They gain new perspectives on their own society, and their understandings of issues such as identity, diversity, etc. (Osler & Starkey, 2000). This contrastive analysis encourages learners to move beyond dichotomies or binary divisions (upper and lower, Western and Eastern, White and Black, Occident and Orient, etc.) toward a “Third Space” (Chien-Hui Kuo, 2003, 234) “by opening up a space of translation, a place of hybridity (...), a transformative and subversive force by which the production of cultural difference is mobilized (...), an ongoing process of relating to otherness” (Chien-Hui Kuo, 2003, 234).

Cultural bias

The success of this contrastive analysis is limited by the fact that cultural bias is unavoidable. We all "identify our own local ways of behaving with Behaviour, or our own socialized habits with Human Nature" (Benedict, 1935, 7). Cultural bias results in honest and subtle differences of perception. The aim of a contrastive analysis is to minimize cultural bias by making learners aware of their own perceptions and those of others. In this way, it offers an insight into their identity by re-interpreting elements of the foreign culture not as threats but as contributions to it.

A pedagogic proposal: Lexical phrases

Lexical phrases (Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992) may facilitate the inclusion of cultural features as the basis of a comparative approach integrating the teaching of language and culture. The form-context-function association of these phrases ensures appropriateness to culture-specific contexts of use, enabling learners to become communicatively and socio-culturally competent. By comparing and contrasting the contexts of use in which lexical phrases are likely to occur both in the L1 and the L2, cultural awareness is encouraged.

Context of instruction and context of L2 use

The proposal is that lexical phrases may mediate between the context of instruction and the context of L2 use through a contrastive approach which takes account of the learners' culture. "The ability to mediate between one's own culture and that of others' defines an intercultural competence" (Dlaska, 2003, 111; Kramsch, 1993). By comparing and contrasting the contexts of use of lexical phrases in the L1 and the L2, learners are offered the possibility of moving towards the L2 contexts of use. The transition may be mediated by lexical phrases as the basis of a contrastive approach oriented towards aspects of the L2 culture *indirectly* through the international English of the pop, travel and scientific cultures (Alptekin, 1993). The fact that this contrastive approach implies a recognition of the value of the learners' culture avoids the danger of learners finding that their identity is being threatened or that they are being imposed the alien and distinct identity of the L2 users.

Conclusion

The inclusion of a cultural component in language teaching is a necessary means of incorporating a sociolinguistic dimension in the development of communicative competence (Byram, 2000). Integrating the teaching of language and culture in the classroom brings about issues related with learner identity, stereotyping, empathy, cultural bias, and prejudice. In a pedagogy of language-and-culture, the question of identity is central: the assumption is that the learner's L1 identity is not "colonized", i.e., does not become submerged in the process of learning a foreign/second language, but rather is modified from a monocultural to a multicultural perspective. A methodological basis for resolving the tension between what may seem to be the competing imperatives of language and culture synthesises the culture-specific dimensions of semantics (Wierzbicka, 1992) with a lexical approach to language teaching (Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992) based on a methodology of cultural comparison and contrast.

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What do we Teach When we Teach Literature? Raising Cultural Awareness

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Abstract

“The works of imaginative literature fulfil the most ancient rites of our conscience in the awareness of being human and of believing in a common destiny” (Pablo Neruda).

Literature is an effective means to raise cultural awareness in a second language class: we recognize ourselves in literary works, we feel identified with cultural aspects shared by a group of people or sense the differences that may exist; but in the process, we can be aware of “our common destiny”.

As the great Chilean poet Pablo Neruda says “the works of imaginative literature fulfil the most ancient rites of our conscience in the awareness of being human and of believing in a common destiny”. There are a lot of ways for raising cultural awareness in a second language class, but very few as effective as literature can be; as Neruda points out literature is the means to let us be aware of our humanity, of our sense of belonging to or being different from, of our identification with cultural aspects shared by a group of people or of our recognition of the differences that may exist; but in the process, we can be aware of “our common destiny”.

We have been privileged witnesses of the evolution of our modern world and the speed at which literary production evolves in total concordance with the changes that have occurred in man’s mind and attitude towards life and moral concerns. So, we are also privileged people when we have in our hands the possibility of choosing the reading material our students will be analysing and reflecting on; this reading material we choose is the open window through which they will see man’s everlasting cultural tensions and how they evolve through times; therefore, the literary pieces we choose have to speak to them in the different voices they need to hear, and have to make them see through the different eyes that contemplate this amazing world. However, from the following quotation we can state that the idea is not new:

.....to ignore the voices from outside the sanctioned tradition is to be close-minded. Progress in the arts has seldom originated in the safety of the centre. What we think of as classics today are works that were often seen as affronts to good taste when they first appeared. James Joyce and D. H. Lawrence were both widely banned; now they are cornerstones of the literature curriculum. Diversity challenges us to be vigilant and flexible. We should approach our reading without preconceptions so far as that is possible. If this advice sounds like trying to have things both ways, so be it. The face-off between traditionalists and innovators is not about to be resolved soon. A compromise that looks for virtues in both positions seems sensible.” (Birkerts, Sven P., 1996);

but yet, the gist of the approach that is brought to discussion at this moment is not based on the confrontation between traditionalists and innovators, but on a more radical idea founded on the grounds of the cross-cultural experiences; a cross-cultural experience that is meant to be wider than the one favoured by the target language, a cross-cultural experience that favours the encounter with the different voices that have always had something to say all through the times in the history of mankind, and no matter in what language.

The idea that social groups never exist in isolation, that they always keep in contact with other groups, that this contact makes them be aware of their individuality, but also leads them to borrow and exchange aspects of the other cultures which make them undergo a permanent change, has been clearly stated by Ladmiral and Lipiansky in their book *La communication interculturelle* (1989). Therefore, the point is that the more the students can

get to know from other cultures through Literature, the better for them to be prepared to reflect on their own identity, and to be able to enlarge the scope of comparison among their own, the Anglo-Saxon and other people's cultures to avoid stereotyped representations of the world and a rejection of the different.

We have to understand that what we teach when we teach Literature is the reflection of LIFE, what we cannot and should not teach is a partial vision of LIFE; we cannot teach only through the eyes of the dominant groups, the dominant cultures. If our outmost task is to transmit different aspects of human life, deal with all the philosophical, sociological, psychological, historical, linguistic and pragmatical implications a literary piece of writing may convey, we have to make our students interact with whatever masterpiece of any time that has been produced by a mastermind no matter in what language but that, for sure, must count with accurate and amazing English translations. We do not have to deprive these minds, developing in a highly globalized society, of the thrilling experience of seeing the world through the eyes of the different witnesses, of listening to the different voices that have always had something to say, to the whole mankind, not to a privileged part of it.

The symbolic systems that human beings use to build the meanings are deeply rooted in their culture and in their language (Bruner, 1990). Teaching literature we count with a powerful tool to make our students construct their meanings not only using their culture and mother tongue, but also the system they are developing; and through both of them to construct the meanings of the world. The question that arises again is: what world? It should be the whole world.

From a literary perspective we can concentrate on helping our students to build a wider knowledge of the world, making them be in contact with other cultures, with other ways of thinking, with other ways of seeing the world, through the powerful means of narration used by every single culture. From ancient times what has made man discover new things is the wish to know; and this knowledge has passed from generation to generation through narration: this was, has been, is and will be the means through which mankind is connected.

There is a theory in Cognitive Psychology that also postulates that narration fosters comprehension, because what makes a person recognize himself or herself like a being belonging to a specific cultural context, to a specific community, is to have been in contact with a powerful narrative since his earlier childhood. To believe that narration is the most powerful tool to raise awareness of our very condition of being human leads us to think of what Literature will help us to reach this goal: literary works chosen from the conventional canon or a selection of fictional pieces that can take the readers where they have never been before.

To dare to expand the canon means not to listen mostly to white and male authors whose writing reflects only western values. If we analyse how the curriculum typically begins with the old English epics, to follow with Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, the eighteenth century novel, the Romantics and the Victorians, and ends with some of the classics of modern British and American Literature, we prove the point we study and teach literary pieces that reflect and reinforce only the culture of the target language, and overlook the perspectives of women, especially the ones who paved the way to the coming of the novel, Native Americans or other ethnic or racial groups because they are still not considered worth of being included in the canon.

....In the United States during the past decade, some universities have sought to expand the traditional canon by including more works by women, people of colour, and writers from a variety of cultures. These additions are meant to open up the curriculum and redefine the standards by which literature is judged. By revising and updating the list of works to be studied, critics of the traditional canon believe that we convey the diversity of both American and world cultures as well as expanding the definition of great literature. (Kirsznar; Mandell, 1997).

This great literature needs to be redefined if we consider an expansion of the canon because we will also be dealing with a different "nature of Literary genres [which] varies

from culture to culture [as] conventions of narrative organization and character development also vary considerably, especially in literature descended from an oral tradition.”(Kirsner;Mandell, 1997)

To illustrate what we really miss if we do not pay attention to the different voices that have something to tell us to raise awareness of our human condition, we have numberless short-stories, or novels and poems that really string the very cord of our human nature, like the poem by Wole Soyinka written in 1962: *The Telephone Conversation*.

To conclude we can say that narration validates each own’s culture, but also favours the natural human needs to know and to try to understand ways of thinking in different cultures. Thus, our task as teachers of Literature also enables us to open doors that will help our students to validate their own culture and to recognize diversity as something amazing and worth of being known.

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Intercultural Reflection in EFL Coursebooks

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1. Of knowledge and skills in intercultural reflection: mapping the territory

In a previous contribution on the treatment of the target culture in foreign language coursebooks (López Barrios et al, 2003) we refer to the fact that learning a foreign language presupposes a hermeneutic process that Bassnett (1997) equates to “embark[ing] on a voyage of discovery, during which perceptions are altered, unquestioned assumptions about culture and identity are challenged” (p. xvii). For this to happen, materials should strive to make the learner reflect critically rather than simply make him or her consume unquestioned facts about a ‘superior’ culture to the detriment of the learners’ source culture, which in our case is usually deemed to be inferior or subordinate to the target culture. The development of intercultural reflection should unfold as a planned rather than as an incidental or marginal process as a component part of the development of foreign language competence.

The different components of this competence are present in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The CEF is “a reference tool for use in (i) planning language curricula, (ii) designing language courses, learning materials and activities, and (iii) developing tests and examinations to assess communicative language proficiency” (Little, 2003, p. 130). Since its publication it has become an influential instrument in shaping foreign language instruction worldwide and across languages. Even if it is a European enterprise, its globalizing objective can in this case be deemed as a positive characteristic in that the CEF sets standards in foreign language teaching that are translated into teaching materials and international examinations that should produce a beneficial washback effect in language classrooms.

Especially interesting is the description of the competences language users are expected to develop at the different levels. These are rooted in particular skills and knowledge areas: declarative knowledge (*savoir*), skills and know-how (*savoir-faire*), existential competence (*savoir être*) and ability to learn (*savoir apprendre*). Developing skills and know-how presupposes automated procedures (procedural knowledge) such as those applied in oral or written communication. Since foreign language development is expected to make a contribution to the learners’ general abilities, i.e. a preparation for life after school, the ability to deal with intercultural situations – not necessarily in the context of foreign travel or communication in a foreign language – is a part of one’s existential competence. The ability to learn entails “being disposed to discover ‘otherness’ – whether the other is another language, another culture, other people or new areas of knowledge” (CEF, p. 12). As Little (2003) notes, unlike the language competences, intercultural competence is elusive and therefore not easily amenable to scaling. Nevertheless, it is an indispensable competence for successful communication. For example, the description of spoken interaction at level B1 states “I can enter unprepared into conversation on topics that are familiar” (CEF, p. 26). For this to happen, awareness of turn-taking conventions on the part of the learner as well as strategies used to join a conversation is of vital importance. This implies that a much broader view of foreign language learning, one that encompasses not only products (customs, literature, art, etc) but also values, beliefs and behaviours (Pulverness, 2003, Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993)

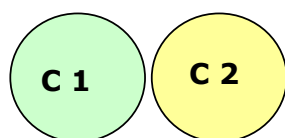
2. Intercultural reflection

As Pulverness (2003) points out, to develop intercultural awareness pedagogic practices and materials need to take account of the learners’ cultural identity “and address more

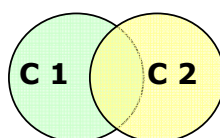
thoroughly the kind of cultural adjustment that underlies the experience of learning a foreign language” (p. 427). Intercultural competence involves attitudes (tolerance of diversity, respect), as well as awareness (of behavioural, cognitive and sociocultural backgrounds of learners and native speakers), in other words, the opportunity not only to appreciate and understand other cultures but to look into one’s own from a different perspective. Therefore, its development necessarily includes the possibility of reflection upon and expression about divergent and convergent aspects of the target culture and that of the learner (Lopez Barrios et al, 2003). However, this should be understood as providing “opportunities for learners to go beyond the mere comparison of facts, which often result[s] in an unfavourable assessment of the students’ own culture and a glorification of the foreign one”(López Barrios & Villanueva de Debat, 2006, p. 16). This reallocation of perspective should aim at empowering learners “to empathize with and understand other persons *on their own terms* which also deepens an appreciation of our own heritage” (Fantini, n.d., p. 8, italics in the original)

3. Promoting intercultural reflection: What EFL coursebooks offer

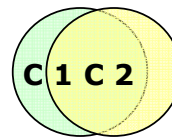
Activities that promote intercultural reflection make the learners notice and (more or less) critically respond / react to other cultures, languages and their speakers. The degree of reflection can be illustrated as follows:



Situation 1



Situation 2



Situation 3

In Situation 1 the materials do not make the learners compare or contrast C1 and C2 but treat them separately. This is the case of the activities in the “Culture Corner” section in *Blockbuster 1*. For example, Culture Corner 6 deals with the topic of “Eating in England”. After doing some reading comprehension activities related to the text, students are asked to write a short text about eating habits in their country and to illustrate it with pictures. No opportunities are offered for students to compare the habits and to think of reasons for the differences. The same topic is dealt with in “Culture Flash 1” in *New Snapshot Elementary*. Again, the same approach is followed (reading comprehension plus activities) and students are asked to consider the topic from the C2 perspective only. Likewise, *Dream Team Starter* in the “Cultural Studies” section provides information about the C2 regarding food, sports, landmarks, etc. without requiring students to make any links with their own contexts. The texts are followed by comprehension questions and a few language tasks. The effect of this is, in Pulverness’ words “often unproductive in terms of cultural understanding, with texts and visuals serving primarily as contextual backdrops to language tasks” (2003, p. 429). *Explorer 2*, a book published in Argentina and written by Argentine authors, includes Argentine characters that speak and write about their habits, likes and dislikes. However, there is no attempt to use that resource to develop some kind of cultural awareness. The book also incorporates some brief motivational texts about several cultural issues such as the diary of

Anne Frank (unit 1b), the Taj Majal (unit 8b), the lives of Perito Moreno (unit 5b) and Martin Luther King (unit 9b), etc. Nevertheless, students are not given the chance to ask, compare or reflect. One of those texts is about “Ghosts in English literature” (p. 17). After reading it students are asked to write their own story without first being required to relate the information to ghosts stories in their own language, for example.

In Situation 2 the materials attempt some degree of comparison between C1 and C2 leading to a moderate degree of reflection. *New Snapshot Elementary* attempts to make learners gain intercultural awareness by making them compare factual information about school timetables (Culture Flash 2) or possessions (Culture Flash 3).

In Situation 3 the materials promote a higher degree of crosscultural confrontation. In this case, learners are made to analyse information critically. An example is included in Culture Flash 3 of *New Snapshot Elementary*. One of the activities asks learners to discuss in groups to determine whether the rooms in the photos belong to teenagers and to find reasons to state that the young people shown in them are British: “How do you know the teenagers are British?”. It is, in fact, not inferable that the teenagers are British since the rooms could be considered to belong to a middle class family anywhere in the Western world. The two teenagers portrayed (a fair haired girl and a coloured boy) reveal a multicultural composition of the society, but it doesn’t necessarily mean the picture was taken in Britain.

What the activities lack so as to qualify as belonging to Situation 3 – intercultural awareness activities – is providing learners with an opportunity to act as “cultural mediators” between their own culture and the target culture as well as the chance to deconstruct stereotypes. This aim belongs to the field of “existential competence” and bears on affective factors rather than on plain knowledge acquisition.

The coursebook could be supplemented by designing tasks that will help students to

- challenge stereotypes
- reflect on values and attitudes by using songs, for instance, to discover the social and cultural values reflected in them, whether they are universal or specific to a culture. For ways of using song lyrics with this purpose see Tomalin and Stempleski (1993)
- explore critical incidents (exploring sociocultural differences and similarities through role-plays). For an excellent sample activity of this type see *Intercultural Resource Pack*, activity 2.4.
- examine communication patterns (and compare and contrast them to their own)
- go beyond content and look at language as a reflection of culture (connotations, proverbs, lexical phrases, etc.)
- become aware of different rhetorical patterns in writing
- defamiliarize as modification of “monocultural awareness” (Byram, 1990 in Pulverness, 2003) by, for example, using stories that force learners to look at their own contexts from a different perspective

In this section we show how an intercultural perspective can be incorporated in an elementary class. The aim is to reflect on differences in habits in different groups – not only across nations but within the students’ own community. Based on the informative texts about eating habits in the coursebooks analysed, we propose the following activities:

Lunchtime habits in my class

Answer these questions for yourself:

What time do you generally have lunch?

- I generally have lunch at ...)

Who do you have lunch with?

- During the week / On weekdays I generally have lunch with ...
- At weekends I generally have lunch with ...

Where do you generally have lunch during the week?

- At school / in the school canteen / at home / at my grandparents’ / ...

What do you usually have for lunch?

- During the week / on weekdays I generally have / eat / drink ...

Now ask some friends and compare your answers. Then compare your answers and those of your friends with the information in the text. What similarities and differences do you notice?

4. Conclusion

In general, the development of declarative knowledge tends to dominate the approach to the treatment of cultural information in the coursebooks analysed. All coursebooks analysed develop two types of declarative knowledge: factual knowledge and sociocultural knowledge about certain aspects of English-speaking cultures. A few activities that foster Intercultural awareness can be found in *New Snapshot Elementary* but they are completely absent in the rest of the sample under analysis. Since this lack means that neither intercultural skills and know how or existential competence are developed, there is a need to supplement the coursebook by adding activities that foster intercultural reflection.

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Intercultural Communication and Socio-cultural Restrictions Across Language Variables

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Abstract

Since language, as a semiotic system, is culture-specific, successful second language (L2) learning demands that intercultural learning goals become an intrinsic part of the curriculum. This presentation examines a number of culturally-constrained communication features, namely, (i) rules of speaking, (ii) non-verbal communication, (iii) intonation choices, (iv) lexical choices and (v) grammatical choices. These variables have been studied in relation, mainly, to the use of English by Spanish-speaking English teacher trainees at the Faculty of Languages, National University of Córdoba.

Introduction

Central to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is the notion that classroom activities ‘engage learners in communication, and require the use of such communicative processes as information sharing, negotiation of meaning and interaction’ (Richards and Rogers 2001, 165). But appropriate communicative language use in the classroom cannot be accomplished unless classroom conditions are created which enable learners to ‘localise the language, create contextual conditions that make language a reality for particular communities of learners so that they can authenticate it’ (Widdowson 1998, 715). As the structuring of language for use as a semiotic system is culture-specific, it follows that successful second language (L2) learning can only take place if intercultural learning goals become an intrinsic part of the learning curriculum.

This paper attempts to examine a group of culturally-constrained communication features where the cross-cultural dimensions of discourse pragmatic and socio-pragmatic abilities are essential, namely, (i) rules of speaking, (ii) non-verbal communication, (iii) intonation choices, (iv) lexical choices and (v) grammatical choices. The incidence of these variables on inter-cultural communication (ICC) will be analysed in relation, mainly, to the use of English by Spanish-speaking English teacher trainees at the Faculty of Languages, National University of Córdoba. A number of common pragma-linguistic, para-linguistic and linguistic errors will be provided in an effort to highlight the need to include systematic instruction regarding culture-specific constraints across languages.

Rules of speaking: appropriate sociolinguistic usage at risk

It has been argued that any student who wishes to learn a new language must acquire not only grammatical competence but also ‘what Hymes (1972) calls the rules of speaking: the patterns of sociolinguistic behaviour of the target language’ (Wolfson 1983, 61). Within rules of speaking, and drawing from Wolfson (1983) and Ellis (1994), we have concentrated on the aspects of (i) terms of address (how people name each other), (ii) remedial exchanges (attempts to counteract potential difficulties in social situations) and (iii) speech acts such as requests.

In the context of classroom interaction and with regard to the first category, Spanish-speaking learners often address their married female teachers as *Mrs*, omitting the teacher’s last name. The explanation for such error can be traced back to Spanish interference. The terms *señora* and *Mrs* have equivalent meanings but while the Spanish term is a free form, the English term is not. Similarly, instead of using *Ma’am* (generally American English) or

Madam (generally British English) when addressing a female classmate, some learners make use of the noun *lady*, rendering it on an equal footing with these two terms. This particular error is frequently observed in activities in which students are asked to communicate assuming a particular situation and adopting specific roles.

As to the second category, inappropriate use of remedial exchanges is particularly noticeable in the case of the formulaic expressions *Pardon*, *Excuse me* and *Sorry*. In order to make way in crowded places or upon late arrival in a class, many students tend to use the first expression. Again, in Spanish there is only one form, *Perdón*, which performs the distinct pragmatic functions ascribed to these three forms in English.

Finally, one is often struck by the realization of certain speech acts such as requests. More often than not, some probably inadvertent learners request further explanation of a particular task using the interrogative pronoun *What?* without allowing for the illocutionary and perlocutionary effects it may create. Another common case is the use of a blunt *Wait!*, for example, to request that the teacher do not proceed with a further step in the task, thus, changing the nature of the speech act from request to command.

Non-verbal communication: body language in ICC

In the field of non-verbal communication, studies carried out in Kinetics (body movement in general), Proxemics (personal distance between speakers) and Haptics (body contact between participants) throw light on a field where lack of knowledge of culture-specific exploitation of these social habits can impair successful communication. Students at the Faculty of Languages are made aware not to transgress the rules of English behaviour in this respect. While it is common in Argentinian Spanish to gesticulate profusely or to stand very close when speaking to strangers or even touch them, in most English-speaking cultures a similar behaviour is considered inappropriate. Another aspect which both teachers and students are sometimes warned about is the Argentinian custom of kissing on first encounter, which may be startling or even offensive to both native and other non-native speakers of English.

Accentuation and intonation patterns: transfer restrictions at stake

Regarding the area of accentuation and intonation patterns, both English and Spanish exhibit a number of differences. In the case of accentuation patterns of single-accented compounds, e.g. *greenhouse*, Spanish students often find it difficult to provide the correct accentuation due to lack of such patterns in the Spanish phonological system and tend to add double accentuation by default, as if they were noun phrases. As far as intonation choices and mainly with respect to tones, the absence of the falling-rising tone in Spanish can bring about noticeable misunderstandings. If students use a rising tone in instances where a falling-rising tone is the socially appropriate choice, they can sound inappropriately dominant. This is so because in English there are social implications superimposed on the rising tone –or the *referring* + in Brazil's (1985; 1994; 1995) terminology– and when speakers use it, they project social-external and contextual-internal control of discourse. Also, if Spanish-speaking students fail to produce the falling-rising tone in greetings and frames, the social meaning of togetherness and solidarity typically associated with use is lost altogether. Proper instruction concerning the social meaning of intonation contours is essential mainly because 'unlike grammar, vocabulary and segmental pronunciation, mistakes in intonation are not usually noticed and allowed for by native speakers, who assume that in this respect a person sounds as he means to sound' (Crystal and Davy 1975,8).

Awareness raising: beware of lexical items

Knowledge that the lexical items in the target language are not direct translations of an L1 is crucial. Differences are particularly noticeable in the case of idiomatic expressions. These items, as Read (2000) notes, '... cause great difficulty for second language learners

because the whole unit has a meaning that cannot be worked out just from knowing what the individual words mean.' Along similar lines, it might be useful to state that although a number of English idioms may share certain similarities with Spanish ones, such as *Don't look a gift horse in the mouth* and *A caballo regalado no se le miran los dientes*, this may not necessarily facilitate the learning of the expression. It is true that even if a single element is changed, the meaning may be altered as well. In order to emphasise the need for intercultural instruction, teachers at the Faculty of Languages often recall anecdotal evidence from a student who used a direct translation of the idiom *El mundo es un pañuelo* from Spanish and said *The world is a handkerchief* for the English idiomatic expression *It's a small world*. According to Coseriu (1983, 26) languages may express similar worldviews when they designate but will differ when they mean. Therefore, cross-cultural awareness is essential for successful ICC.

Grammatical differences: the problem with structures

The differences between English and Spanish are countless in this field. Some of the features with great incidence on potential intercultural misunderstanding relate to (i) the tendency for Spanish-speaking students to omit the subject in English, (ii) the difficulty in using object and possessive pronouns and (iii) inappropriate use of certain verb tenses. As to the first element put forward in this section, it is commonplace to hear pre-intermediate and some intermediate level students talking about the weather saying things such as *Is clear and sunny today* or *Is nine o'clock*, when they are trying to tell the time. Ostensible transfer from the L1 is produced here since Spanish is a 'pro-drop' language. Regarding the second item, deictic referencing can be damaged as there may be cases where it is not clear whether a *him* or *her* is action recipient or whose *something* or *somebody* is. It is also common to hear learners saying *I study for two years* as a reply to *How long have you studied English?* Failure to recognise the connection between past and present in this use of the present perfect tense occurs even when the this tense in Spanish can be used in the same way.

Conclusion

The present work aims at highlighting the key role of cultural differences between languages in ICC. For contextualisation of analysis, the discussion has centred on intercultural problems that Spanish-speaking English teacher trainees frequently encounter on their way to becoming competent users of the target language. Through the particular examples presented, we have attempted to illustrate the practical relevance of and theoretical guidelines for the analysis of communication variables and the interpretation of referential errors. The overall intention remains to raise awareness as to the crucial role of intercultural learning as 'critical awareness, acceptance of paradox and contradiction...and willingness to cross over into other disciplines' (Kramsch 2005, 552). It is hoped that the argumentation framework presented can admit further exploitation with relation to other EFL instruction settings and is critically adapted and enlarged.

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Verb Tenses in Form-focused and Meaning-focused Tasks

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Abstract

This study analyzes the mistakes with tenses that students of English make in a form-focused test (grammaticality judgment test) as opposed to a meaning-focused test (compositions). The data for the study narrowly analyses some verb tenses and verb forms. The results of the study demonstrate that after a year of English Grammar instruction at university advanced NNS students showed a significant difference between the rates found in both tests. The paper also offers some practical techniques to improve students' production of appropriate L2 written prose.

Introduction

This paper analyzes specific written discourse production in which non-native speakers' (NNS) usage of English tenses appears to be dramatically different from the usage of tenses in a form-focused task or exercise. The data for the study narrowly focuses on a small number of verb phrase features, such as verb tenses like Simple Present, Present Perfect, Simple Past and Past Perfect, and also verb forms. The main goals of the analysis are, on the one hand, to find out whether students of an FL make more mistakes in verb tenses and verb forms when they have to detect and correct errors in a grammaticality judgment test or when they produce their own texts. On the other hand, this work intends to shed light on the teaching of verb tenses in EFL by discussing some useful strategies and techniques.

The study is framed by theories of second language acquisition (Tarone, 1988; Ellis, 1994, 2000) and also by task-based approaches (Skehan, 1999; Nunan, 1989, 2002). According to Ellis, "learner language [...] appears to be inherently variable. Learners frequently use one structure on one occasion and a different structure on another" (1994: 22). He claims that if non-native speakers (NNS) use planning time to focus on form, they will increase accuracy; but if they use it to organize the content of their output – i.e. if they focus on meaning –, an increase in accuracy is less likely and this may result in an improvement in fluency. Skehan (1999) explains that the different tasks that we as instructors design predispose learners to channel their attention in predictable ways towards particular aspects of language use, which in turn help learners produce a more or less accurate, complex or fluent L2.

This study aims to determine whether or not the different tasks designed to elicit the correct use of verbs affect the students' production of English tenses.

Methods

The study was carried out with 55 students after they had taken the course: Grammar Practice (1st year, Translation and Teaching programs, Facultad de Lenguas, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba).

The participants had already passed their final grammar exam and had just started Grammar I (2nd year) when they took part in this project. It was assumed that they had been instructed on verb tenses since this is a crucial grammar point included in the Grammar Practice syllabus.

In order to examine this issue, two tests were designed and administered to the 55 students. The study employed different tasks as its main independent variables: a meaning-focused task in nature and a form-focused one.

Test A, a grammaticality judgment test, focused on form. It consisted of sentences that contained a mistake in the use of verbs which the students had to detect and correct. It is worth mentioning that if a participant made an error in the use of verbs while “correcting” what they understood as a mistake, these “corrections” were also added to the student’s record of errors. On the other hand, Test B, three open-ended questions, focused on meaning rather than on form. The students had to freely answer personal questions channeling their attention towards meaning instead of focusing on any particular structure. The questions aimed to elicit the use of the Simple Past and Past Perfect (question 1), the Simple Present (question 2) and the Present Perfect (question 3).

The tests were piloted so that the necessary adjustments could be made before they were actually used. Also, two raters other than the researcher were asked to score the participants’ written production task to ensure objectivity and to reach inter-rater reliability.

Results and Conclusions

The results of the study demonstrate that after a year of English Grammar instruction at university advanced NNS students showed a significant difference (Pearson’s test of correlations, Pardo Merino, A. & M.A. Ruiz Díaz, 2002) between the rates found in the form-focused test and the meaning-focused test ($\alpha=0,004$, being $\alpha= 0,05$ the inferior level of significance). Most students made mistakes with verb tenses at least once(63%).

The following chart summarizes the statistical results in both tests.

Correlations

		Number of mistakes of verb tenses in grammaticality judgement test	Number of mistakes of verb tenses in open questionnaire
Number of mistakes of verb tenses in grammaticality judgement test	Pearson Correlation	1	,381(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,004
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	208,833	59,278
	Covariance	3,940	1,118
	N	54	54

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As we can see there is a positive correlation between the variables “Number of mistakes of verb tenses in grammaticality judgement test” and “Number of mistakes of verb tenses in open questionnaire”. The critical value 0,004 is inferior to the value of statistical significance $\alpha= 0,01$.

In other words, students failed to detect or made many more mistakes in the grammaticality judgment test than when they had to produce their own texts.

In Test A (form-focused) they were supposed to spot mistakes with verb tenses such as Simple Present and Present Perfect and they also had to correct the mistakes themselves. It is worth mentioning that in the case of Test B (meaning-focused), even though the given situations triggered the use of particular verb tenses, the learners were free to use the structures and tenses they were more sure about.

Here is a transcription of the items they had to correct in Test A and also some mistakes students made when answering the open-ended questionnaire.

TEST A –

The students had to correct the following items:

1. He takes care of the dog whenever his next door neighbors goes away.
2. My aunt Jillian works in that office ever since she arrived in Edmonton.
3. The baseball player that Mac likes the most always try to hit a home run.
4. John repeats the same topics of conversation these days.

Number 1 and 3 showed problems with the formation of the Simple Present, numbers 2 and 4 with the Present Perfect.

TEST B- STUDENTS' ANSWERS

Students had to answer three questions that triggered the use of particular verb tenses.

1. Discuss last year's/this year's Oscar's ceremony. Refer to the favorite movies, nominations, nominees, winners, the awards in general, etc. (**SIMPLE PAST**)

2. Do you usually advise your friends? What type of advice are they eager to receive? Refer to any anecdote, event connected with this topic. (**SIMPLE PRESENT, SIMPLE PAST**, etc.)

3. Refer to your "English history". Years of study, private institutions, your English at present, etc. (**PRESENT PERFECT**)

Here are some of the mistakes students made with tenses when producing their answers.

Problems with the Present Perfect

1. *I started learning English when I was twelve years old and it is amazing that since then I *am still learning it.* (R54)

2. *From very early age, my parents sent me to a private English institute and I *didn't want to give up studying it since then.* (R49)

Problems with the Simple Past

3. *I have been studying English for two years before I *enter university.* (R50)

4. *After I've finished my secondary studies I quit studying English for an year and then ...* (R34)

Problems with the Past Perfect

5. *I *have been studying English for two years before I enter university.* (R50)

6. *I have been study for two years at the faculty of languages, but I *have studied for tree years before gaing acces to the university.* (R35)

The preliminary interpretation of results indicates that most students had trouble producing instances of the Simple Past and the Present Perfect (mainly the unfinished use); additionally they evidenced serious problems with the form of the verb phrase (see example 5 above "have been study"). In fact, the two tenses that proved to be the most troublesome were related since in many occasions the students used the Present Perfect where they should have used the Simple Past or vice versa (examples 4 and 2 respectively).

Ellis (1994) also explains that students very often transfer their L1 forms into their production in the target language. More precisely, second language acquisition implies problems such as the use of a TL grammar that is completely different from their mother tongue's. The learner, consequently, may find grammar as a hindrance in his or her acquisition of a foreign or second language.

Pedagogical Implications

The paper also offers a few practical techniques to improve NNS students' production of appropriate L2 written prose mainly focusing on verb tenses.

Teacher and translator training programs in ELT usually propose the study of numerous verb tenses in the first years of the study program, and students are not normally trained in these points at secondary school before entering university. Verb tenses has shown to be a problematic grammatical point within NNS university students.

In order to help students and teachers tackle this problem more effectively, Petrovitz, (2001) suggests that the presentation of grammar in ELT can be greatly enriched by dividing the whole topic into smaller chunks throughout the year so as not to force such a large amount of disparate material into one single teaching unit. A principled redistribution would allow for a more natural and comprehensible presentation.

Research into L2 learning and acquisition has also found that due to a number of its complex grammatical, lexical and pragmatic features, the system of English tense is very difficult for NNSs to use correctly and in appropriate contexts (Hinkel, 2003). Furthermore, other investigations have pointed out that English verb tense usage is largely collocational and idiomatic (e.g., Norris & Ortega, 2000). In light of the many layers of complexity associated with the contextual uses of verb tenses in English, an easy technique that L2 writers can rely on with great effect is to practice using them in context. For example, Swales and Feak (1994, 2000) note that such verbs as *considered*, *done*, *found*, *given*, *made*, *shown* or *used*, are almost always employed in passive constructions, and predominantly in the simple present. These semantically and pragmatically simple passive verbs are so common that they are usually familiar to L2 learners even at the beginning or intermediate levels of L2 proficiency. For this reason, practice with common passive phrases, sentences or collocational expressions in the simple present can be combined with other verb constructions in speaking or writing practice.

Techniques that can help EFL students understand and learn verb tenses

Students in special education classes as well as many other students in general education are routinely given instruction and assignments for which they are not prepared. Although teachers receive strong pressure to "*cover*" materials in preparation for high stakes tests, what Cecil Mercer (Mercer & Mercer, 2001) terms the "spray and pray" approach to teaching content is not effective. When students do not have the necessary preskills to complete a task successfully, whether it is answering an oral question in class, solving an arithmetic problem, or answering a question about the content of a chapter in history, assigning the task has no educational value. What students learn from such assignments is to avoid the task. Many students quickly decide that it is easier and less damaging to their self-esteem to say "*I won't*" than "*I can't*." When teachers assign work students cannot do, they are not only wasting valuable instructional time, they are increasing the likelihood that students will feel disappointed, frustrated, and thus will not learn.

The following are tips that EFL teachers can take into account when teaching verb tenses. The different points are illustrated with exercises and activities that can be found in the appendices.

1. Limit the information about verb tenses according to the **time frame**: present tenses, past tenses,
and future tenses.
2. Provide students with different genres that are typically used in a particular time frame.
3. Using models (authentic texts) as example. Analyze them in class. (*Points 1, 2 and 3 are illustrated in Appendix A*).

4. Review the definition of a verb and **recycle** the role verbs play in writing complete sentences.

5. Make students edit faulty paragraphs so that they can become aware of their own problems with tenses. (*Example in Appendix B*).

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Teacher Associations Bonds across Cultures

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In December 2006, two of FAAPI's members, Norma Boetsch, as its President, and Gabriela Tavella from APIZALS, were granted a Hornby Trust award to attend the British Council "TA Seminar: Next Steps" in Cambridge, England.

This article is the result of that professional development event attended by TA representatives from several continents. As stated by the Event Commissioner, Barbara Hewitt, its aim was ***"to give participants the opportunity to share knowledge and explore best practice about how to develop and maintain successful teacher associations."***

As we worked on our joint presentation at the end of the seminar, both of us became increasingly aware that FAAPI needs both to reach out to more ELT professionals all over the country through carefully programmed actions and to reinforce its support to its member TAs to enable their **sustainability** over time. So to give TA representatives and other ELT professionals attending this session the same opportunity to share knowledge and explore best practice about how to develop and maintain successful teacher associations is the driving principle of FAAPI's Cascading Project, whose copy is in the handout*.

Even though efforts have been made to reach out to all of FAAPI's member TAs by means of its website and Internet connections, we are well aware that not all of them have access to Internet and that each and every one has a different profile closely related to their local culture. Therefore, we must avail ourselves of this great chance to work together in this initial move to replicate that experience.

There, tapping mainly on the ELT Management approach, we analyzed situations, compared approaches and audiences, exchanged opinions and worked with each and every one of the attendees thanks to great group dynamics techniques used in its development.

And we reinforced our opinion that every Teacher Association has its own and unique organizational culture which could be defined as

♦ *A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way you perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (Schein, 1993)*

♦ *A system of shared meaning held by members that distinguishes the organization from other organizations. (Robbins, 1989)*

TAs can differ in their organizational culture, in their identity, but most of them share the same basic principles in their mission statement. In the case of FAAPI, this is ensured by the requirement that every federated TA's bylaw agree with its own. Hence, it becomes relevant to analyze how each of them fulfils it in its own cultural context.

By **mission** we mean the purpose of the organization, which in the case of a TA involves:

- Who its members are
- What they do
- Where they do it
- What is unique about their institution
- What their most important values are

The BC TA Seminar could not have been more timely and to the point as 39 attendees- some of them TA Executive Officers- from as many as 34 countries convened at Cambridge to analyze and discuss their own conditions, exchange experiences and share solutions. A true ELT Management course deftly directed by George Pickering enabled us to have an excellent overview of something we may never actually be aware of when we are striving along to overcome obstacles in our home country, city or town: we are not alone in our commitment to voluntary work for our Associations and it may be more rewarding if we share them with those “in the same boat” elsewhere.

A case in point, that you will find in your handout, is the letter from Pakistan’s SPELT Founding Member Zakia Sarwar, a fine elderly Pakistani female ELT professional, to IATEFL, published in their August-September 2003 Newsletter issue and where you may find that all the answers to the questions above help describe her institution’s profile. In addition, you may also guess why we chose to include it in your handout. However, each and every one of the attending TAs might have merited mention for the very same reasons.

During the sessions we worked together on topics ranging from how to apply the SWOT paradigm to our Associations on to analyze how to enhance or/ and extend the services offered to our members and, even further on to how to get external support and how to make better use of the British Council’s website and other services, IATEFL SIGs, LATIN CALL.

So from the concept of mission let us move on to **strategic planning**, which involves answering five key questions:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Where are we now? | Analyzing our current situation |
| Where do we want to go? | Mission and values |
| | Setting Strategic Objectives |
| How do we get there? | Strategy and tactics |
| How are we doing? | Monitoring and reviewing progress |

Strategy involves

- Assessing the external and the internal environment
- Appraising the organization’s capabilities.
- Setting a mission and goals.
- Devising appropriate strategies
- Evaluating their effectiveness

1. Strategic Planning*

Where are we now?

Who are our members?

What do they think of us?

What are our strengths and weaknesses?

What are our opportunities and threats?

The best way to answer these questions is by applying the **SWOT analysis** which enables us to assess the position of our association. An internal audit will allow us to assess our strengths and weaknesses whereas an external audit will provide the information to calculate the opportunities and threats to the organization.

Many factors can be construed as either an opportunity or a threat. If a shoe salesman visited a country where no one wore shoes, would they see it as an untapped market or as a place with no market demand? Threats have also been described as opportunities in disguise.

The chart below is an example of how to assess the current condition of our TA so that we can define strategies to make the most of our opportunities without overlooking possible threats or, whenever possible, turning the latter into the former. On analyzing it, bear in mind that the terms *people*, *customer*, *client* and *resources* are to be accurately interpreted in each of the cases in they are to be considered.

	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Leadership		
Strategy		
Products, Services (Newsletter, Conference, Courses, Website, other)		
People (customer service, involvement)		
Systems and procedures		
Resources		
Innovation		
Other		
	Opportunities	Threats
Socio-cultural		
Technological		
Economic		
Educational		
Political		
Other		

2. Marketing the Association.*

The key aspect of marketing is an attitude of mind. It requires that, in taking “marketing decisions, the manager looks at these from the view point of the customer. These decisions will thus be driven by what the customer needs and wants. David Merrer (1996).

“The management process which identifies, anticipates and supplies customer requirements efficiently and effectively.” The Chartered Institute of Marketing.

“The purpose of business is to create and keep a customer and the aim of marketing is to know and understand the customer so well the product or service fits him and sells itself.” Peter Drucker

Then the crucial questions are:
Who are our customers?
What products and services do they want from us?
What services do other TAs across the world offer their clients? .

3. Leadership

As regards leadership, aspects such as number of members in the executive committees, election process, when they are elected and for how long, how they are renewed should be analyzed as how and why Executive Committee officers are elected has a lot to do with the culture of each TA membership but also with leadership styles..

But we also need to remember that long-term leaders are difficult to substitute unless they do work towards ensuring their own replacement to take over with self-confidence and assurance of whole-hearted support of the previous holders of the position, something that might be achieved through shadowing...

4. Sustainability*

An aptly chosen term to approach the issue of how TAs may continue to grow and provide services through time, sustainability requires reflection on the global concepts of affect and management. Thus, it may turn to be the most dependent on the balanced interplay of those variables in which cultural factors play crucial roles. The fact that the current telecommunication revolution has provided us with the chance to strengthen TAs' Bonds across Cultures and help each other to look both inwards and outwards to develop the right projects to ensure it, may be vital in its attainment by providing interesting examples.

Conclusion

After analyzing and comparing these aspects, we can ascertain that we have many things in common and that those which differentiate one TA from another are specific to the organizational approach of the cultures in which they are immersed. We firmly believe that cultural bonds can be strengthened across TAs, provided that they are all committed to the shared goal of developing our profession and strengthening friendly relationships among its members- irrespective of cultural differences deriving from their respective communities. Continuing to exchange experiences and ideas may not only help build bridges across cultures but also, to enhance our institutions and their services...

As FAAPI, we are certain that this is a great move in the right direction for an institution that has weathered so many crises but needs- now it has come of age- to settle down as a more formal one establishing partnerships at national and international levels to further the development of ELT professionals all over the country. That is why it is so important to consider this as just the first move in a longer term project, so that each member of a TA taking part in this session may invite its members to join the Cascading Project. Equally important is that any attendee who does not belong to a TA should consider joining or starting one in his area so that more ELT professionals could benefit from our services.

* Indicates the corresponding handout sections.

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Intercultural Resource Pack. Latin American Perspectives

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Abstract

The Intercultural Approach proposes to transform information gaps into intercultural gaps. The *Intercultural Resource Pack* was produced in order to try to bridge intercultural gaps by promoting IC competence in the Latin American classroom. The aim of this workshop is to explore activities in the pack to see them as an example of what constitutes the beginning of an active collective process which transcends cultural awareness in order to place Intercultural competence at the centre of the curriculum.

Workshop summary

In today's ELT world, many of the facts that were once held as certainties are now only uncertainties. Paradigms have changed and are changing and no truths seem to hold unchangeable or unquestionable. Questions such as:

- Are we teaching EFL, ESL, ELF? What is the aim of language teaching?
Who are our students going to communicate with? What are their aims accordingly?
- What are the standards we can/ should expect from our students in teaching /testing them?
- Is English as a Global language an abstraction or a reality? How does the local express itself within the global?

In this context, in a world that sees English in an unprecedented role as a *lingua franca* which is at the same time being challenged and changed by users even unconsciously as they express their identity, the notion of culture is paramount, as it is revisited and reshaped in order to acquire new meanings.

This workshop will explore the notion of culture from one particular point of view: the application of an Intercultural Approach to Language teaching (Corbett, 2003) in different ELT contexts, ranging from General English to ESP contexts, through the use of the ICRP, a Resource pack for language teachers in Latin America produced by five ELT practitioners from Brazil, Argentina and Venezuela as an outcome of Hornby Summer School Brazil 2006. In this approach learners become mediators between two or more cultures in an attempt to bridge gaps but at the same time retain their identities. In doing so identities are enriched and languages get closer together.

The following is the proposed structure of the workshop:

1) Exploration of theoretical issues:

We will explore together through a questionnaire the meanings and implications of English today and English Next (Graddol, 2006) and what the future seems to hold for us.

We will look at how related disciplines (ethnography, media studies, sociology) can aid language teaching and we will explore how transcending the Information gap and generating the Intercultural gap can help students reach Kramsch's 'third place',

A vantage point from which the learner can understand and mediate between the home culture and the target culture (Kramsch, 1993).

(Corbett, op.cit: 31)

In this way, developing intercultural competence means taking the info gap further and creating meaningful dialogues through a set of savoirs (Byram, 1997b: 34 cited in Corbett, ibid.)

- 1) Knowledge of self and others.
- 2) Knowing how to interpret and relate information.
- 3) Knowing how to engage with the political consequences of education.
- 4) Knowing how to discover cultural information.
- 5) Knowing how to relativise oneself and value the attitudes and beliefs of the other.

(Corbett, op.cit : 32)

2) We will take the different strands proposed by Corbett and, by working in groups, analyse one activity in the pack per group, by cross-referencing the different strands in Corbett (op.cit.) and the Sections of the pack, i.e. *The Learner as Ethnographer*, *Cultural values and attitudes*, *Challenging stereotypes*, *Critical readings of culture*, *The Media*, which could be used in any class following the Intercultural Approach.

The analysis will be based on the following points:

1. How would this activity work in a class of my own?
2. Would I have to adapt it in any way?

How can I adapt it so that it suits a different context, e.g. Young Learners, Secondary Education, Adult learners, Trainee Teachers, General English, Business English, EAP, ESP.

3. What interesting “product” info could derive from this activity? e.g. texts written by students, lists of things, people, books, events that are relevant to different cultures and would be good material for exchange and learning about each other.⁴

Each group will briefly present their conclusions to the whole group, based on the questionnaires.

After each group has presented their conclusions, the presenter will give them some further input, in the shape of a bit of a sitcom/ film, a game, a text, a traditional info gap, to see how the audience can transform them into an activity which seeks to develop Intercultural competence. Results will be reported to the whole group.

3) Next, the website/ blog and forum accompanying the pack will be shown to the group with a list of countries of people participating in the forum/ piloting the activities and the proposed structure for the Intercultural Corner, which will be built based on the product info received.

The methodology of some parts of the workshop will be based on OSDE methodology in order to produce true dialogues and enquiries into the concept of culture and its applications.

As a final follow-up activity, participants will be given the following negative etiquette about Scotland, cited in Corbett (op.cit. 110) to read (cf. Negative Etiquette p 50 of ICRP too). They are provided as “Seven Ways to annoy the Scots”

- 1) Use England instead of Britain or English instead of British.
- 2) Use British instead of Scottish.
- 3) Use Scotch to refer to the people.
- 4) Pretend never to have heard of Robert Burns.

⁴ (The presenter will also hand out some questions specifically designed for each activity, questions the materials producers would like to have answered as feedback).

- 5) Say it would be better if the UK had one football team instead of four.
- 6) Talk about men wearing skirts.
- 7) Imitate the local accent.

They will be asked to produce “Seven Ways to annoy the Intercultural language teacher”, which they will read aloud to the class.

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Sites

<http://interculturalvoices.googlepages.com/home>

<http://interculturalvoices.wordpress.com/>

www.osdemethodology.org.uk

Integrating Geography and Literature: A One-Way Road to Cultural Awareness

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Abstract

Teaching English in Secondary Schools today poses the challenge of educating young people with intercultural awareness. The English class is expected to cater for cross cultural education with the aim of strengthening students' self cultural identity in the process of learning about other cultures. This paper summarizes the research work carried out in a parochial school in which students' intercultural competence was developed through a content and language integrated curriculum in which Geography and Literature blend in the English class.

Introduction

ELT in Secondary Schools today poses the challenge of educating young people as intercultural speakers (Byram, 2001), a new educational perspective expressed in the new National Law of Education and in the new secondary school curricular designs. From this perspective, teachers should aim at systematically developing knowledge, skills and attitudes that help our learners interact with "otherness", accepting other perspectives and respecting difference (Ibid, 2001). This paper summarizes the research work carried out in a parochial school in which students' intercultural competence (Byram, 2001: 5) was developed through a content and language integrated syllabus (Deller and Price, 2007: 9) in which Geography and Literature blend in the English class. There were three stages in the implementation of the project: the design stage, the teaching stage and the analysis stage.

Theoretical Framework

Communication is a complex process of realizing texts as discourse; that is to say, applying sociocultural knowledge as well as linguistic knowledge in particular contexts (Kern, 2001: 271). Communication is a matter of making meaning through written and spoken texts and as Fecho and Botzakis (2007: 551-552) point out "*Immersed in context, words come laden with intention and depth of meaning. When it comes to language, one size does not fit all. Language is richer, deeper, more necessary, and more complex than that.*" This is the reason why it is essential for teachers to generate teaching situations in which students create discourse. This means that our schools should promote the use of English to create and interpret spoken and written texts considering questions of use and genre in diverse social and cultural contexts (Kern, 2001: 10). We are assuming that language and culture are inseparable, especially when the language in question is a lingua franca. Therefore, good teaching should stimulate reflection on those social practices carried out through language and should help students analyze and recognize language as a symbol, representation and vehicle of culture (Kramsch, 1998). In this respect, good teaching should cater for cross cultural education with the aim of strengthening students' self cultural identity in the process of learning about other cultures.

The Programme: Design, Teaching and Analysis Stages

The programme was designed using the principles of Content and Language Integrated Learning. This umbrella term describes both learning another content subject through the medium of a foreign language and learning a foreign language by studying content subject

matter. Also, the programme was based on the idea that literature helps develop awareness of cultural differences -realised in the use of language- in terms of ethnic background, gender, social class, age and profession when dealing with topics coming from the field of social studies (Mc Rae, 1991) (Lazar 1993). In this particular case, the programme considered topics covered by Human Geography, namely migration and social mobility. We thought this was particularly relevant since it is in those contacts between foreigners moving across borders that English is used as an international language and cultural differences are made more evident in social exchanges (McKay, 2002).

On the one hand, we selected Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street* and Kureishi's *My Son the Fanatic* as the key literature works for our project together with non canonic literary pieces such as Sting's song *An Englishman in New York* and a poem written by an immigrant to UK *The Things I Miss*. Students were also exposed to the movie *In America* and essays published in www.movinghere.org.uk website in which immigrants from Asian countries expressed their views of the host country together with their feelings and experiences in it.

On the other hand, we chose informative texts on different types of migration, its reasons and its social consequences in host and migration countries and study cases of immigrant communities in England, the rest of Europe and the U.S.A. The teaching sequences were planned around tasks in which language was used meaningfully with an authentic communicative purpose. Such a communicative purpose responded to content needs; that is to say, the needs to learn about a specific topic using language as a vehicle.

The teaching stage was characterized by a focus on reflection and critical thinking through patterns of interaction with the teacher and among students that facilitated the analysis of language in terms of its cultural content. Classes were planned from a social interactionist perspective: learning takes place in a social context and by interacting with others new knowledge is constructed on the basis of knowledge previously acquired (Vygostky, 1978). For example: when presented with the book *The House on Mango Street*, students were asked to think and reflect upon cases in Argentina: where immigrants were from, their customs and living conditions and whether they eventually assimilated into our culture. This triggered their assumptions on what might happen in countries such as the USA or the UK and led them to gather factual information about immigrants and border policies in different countries and our own. Students also showed special interest in controversial issues such as: discrimination and its causes as well as other social matters like language, accent and customs. Because students retrieved information from their own experience, the classes provided the suitable environment for emergent learning situations to take place. These situations were used by the teacher to empower the project. Strong emphasis was placed on those tasks that involved student production; in these linguistic support was given to facilitate the creation of meanings through language. Feedback was provided to challenge students' perception on the topics presented. One instance of an emergent learning situation was the students' opinions of the cover of *The House on Mango Street*. When asked about their interpretation of the picture shown, students explained that it did not really mirror the spirit of the street they captured when reading the descriptions the author included. As a consequence they were presented with the task of producing their own covers and explaining the images shown, which were their own drawings.

The last stage of the project consisted of the analysis of students' responses to different tasks in order to see how the components of intercultural competence had developed in the process. The first ones were a semi-structured survey and the writing of a script for a play in which characters from different cultural backgrounds interacted in a specific situation. The analysis of students' answers to the survey reveals that students started questioning and reflecting upon mainstream cultural stereotypes. This exemplifies one of the components: *intercultural attitudes (savoir etre) -curiosity an openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own* (Byram, 2001:5). They became aware of the potential of English to communicate in other cultures other than the ones commonly associated with an English or American national identity. They also seemed to realize how language reflects culture and how people cling to their customs in an attempt to preserve

their identity, their roots and by doing so they consciously or unconsciously refuse to learn the language of the host country. It was their opinion that within some communities the foreign language is considered to have only a transactional value.

Other tasks students performed were:

- the search of biographical elements in the short story *My Son the Fanatic*. Their findings revealed the imprint of cultural identity in Kureishi's story together with his strong feeling of not belonging to the host country and, according to the students, the most striking finding was how religious beliefs could prevent immigrants from adapting to the new cultural background. This is an example of another component: *skills of interpreting and relating which is the ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents or events from one's own.* (Byram,2001:6)
- the production of their own poems based on the one analyzed in class *The Things I Miss* and the song *An Englishman in New York*. The poems were written as if they were immigrants from Argentina, Asian and Caribbean countries. In order to perform this task students had to search for information about those countries and choose the cultural elements they would include. In doing so they developed awareness of how difficult it could become to express feelings and abstract terms in a foreign language. All this led them to different conclusions being the most important one that one's own mother tongue seems to be the best means to express your own idiosyncrasy because language is a vehicle of culture. In other words we may say that they developed *skills of discovery and interaction*, the component that describes *the ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of realtime communication and interaction.* (Byram,2001:6)
- a reflective task in which students had to draw conclusions on how the different literary pieces, canonic and non canonic, relate to the syllabus and among themselves and finally what perspective they thought the syllabus should include to cover the whole broad topic of migration, language and culture. About the first topic they concluded that what all the pieces shared was the fact that language is a vehicle of culture and that when people from different cultures are in contact there are some immigrants who wish to assimilate into the chosen host country and try to eliminate the somehow obvious differences. There are also others who just want to be accepted without being asked to introduce any changes to their habits and practices mainly linguistic ones. However, they also noticed that after some time immigrants seem to adapt to the new environment but they also succeed in keeping the cultural elements that help them preserve their identity. As regards the latter, students decided that the programme should include literary pieces which show other perspectives on the issue of migration and social mobility such as immigrants returning to their country of origin as visitors. They predicted that people in such a situation would probably realize their own changes and make a different reading of both cultural realities. Their conclusion is a clear example of the development of *knowledge of social process*. That is to say how social groups and social identities function. (Byram:2001:6)

Conclusion

Our conclusion is that within a content and language integrated curriculum students develop not only communicative competence in the second language but also intercultural competence, which leads them in time to reflect upon the symbiotic relationship between language and culture: cultural identity is embodied in the linguistic practices of people in different interaction situations. It is our belief that Content and Language Integrated Learning classes in which Literature is integrated with any other social science help students become "intercultural speakers". That is to say speakers who have a knowledge of one or

more cultures and social identities and have a capacity to discover and relate to new people from other contexts for which they have not been prepared directly.(Byram,1998)

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Poetry as a Mirror of Human Experience: Practical Techniques for Reflection and Linguistic Development

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Abstract

This paper aims at providing a simple introduction to approaching poetry from a reader-response perspective, allowing teachers to confidently embrace meaning in a poem. It also addresses some of the features that make poetry a unique resource to develop both intercultural awareness and linguistic enhancement in the ELT classroom, using the theme of *gender roles* in the poem *Men Talk* by Liz Lockhead as example.

Introduction

Among the various resources used in the language classroom, poetry seems to be one of the most disregarded. Not because of any uselessness in its nature, but because of fear of its seeming intricacies. Many literary critics have succeeded in detracting ordinary people from reading and responding to poetry. However, a finished poem does not belong to the critics. It has also slipped away from the poet's fingers once it has been published. A finished poem belongs to the reader/listener, as they make it theirs, as they recognize a bit of their own soul into it. Throughout history, men and women from different cultures have poured their hearts into verse, inviting humankind to feel horror, sympathy, and humour. Poetry acts like a mirror of human experience. So why fear poetry then? Why not invite our students to join in this emotion feast instead?

What is poetry?

Critics and artists alike have gone to great pains to define what "poetry" is, given the magnitude of poetic experiences, forms and purposes. There is a clue in the word's etymology: "poetry" comes from the Greek *poesis*, "create, make". Nonetheless, as Maley et.al (1985) points out, "we just know" what a poem is. It is easily recognisable by a greater amount of "whiteness" on the page than for prose, and by certain musicality and rhythmically inherent in the use and organization of language. Still, there must be some other feature that encompasses under "poetry" categories such as a haiku, a sonnet or a rap.

The answer may lie on the functions of poetry. Initially, verse served as a way of retelling past experience, of keeping memory alive through song and mnemonic devices provided by rhyme. It also served liturgical purposes. Going still further, we know from Aristotle that poetry was to be an imitation (*mimesis*) of life, and that it served as an "outlet from intense emotions" (Culler 1997:71). Renaissance times gave poetry a role of "teaching, delighting, moving" (Culler 1997:71). Nineteenth century poets lay emphasis on originality. In the late nineteenth century it was claimed that true poetry was "conceived and composed in the soul", not in the "wits". Poetry has since then been connected to the description of the "sublime" and the "abstract", without the hindrances of logical thinking.

It can be inferred from all these different, but somehow converging views on poetry, that a poem presents a *non-ordinary use of language* which is striking in itself, since it is introduced in such a way that it can mirror and stir those intense feelings that in spite of its everyday occurrence, cannot be simply put in everyday language. In Scholvsky's⁵ view, poetry "defamiliarises" perception, making the familiar objects and experiences new or revisited under a new light. Poetry "elevates" the ordinary, and pleasure is found in this process.

■ ⁵ Quoted in Felperin, L. et al. (2001). *Approaches to Text*. Goldsmiths' College. London: University of London. page 35

Why bring poetry to the ELT classroom?

Poetry should not be difficult to handle in any ELT classroom. Arguably, we have all as children been exposed to nursery rhymes and games relying on rhyme to achieve a particular effect. Consequently, our students' lifelong contact with the poetic genre will allow them to approach poetry from a "reader-response" point of view, making "poetry as an event" (Culler, 1997:71) an invaluable source and resource in which *feelings, motivation, language* and *culture* meet.

Poems deal with emotions and feelings common to humankind as a whole, overstepping the thresholds of time and nationality. The notion of "universal" has now been challenged, but "humanity" can safely be used to refer to the poetic experience, since love, hatred, fear, awe, happiness are but some of the passions that make us human. Hence, poems are *meaningful* and *memorable* to our students, evoking familiar vibrations.

The "defamiliarising" function of poetry provides an aura of *non-triviality* (Maley, 1989:8) to the theme of a poem, and encourages a response on the part of the student-reader/listener which does not bear a "right" or "wrong" grading. Thus, the introduction of a poem in the class is *motivating* in itself and encourages students to take risks.

Language-wise, a poem presents rules of its own accord; with a voice bringing into use countless puzzling language devices or *figures of speech*. Spotting deviations in the grammaticality and meaning of words constitutes a challenging exercise. Rhyme and sound patterning are features sometimes overlooked by teachers, which necessarily need to be addressed when sharing a poem.

All in all, poem is a truly versatile resource, which can, within the ELT class plan, act as either a lead-in/follow-up activity, or as a reading/listening activity in itself.

How can a poem be used in the classroom?

Approaching a poem

To be able to present a poem to the student, our own fear of it should have been dismissed. That can be achieved by engaging in the adventure of interpretation, however limited our experience in analysis has been. Northop Frye⁶ has said that a poem both "babbles" and "doodles". "Babble" is connected to a "charm" or "incantation" aspect, in which lies on rhyme and sound patterning. "Doodle" is connected to the "riddle" or puzzling formulation that a poem carries that is supported by the way language has been chosen and organized. So then we should be looking at what is said in a poem and how it signifies, after allowing the magic of it fill us.

We will be examining the poem "Men Talk" by Liz Lochhead⁷. A framework for analysis will be put forward, and different classroom tasks will be described.

Men Talk⁸

Women

Rabbit rabbit rabbit women

Tattle and titter Women prattle

Women waffle and witter

Men Talk. Men Talk.

⁶ Quoted in Culler (1997:79)

⁷ Scottish poet and playwright, born in 1947.

⁸ From *Training and Development Agency Research Website*. University of East Anglia. <http://www.uea.ac.uk/edu/tdaresearch/poetry/poems/poem18/mentalk.html#men>

*Women into Girl Talk
About Women's Trouble
Trivia 'n' Small Talk
They yap and they babble*

Men Talk. Men Talk.

*Women gossip Women giggle
Women niggle-niggle-niggle
Men Talk.*

*Women yatter
Women chatter
Women chew the fat, women spill the beans
Women aint been takin'
The oh-so Good Advice in them
Women's Magazines.*

A Man Likes a Good Listener.

*Oh yeah
I like A Woman
Who likes me enough
Not to nitpick
Not to nag and
Not to interrupt 'cause I call that treason
A woman with the Good Grace
To be struck dumb
By me Sweet Reason. Yes -*

*A Man Likes a Good Listener
A Real
Man
Likes a Real Good Listener*

*Women yap yap yap
Verbal Diarrhoea is a Female Disease
Women she spread she rumours round she
Like Philadelphia Cream Cheese*

*Oh
Bossy Women Gossip
Girlish Women Giggle
Women natter, women nag
Women niggle niggle niggle*

Men Talk.

*Men
Think First.
Speak Later
Men Talk*

A good starting point is the *title*. What does it tell us about the *theme* of the poem? Interestingly enough, we come across the first *ambiguity* and *pun*, another meaningful aspect to look into. Is the *voice* in the poem going to discuss “Men Talk” (compound noun), the way men talk? Is he going to claim that “Men Talk” (subject plus predicate), that is, implying that women do not? We should then move on to read the poem and find proof to decide on one hypothesis.

Without having read closely yet, we can look at *layout and structure* and another striking thing can be spotted. It seems that all the stanzas related to men are short, simple, concise. Does this mirror “Men Talk” in any way? Looking at *sentence construction* and its distribution throughout, it seems that everything surrounding women talk is complex and somehow endless, given the length of the sentences.

The *wording* and the *figures of speech* make the differences between men and women talk significant. All the verbs used to describe the way women communicate denote gossip, triviality and speed in talk. Towards the end, the nicely-controlled rhythm of and pace seems to go wayward. Does this in any way mirror the emotions of the speaking voice? Longer words, striking *metaphors* (“verbal diarrhea”) and *irony* seem to prove so. The initial triviality in speech women carry out turns into “treason”. The ending reveals the thoughtlessness ascribed to women, crediting men with real talk.

Last but not least, *sound, intonation and rhythm*. The sounds inherent in the words chosen accompany the rhythm, apart from carrying meaning in themselves. The presence and systematic occurrence of plosive sounds /b/ and /t/ reinforce the idea of both a “blah blah” speech and constant ear-drum hammering for the listening. It is thus clear that *sound patterning* in this case, *alliteration*, also groups words in much the same way *semantic resemblance* does. The same holds true for the third stanza, in which /g/ prevails. Those engaging in phonosemantics would say that /g/ implies “too much where it does not belong”⁹, easily recognisable in other verbs used to refer to talking.

Finally, it cannot be denied that the poem sounds like a rap, the music genre associated with protest and denounce. So even in the selection of *genre* and respect for some of its *conventions*, meaning is expressed.

Planning tasks with poems

A poem can act as a lead-in, a follow-up, or as a reading/listening activity in itself. Whatever we make it, the choice of poem is the first challenging task. After a poem has been selected, all sorts of meaningful tasks exploring feelings, culture differences and language exploitation can be planned.

A poem can be chosen due to its content matter, which could be connected to the mood of the group at the moment, or to the topic of the unit being explored. It needs to be selected on the basis of the group’s maturity and previous experience in reading poetry. The clarity or obscurity in meaning and the access to understanding connotation need to be assessed. The tone, whether humorous or bleak, is essential to set the mood of the class, and to predict its subsequent stirring or soothing effect.

Our poem *Men Talk* has proven rich in interpretative information, and it shouldn’t be less so when it comes to classroom exploitation. Taking this poem as a reading/listening activity in itself, students could engage in a *pre-task* involving the listing of women and men stereotypes as they know them. They could write a Decalogue with the rules behind the “Be Ladylike” or “Act like a Man” discourse. Stirring and exciting for co-ed classes, these activities set the mood for the *Men Talk* experience.

Most formal aspects of the poem elicited, a language exploitation stage may ensue. The analysis of the ways of talking included in the text with a simple “fill in the gaps” task that illustrates the meaning of the terms can be great help for vocabulary enhancement. Students

⁹ Magnus, Margaret. *Archetypes in the Consonants*. Retrieved July 20th from Magical Letter Page <http://www.conknet.com/~mmagnus/>

could later inquire into other “ways of” and write similar raps such as *Politician Talk*, *Teacher Talk*, *Mother Talk*, adding their own humorous views on the subject.

Pronunciation and rhythm can also be practised, given the poem’s rap tinge, and the ensuing need to “squeeze” many syllables in a short span of time. The auditory effect of the use of plosives can also be gone into.

Finally, the cultural assumptions in the poem need to be addressed. Students’ initial discussion of gender stereotypes and the demands of society on them could be contrasted to that in other cultures they know of. The sense of likeness in gender roles to the British experience expressed into the poem could be reflected upon. Oriental views on the roles of men and women could be delved into. A whole cross-cultural project could stem from a simple poem!

Conclusion

Complex, yet memorable. Out of the ordinary, yet familiar. Diverse in interpretation, yet unifying in spirit, poetry proves a versatile source of cross-cultural reflection and linguistic development in the classroom. Poetry “babbles” and “doodles” us, charms us with its magic use of language, its unexpected, yet significant structure. Poetry wakes us up out of our “wits” into our soul and unites us to the soul of many others that join us in this “human experience”.

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Stuck in the Middle: A Glimpse at Second-Generation Americans through Poetry

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Abstract

The concept of "American culture" is extremely vast, and is too-often limited to the dominant cultural images portrayed in the media or traditional history books. The presentation of alternative and minority viewpoints enhances understanding of American culture. In this paper, we look at Second-Generation Americans as an important subgroup of U.S. American culture. Through the analysis of two poems by two very different authors ("Old Maids" by Sandra Cisneros and "White Plastic" by Jake Ricafrente), the distinct Second-Generation American voice begins to emerge as one which addresses complex themes of identity and the conflict of cultural values. Though manifested by these authors in particular, these are universal themes which offer a great deal to the classroom. We close by discussing methods for the fruitful incorporation of these works into ELT classroom in ways which continue to enhance our understanding of U.S. culture through the teaching of the English language.

Introduction

In considering what constitutes "American culture," it is tempting to confine our understanding to the dominant cultural forces that are present in American media and traditional history books. These dominant forces, however, do not accurately represent the make-up of the population of the United States. In order to truly begin to understand U.S. American culture, we must examine sub-populations and their relationship with the dominant U.S. culture. The purpose of this paper is to highlight Second-Generation Americans as an important subgroup within the United States. We will look at two poems by Second-Generation American authors, and the ways in which they display a distinct yet distinctly U.S. American voice. Hopefully this analysis will help expand traditional notions of what it means to teach "American culture."

Before proceeding, it is important to define the term Second-Generation American. In this paper, we will define Second-Generation Americans as those native-born U.S. citizens who have at least one parent who was born in a foreign country. It is important to note here that, as with many cultural identities, "Second-Generation American" is a term which is a matter of self-identification; that is to say that some who fits this technical definition may not choose to identify with the group, while some others who may not fit this exact definition will consider themselves to be Second-Generation Americans. This is not problematic. Rather, it enforces the idea that culture is a fluid term with fluid boundaries.

According to the most recent U.S. census data, there are approximately 30.4 million second-generation Americans in the United States today, a figure which composes a full 12% of the current U.S. population. This clearly makes Second-Generation Americans a sizeable portion of the U.S. populace. The "Second-Generation" group is very diverse, with parentage ranging from all parts of the world. Despite the diversity, however, looking at Second-Generation Americans as one group is fruitful in the study of U.S. culture. We will look at two poems written by two very different Second-Generation American authors in the hopes of beginning to consider the Second-Generation American experience. Finally, we will close by discussing some ways that these works—and the ideas that they present—can be incorporated into the ELT classroom.

Analysis

The first poem we will examine, "Old Maids," was written by Sandra Cisneros. Cisneros is a renowned Mexican-American author who was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1954. One of the first Latina authors to be generally acclaimed in the U.S., her writing is characterized by urban settings and cultural themes. The complete text of the poem can be found in the appendix of this paper.

In content, this poem gives voice to a number of themes that display a specific experience of conflict between her family's culture and the dominant U.S. American culture. Firstly, the theme of marriage age is prominent. According to the poem, the speaker is in her thirties but considered an "old maid," or spinster, by her family. This suggests a conflict between acceptable marriage age in Mexico versus acceptable marriage age in dominant U.S. culture, which is ostensibly older. The speaker explicitly states: "We're *too old* / by Mexican standards." Her reference here to "Mexican standards" clearly implies that she is also conscious of another set of standards by which she is measured, which are most likely the standards of dominant U.S. American culture. Therefore while her family might view her as a spinster, the speaker implicitly recognizes the fact that she may not be viewed as such by the rest of her acquaintances. This displays the theme of conflicting cultural values.

Cisneros questions what the role of a woman is in marriage, and why it is so important to her relatives. The closing stanza of the poem, for example, lists famous female mythical-historical figures: Ariadne, Vashti, Penelope, and Malintzin are figures of various cultural traditions, from Greece to Persia to Mexico. Each of these figures is controversial in her own right. Malintzin (better known as La Malinche) is viewed as a traitor to the indigenous people of Mexico while Penelope, wife of Odysseus, manifests the dichotomy between faithfulness and adultery. Here, Cisneros appeals to a greater cultural context than that of either U.S. or Mexican history. Here, she globalizes and historicizes the conflict that the speaker is experiencing. Thus, the conflict that the speaker lives as a conflict between specific Mexican and U.S. American cultural forces is reframed as an experience that is not uniquely her own. In this way, Cisneros gives voice to a conflict that encompasses her identity as a Mexican-American woman, in particular.

Though Jake Ricafrente's "White Plastics" differs greatly in content and form, it continues to display similar cultural themes as Cisneros's poem. Ricafrente is an emerging Filipino-American writer, and his "White Plastics" was published only this year. Again, the complete text of his poem can be found in the appendix of this paper.

As with Cisneros's work, we will begin by addressing the cultural conflict presented through the content of the poem. Because his work is so recent, there is very little biographical information available about him at this time. However, we can make certain inferences about the ethnicity of his speaker (if not about him as the author directly) because of the way that he addresses race in his work. He makes, for example, a reference to being "A half-breed, some percent / of full," thereby suggesting that he is of a multiethnic background. His reference to promoting "'other' as a race" further supports this theory. Here, Ricafrente references forms (applications, surveys, etc.) in the United States that ask about race. Those who do not identify with the prescribed categories (for example, "White, Asian, Black, Hispanic") are forced to indicate their race as "Other." The speaker is, therefore, most likely of a mixed ethnic background.

Ricafrente presents this speaker as experiencing a conflict of cultures. In the poem, he describes sharing a meal with family members. This meal is most likely the Thanksgiving meal, as he references Pilgrims, traditional Thanksgiving foods (ham, mashed potatoes, rolls), and sharing the meal with distant family members ("Aunt Something"). Yet within this most typical of U.S. American settings, he finds himself conscious of his "skin Sahara brown." In addition to this, throughout the course of this meal, the speaker finds himself reflecting on lies and illusions: he asks himself, "How old were we when everything we knew / began to fail?" and finds himself analyzing his relatives, with statements such as "I doubt / they watch their words." Ricafrente, therefore, presents both a very typical U.S. American tradition contrasted with a sense of displacement.

The form of "White Plastic" underlies the theme of division or cultural conflict. The poem is made up of nine couplets written in iambic pentameter. Thus, his work is somewhat

reminiscent of a Shakespearean sonnet. However, the length and rhyme scheme deviate from this traditional standard. In this way, Ricafrente underscores the theme of pertaining to but not completely manifesting a particular set of cultural norms. In addition to this, the work is characterized by an extensive use of hiatus, or the use of mid-line pauses. The use of hiatus creates a sense of uncertainty and almost masks the very structured rhythmic pattern of the poem. In this way, he furthers the theme of illusions and masked realities. The structure of the poem demonstrates the ideas of conflicting and complex identities.

Conclusions

In this way, though both "Old Maids" and "White Plastic" vary greatly in authorship, context, and form, they still have great commonalities in the themes of cultural conflict and identity. Through these commonalities, the Second-Generation American voice begins to emerge. The Second-Generation American has a particular U.S. experience; one which daily incorporates, interacts with, manifests, and sometimes clashes with the dominant U.S. American culture. It is of utmost importance to note that despite this relationship with the dominant culture, Second-Generation Americans are not in any way less "American" than their other native-born counterparts. Rather, their experience is an important part of U.S. culture as a whole, and should be considered in the study of U.S. American culture.

To this end, the incorporation of these authors (or other Second-Generation American authors) can be included in the ELT classroom in many ways. It is not necessary to study Second-Generation Americans in particular (although this, of course, is always an option). Rather, accepting these authors as an important part of the American literary canon will allow for their normal incorporation into the classroom. For example, either of the works could be used in a literature class. Instead of studying only Dickinson or Poe, the incorporation of these modern authors would certainly enhance the syllabus. In addition to this, "White Plastic," particularly lends itself to the study of poetic form. Either work could be used as the basis for discussions of various themes. "Old Maids," for example, could be incorporated into a discussion about themes from feminism to marriage to cultural mythology. "White Plastic" could be used to discuss racial classification, or even to enhance a Thanksgiving lesson. The poems could even be used to spark journaling-type writing assignments about feelings of displacement, or about cultural values.

The possibilities are endless, and all are invariably enriching. The incorporation of these Second-Generation Authors into the classroom guarantees a more full and accurate view of U.S. American culture, and therefore furthers the goal of cross-cultural communication and awareness both inside and outside of the classroom.

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Appendix

Old Maids by Sandra Cisneros

My cousins and I,
we don't marry.
We're *too old*
by Mexican standards.

And the relatives
have long suspected
we can't anymore
in white.

My cousins and I,
we're all old
maids at thirty.

Who won't dress children,
and *never* saints--
though we undress them.

The aunts,
they've given up on us.
No longer nudge--*You're next*.

Instead--
What happened in your childhood?
What left you all mean teens?
Who hurt you, honey?

But we've studied
marriages too long--

Aunt Ariadne,
Tia Vashti,
Comadre Penelope,
querida Malintzin,
Senora Pumpkin Shell--

lessons that served us well.

White Plastic by Jake Ricafrente

How old were we when everything we knew
began to fail? Dad's bleeding heart, the Blue
Bell Ice Cream down the road, those sexy lies
of circumnavigation, that the sky's
not really blue. How old when rules were bent
to fit the ruse? *A half-breed, some percent
of full.* I meet them now, their smiles are pressed
and cool. Aunt Something with a pool suggests
I summer in Poughkeepsie with "The Fam."
I laugh and take a second bite of ham,
potatoes mashed, a buttered roll. I doubt
they watch their words. They gather round to scout
strabismic eyes, my skin Sahara brown.
How old were we when every form and down-
town play promoted "other" as a race?
I can't recall when Pilgrims were replaced
by Salem hoards. There're hugs now as aunts pack
some plastic loads of white into white sacks.

Nurturing Our Students' Sense of Self and Community: A Critical Approach to Selecting Cultural Content

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Abstract

We will explore ways to promote our students' sense of self and community by sharing activities and projects that will help kids express their own meaning, and appreciate both the essential humanity in the universal values of L2 texts, and the cross-cultural differences from a critical viewpoint. Some of the activities revolve around podcasts, student-made radio programs, English language learner DJ, creative writing assignments, reading for pleasure techniques, songs, portfolios, class yearbooks, and self-disclosure activities.

Underlying principles

When we face the task of designing a course tailored to our students' needs and sociocultural context, we tend first to determine the level of proficiency of the students, and then select the textbook that will go along with it. With these two simple steps, most of our work seems to be done in terms of curriculum development. Some more enthusiastic teachers usually try to add readers and other 'extra' material and activities. This configuration is sound in terms of its consideration of the students' linguistic proficiency, the number of class hours in the program, and the appropriate sequence of linguistic development in all four skills, usually provided by the textbook. However, there's a whole dimension that goes largely ignored: What is the cultural content of our class and how is it to strengthen our students' knowledge foundation?

One of the basic tenets of teaching and learning a foreign language is to acquire an added perspective to our view of the world. Cultural awareness is paramount to the acquisition of other languages. In acquiring a language there is, to some extent, an appropriation of a cultural identity too (Connolly, 2005). However, when it comes to English, this simple statement takes on a kaleidoscopic dimension. As a *lingua franca*, English is nowadays the language of communication in the international community. Indeed more people speak English as a second or foreign language than the number of people who do so as their first language. Although this does not preclude the participation of English native speakers in *English as lingua franca* interaction, what is distinctive about it is that, in most cases, it is 'a contact language' between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication' (Firth 1996: 240 quoted by Seidlhofer, 2005). It is also a second official language in a number of countries, such as Singapore and India, and the chosen language in the business and entertainment world. It is estimated that over 80% of what gets published on the Internet is in English. On a different level, English has also been the predominantly colonial language in the last two centuries. In addition, such long standing influence of English-speaking hegemonies has led to a quite intricate sociopolitical environment in each country of the periphery. Issues of power, identity, assimilation, imperialism, ownership, and international conflict, as it was our case with the Malvinas War, have determined the way citizens of countries in the periphery view and relate to this language. For this reason, it is paramount for us EFL teachers to facilitate our students' exploration of the different layers that make up their own perspectives, the sum of which become their culture. In this context, the role of the teacher becomes pivotal to social transformation. Following the proposal of critical pedagogies, we become agents of change who can promote action as a result of the exploration of current global, national, and regional issues (Connolly, 2005). One possible

way for the language instructor to come to terms with the cultural imposition underlying the teaching of the English language is to approach the task through practices which position and define English as an international language (EIL) (Modiano, 2001). This implies a shift in the ownership of the language, a phenomenon by which the center of gravity will drift away from speakers of English as a first language. The implications for the ELT profession will be deeply felt. Arndt, Harvey and Nuttall (2000) list them as follows:

Standard English will no longer be the exclusive province of either US forms or UK forms, but rather a 'World Standard Spoken English' will evolve (quoting Crystal 1997a:11)

- future goals in ELT will include the command of a range of varieties of the language
- 'authentic' sources of 'real' English will not be exclusively EL1 varieties
- teachers will need to teach a 'negotiated form of International English', where the cultural values embedded in the language are appropriate and acceptable to all participants (quoting Hollett 1997:18)
- the cross-cultural negotiation of meaning, and communication strategies in 'lingua franca' English contexts will need to assume greater importance in both teaching and research (quoting Graddol 1997a:13)

In light of this trend, the selection of cultural content becomes truly diversified and flexible. It will be up to the teacher to decide which issues and texts are the most relevant to their students' socio-economic situation. Kumaravadivelu encourages us to "tap the sociopolitical consciousness that participants bring with them to the classroom so that it can also function as a catalyst for a continual quest for identity formation and social transformation" (p. 37). The English teacher can become a means to strengthen our subordination to the dominant culture or the facilitator in a nurturing process of our students' identity formation, critical thinking, and global awareness.

Further insight regarding teaching toward cultural awareness is provided by Kumaravadivelu (2003). He points out that this concept is usually narrowly associated with nation and language. According to this view, a focal point of the cognitive, affective, and behavioral components of teaching culture has always been the native speaker of the target language. Supposedly, "one of the most important aims of culture teaching is to help the learner gain an understanding of the native speaker's perspective" (Stern, 1992, quoted by Kumaravadivelu). However, this view is rather limited, as empathizing and interacting with native speakers of the target language is but one aspect to be considered in culture teaching and learning. Teaching toward cultural consciousness implies that cultural identity goes beyond the native speakers' and the learners' national and linguistic background. It reaches a deeper level to include ethnic heritage, religious beliefs, class, age, gender, and sexual orientation. Based on this diversity of views, as homogeneous as our class might seem, they are not composed of monocultural cocoons, but of multicultural mosaics instead.

Cortazzi and Jin (1999, quoted by Kumaravadivelu) suggest we draw on three types of cultural information when facing the task of selecting or producing our teaching material:

- a) Target culture materials that use the culture of a country where English is spoken as a first language.
- b) Source culture materials that draw on the learners' own culture as content.
- c) International target culture materials that use a variety of cultures in English and non-English-speaking countries around the world.

To these three types we would like to add the individual dimension, i.e. materials that promote exploration of the self. Even though self-knowledge and awareness do not necessarily provide any cultural insight, it is at the personal level that we absorb the messages we get from our environment and shape our own identity. The sum of these four criteria encourages our students' exploration of their sense of self and community. We will share activities and projects that will help kids express their own meaning and appreciate both the essential humanity in the universal values of authentic texts of the target culture, and the cross-cultural differences that make us aware that their view of the world is not and need not be universally shared.

As part of the workshop we will show how students have included in their work material relevant to their own socio-cultural environment and reality. We will also share activities based on podcasts, student-made radio programs, English language learner DJ, class yearbooks, creative writing assignments, reading for pleasure techniques, such as book fairs. We will also talk about literary circles, songs, production of expository and journalistic texts, and portfolios. We shall revisit our use of diaries or journals, as they encourage the students writing about issues that directly concern them.

They may be encouraged to reflect and write about a wide range of topics including their developing sense of who they are and how they relate to the outside world, and how they and other members of the learning community react and respond to various sociocultural issues” (Kumaravadivelu 2003, p.60).

As we tread on the path traced by the principles aforementioned, it is our expectation that we can redefine the nature of English as an academic subject and our own role and relevance as English teachers in 21st century Argentina.

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Weblogging our Way to Self-exploration and Global Awareness

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We do not need to become a tech whiz to create a blog. We will share different ways to incorporate blogs into our teaching. The focus will be on three uses: the teacher's, class, and student's blog. Examples from our personal experience will be the core of the presentation, including a variety of activities to foster linguistic development, cultural awareness, and critical thinking. The goal is the amelioration of authentic interaction, exploration of self and the larger community in a stimulating and fun virtual environment.

Underlying principles: A Critical Approach to Selecting Cultural Content

When we face the task of designing a course tailored to our students' needs and socio-cultural context, we tend first to determine the level of proficiency of the students, and then select the textbook that will go along with it. With these two simple steps, most of our work seems to be done in terms of curriculum development. Some more enthusiastic teachers usually try to add readers and other 'extra' activities. This configuration is sound in terms of its consideration of the students' linguistic proficiency, the number of class hours in the program, and the appropriate sequence of linguistic development in all four skills, usually provided by the textbook. However, there's a whole dimension that goes largely ignored: What is the cultural content of our class and how is it to strengthen our students' knowledge foundation?

One of the basic tenets of teaching and learning a foreign language is to acquire an added perspective to our view of the world. Cultural awareness is paramount to the acquisition of other languages. However, when it comes to English, this simple statement takes on a kaleidoscopic dimension. As a *lingua franca*, English is nowadays the language of communication in the international community. Indeed more people speak English as a second or foreign language than the number of people who do so as their first language. It is also a second official language in a number of countries, such as Singapore and India, and the chosen language in the business and entertainment world. It is estimated that over 80% of what gets published on the Internet is in English. On a different level, English has also been the predominantly colonial language in the last two centuries. In addition, such long standing influence of English-speaking hegemonies has led to a quite intricate sociopolitical environment in each country of the periphery. Issues of power, identity, assimilation, imperialism, ownership, and international conflict, as it was our case with the Malvinas War, have determined the way citizens of countries in the periphery view and relate to this language. In this context, the English teacher can become a means to strengthen our subordination to the dominant culture or the facilitator in a nurturing process of our students' identity formation, critical thinking, and global awareness.

The Focus of the Workshop

One of the limitations EFL teachers often face is their students' and their own lack of exposure to authentic material and interaction with native speakers in real situations. On a general basis, a curriculum mostly based on the use of a textbook poses further limitations on truly authentic communication.

One way to counteract this drawback is the introduction of pedagogic tools provided by the Internet. Collaborative learning, supported by the use of e-mail, chat exchanges and discussion forums – which represent the first-generation web tools (Godwin-Jones, 2003) – has proved to be efficient as a source of authentic material and interaction. The Internet serves as proper ground for the development of the language and its real usage, which some

traditional scholars may tend to criticize by saying that it mainly serves to deteriorate the language. However, as David Crystal (Eisenberg, 2001) states in his book 'Language and the Internet' "the discourse of the Internet- with its new, informal, even bizarre forms of language- neither threatens nor replaces existing varieties of English but instead enriches them, extending our range of expression and showing us as 'homo loquens' at its best".

Considering the successful advent of weblogging in the world of web publishing and journalism in the latest years, we propose its pedagogical use for the students' development of reading and writing skills. More importantly, weblogs foster self-exploration, critical thinking, and fluid communication with the larger community. We have found this tool effective not only in the process of linguistic acquisition, but also as a means to get students to reflect about themselves as individuals, and their place in the world.

What is a Weblog?

It is a web-based writing space, similar to an online journal which is dynamic, chronological, and continually updated with the accumulation of writing and other content - such as comments from readers, pictures, movie clips, podcasts and links to other websites. By making rich use of hypertext, writers have the possibility to connect to other writers' productions on the web. Blog entries are followed by a *comment button* which allows the readers to comment, react and /or respond critically to the original text, which then is published along with the author's posts (Godwin-Jones, 2003). Blogs can be personal or group production, kept in privacy or published to a wider audience with a common interest. Keeping a blog is a truly communicative activity, since the entries are not produced for the audience of a teacher, but published to be read by a community of peers and, if so desired, by the general public on a global scale. As a result, the English class moves beyond the limits of the classroom walls, transcending the spectrum of the local community.

Weblogging as a Means to Foster Linguistic and Cultural Awareness

This computer-mediated process known as weblogging encourages critical thinking and thoughtful writing, as well as extensive reading and research in the target language. As a result, reading comprehension, vocabulary expansion, and writing production improve considerably. The possibility of interaction with members of other communities broadens the individual's mind and enhances understanding, acceptance and appreciation of other cultures. In the cognitive aspect, we truly believe that frequent writing improves writing further (Richardson, 2004), and the access to a variety of genres broadens the possibility to polish the students' language use and lexis. The challenge to go beyond the surface in the different issues developed through this tool, plus the use of computers and the Internet, can become highly motivating while pursuing among students' critical awareness and self-exploration. Furthermore, peer-generated content becomes a true-to-life, exciting representation of concepts, feelings and emotions that textbooks rarely achieve (Campbell, 2005). Besides, self-publishing encourages ownership and responsibility among students, who regard their real audience more seriously (Godwin-Jones, 2003). It must be stated that this openness that blogging provides is not something to be afraid of, but an opportunity to *use* language instead of merely *studying* it. This is the case of students who will make an effort to improve their language proficiency in order to get meanings across more efficiently. Students who get involved and feel they belong to a worldwide network may continue interacting at their leisure even when the school year comes to an end. Thus, their language learning process continues as well as their appreciation of other cultures, eventually taking them gently toward greater self-direction.

Blogs are easy to create. One does not need to become a tech whiz to use them, and they can certainly outweigh the appeal of the traditional foreign language class. This is why we would like to share different ways in which blogs can be incorporated into our daily teaching. The core of our proposal was firstly inspired by Aaron Campbell's work

(Campbell, 2003): the *teacher's blog*, the *class blog*, and the *student's blog*. Examples from our personal experience will provide practical applications and activities tailored according to different students' needs and learning experiences. The development of class blogs based on a popular TV series, literary works analyzed in class, as well as personal blogs used to encourage self-exploration and debates on different issues will provide a vivid spectrum of activities by means of which linguistic development, cultural awareness, and critical thinking are constantly fostered. This proposal goes beyond the development of cognitive processes, being the main goal the amelioration of authentic interaction, exploration of self, discussion of global issues in a stimulating and fun virtual environment. Undoubtedly, weblogging may represent for teachers a challenge hard to face, who may even regard the new information technologies with suspicion or contempt. This is an experience to be encouraged and explored, since the benefits that students and even teachers can get are really worth the risk.

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Towards the Development of Reading Skills: How Alcohol Ads Work on Our Minds

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This workshop will model some teaching strategies intended to approach the reading of an article about how alcohol advertisements persuade consumers to drink. The activities will then: (a) demonstrate how culture, in this case analysis of alcohol advertisements, may be proposed as classroom content to make younger students conscious of the dangers of some advertising messages; (b) suggest some reading strategies intended to facilitate the comprehension of a authentic text; and (c) contribute to the development of the student's media literacy.

The interpretation of written messages is one of the skills to be attained by learners of a foreign language; thus, there have been on-going efforts by both researchers and instructors to understand the many complexities involved in L2 reading. Reading involves not only the ability to recognition of the written marks on a paper but also the capacity to understand the writer's intended meaning packed in a text.

Reading will take place if certain requirements are met, i.e. that the text is not particularly difficult, that the vocabulary used is familiar, that the reader has some background knowledge related to the topic of the text, and above all that the linguistic code is shared by both reader and writer. Not knowing the language a text is written in is a major drawback, but this is not the only one since reading occurs successfully when the reader who interprets the text is the target reader the writer had in mind.

The typical classroom passage is not "particularly difficult" for students. Generally speaking, most texts in the classroom are intended for the general public, i.e. they deal with topics of general interest, sometimes purely entertaining, providing familiar data or simply unappealing information. Perhaps, the two areas to consider seriously in the case of L2 reading are the linguistic limitations of the reader, who is a native speaker of another language, and the fact that most of the times they are forced to read pieces they did not choose themselves.

Today, reading in foreign language is a vital need for man; however, the advantages are not so relevant for secondary school teenagers. This situation imposes an extra requirement for the reading process to succeed: that the messages in texts proposed at school should be interesting to the target readers. It is accepted by all teachers that motivation is a key element to achieve educational objectives, so the content of texts intended to teach reading must be closer to students' needs and life experience.

Reading involves a complex psycholinguistic process with several associated competences at work. First, there is a constant interaction between the reader's experience and the message in the text. Based on what they know, the previously acquired schemata, the reader seeks for information that will enrich, modify or confirm existing knowledge. Parallel to this operation, there is a permanent recognition of the written marks, letters and words, to build utterances which in turn are integrated with one another to construct meaning. Reading is interactive in the sense that the reader's previous knowledge and the information in the text are simultaneously at work; i.e., while previous information leads to predicting, the marks in the text confirm them or not.

The workshop proposal

In the real world, away from the L2 classroom environment, people read for a reason. Purposeful reading is then one of the activities that students should be engaged in to make sure the process is well oriented. One of the topics which is very close to teenage experience these day is alcohol consumption and abuse. So, it would be worth using a text, in this case

an analysis of how alcohol advertisements work, to make younger students conscious of the dangers of some advertising messages. Such an activity may contribute to the development of not only a linguistic ability, namely reading, but also the student's media literacy.

The goal of the mass media is to deliver audiences to advertisers whose job, in turn, is to catch consumers' attention by means of various strategies. Since the younger audiences are more easily persuaded by media messages, it would be important for the language classroom to become a site for the development of thinking as well as analytical skills that will guide consumers when processing advertising messages. The advertisement is above all a message issued by a manufacturer to lead audiences to the consumption of the product/service advertised. It is a picture, a short film, a song, etc. which attempts to inform people or to persuade them to behave in some way.

From an educational perspective, it is important to help students to *deconstruct* and *analyze* media texts, think critically about them, and thus gain critical autonomy in the interpretation of media texts they encounter in their everyday life (Eken 2000). The central goal here is to develop *media literacy*. Recognizing the *structural features* of advertising is an important step in the process of becoming a critical user of the media. Structural features include the use of language, color, design, etc. At a more sophisticated level, it is possible to identify processes such as ambiguity, alliteration, use of metaphors, and subtexts (the implicit meaning of an advertising message).

From the point of view of culture, analyses of graphic ads may contribute to the student's awareness that advertising:

- may at times be tricky, deceitful, and manipulative
- provides very few facts but a lot of images and words to persuade
- can encourage the public to buy more than they need
- very often influences teenagers by showing them the kind of people they would like to be
- frequently exploits the female image to catch the public's attention
- shows social stereotypes that do not always exist (the mother as a full-time housewife, or the father as a white-collar worker)
- sometimes makes people frustrated or guilty because they do not have what they advertise
- is dangerous particularly in countries where consumers who have had little or not education are not ready to choose
- may make brand names a source of status and an end in themselves
- is useful in that it provides consumers with information about products and services

Reading Comprehension Activities

The activities included in this section model some teaching tools to approach the reading process of an authentic text. In this case the text chosen for reading comprehension is an essay¹⁰ written by [Jean Kilbourne](#). In "Deadly Persuasion: 7 Myths Alcohol Advertisers Want You to Believe" the writer reviews the strategies that advertisers make use of to persuade alcohol consumers. The essay involves the reader as a consumer while providing strong arguments to support assertions founded on evidence that is observable to the sharp eye.

Activity (1). This activity exploits the meaning of *realia*, i.e. true graphic publicity advertising alcohol.

Look at the advertisements of alcohol displayed. Carefully identify the participants involved, their attitudes and suggested actions. Identify the setting, time and place. Observe the product, if it is displayed or not. Explore the possible messages: all ads are intended to orient the consumers' actions in one direction or

¹⁰ Digital source: http://www.medialit.org/reading_room/article64.html

the other. What does the ad want the consumer to believe in? What does the ad want the consumer to do?

Activity (2). The strategy proposed involves the use of simplification of the propositions in a text -working from the simpler syntactic patterns towards the most complex - to familiarize the reader with the content to encounter in a text.

Read the following paragraph containing the central information in the essay. Check the meaning of new vocabulary items and, next, compare this version with the expanded authentic version. What further information is added by the original text?

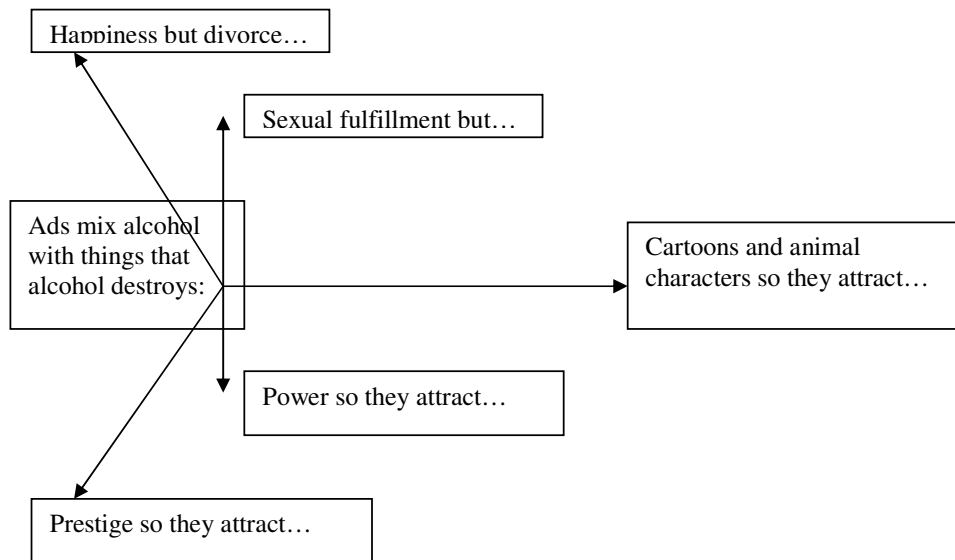
“Ads imply that it is all right to consume large quantities of alcohol” “Light beer is for the heavy drinker” Ads like these say it is all right to be obsessed by alcohol” All trouble or addiction are erased” “Signs of trouble are avoided” “Problems are never hinted at”

Activity (3). This strategy involves identifying the connecting elements between clauses and phrases to work out from the lower syntactic levels the meaning of the whole piece.

“Piper champagne ad puts it in this way: How? ...” The advertiser contrasts the world of the drinker with reality by doing this. What is it?...” “At the heart of the alcoholic is this belief. Which one?...” “These ads present that nightmare as true, thus they affirm something. What is it?”

Activity (4). The strategy proposed consists of using a visual organizer, such as a chart or mind map, to anticipate the content of a paragraph. From the visual information, the reader anticipates the possible relationship among the items of information, which is later confirmed as reading takes place.

“Carefully read the fourth myth and complete this map with the missing information.”



Activity (5). The strategy proposed involves matching questions and answers. Students are given questions whose answers are in the text, as they read the questions they may imagine or anticipate the information to find in the text, which is later confirmed or rejected.

Read the fifth myth and answer these questions by referring to the information there. The questions are ordered as the data appear in the text. “What is the effect of alcohol on athletes?” “What contrasting images do ads show?” “What do they imply?” “How else do ads connect suggest that sport and alcohol go together?”

Activity (6). The strategy proposed is working on lexical items in the text beforehand so that when the student approaches the reading process, the marks on the paper evoke the right concept.

“Match the words and expressions in set (a) with those in set (b).”

“(a) to bite the hand of, to feed, promotion, seldom, coverage, linked, at least, focus, rare”

“(b) to betray or to act against someone who trusts you; to give food to, advertising, not often, the way advertisements present an event or subject, connected, minimum, the thing getting most attention, very unusual”

Activity (7). The strategy proposed involves the identification of logical relationships among the propositions in the text so that the meaning of the whole can be reconstructed by working from the smaller units, clauses and phrases, to the larger units, sentences and paragraphs.

“Circle the following connectors: as, when, also, rather than, although, as long as, in any case, for example. The logical relationships expressed by those connectors are listed here: reason, time, replacement, addition, concession, condition, exemplification. Consider their meaning and reconstruct, in your own words, the meaning of each pair or related utterances. For example: it is perfectly all right to get drunk, if (condition) you don’t drive”

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Oh to See Ourselves as Others See us.

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Abstract:

The key area to be addressed in this workshop is the departure from the culture specific in text books used for teaching English to Students of Other Languages. During the workshop several ideas will be presented but the main sources will be the books *Crying with Cockroaches, Argentina to New York with two horses* by Marianne du Toit (2006) and *Lost Cowboys, From Patagonia to the Alamo* by Frank Wangford first published in England by Victor Gollancz in 1995. The latter is an educational, entertaining book reviewed in Macmillan's Ready for CAE (Cambridge Advanced English) by Roy Norris. The principal aim is to show how these and other related materials recently published in English, can be exploited in the classroom to make students more aware of their immediate surroundings and their own culture. Activities will relate to this and participants will be invited to discuss their efficacy. Practicality, humour and optimism will characterise this approach.

Rationale:

Textbooks published abroad have frequently been criticized as being too culture specific so it was a pleasant surprise to find a move away from this with the following example review published in Macmillan's Ready for CAE:

Review of *Lost Cowboys* from Ready for CAE by Roy Norris published by Macmillan:

Did you realise that there were no horses or cows in the Americas until Columbus introduced them on his return visit in 1494? Or that the first cowboys were not those of North America as Hollywood might lead us to believe, but the 'gauchos', 'huasos', 'llaneros' and 'vaqueros' of Argentina, Chile, Venezuela and Mexico? I certainly didn't until I read Frank Wangford's revealing study of cowboy culture from Patagonia in South America to the Alamo in Texas.

The book is full of interesting facts and stories about cowboy heroes who were previously unknown to me. One such man was Martin Miguel de Guemes, who in 1806 rode with thirty other gauchos into the waters of the River Plate and captured a British ship which had run aground there. The event is narrated with Wangford's characteristic sense of humour, which will have you laughing out loud from the very beginning of the book.

And if you're not a great cowboy fan, don't be put off by the title. 'Lost Cowboys' does more than simply trace the history of cattlemen on horseback; it provides a fascinating insight into the customs, food, music, geography and wildlife of a whole continent. There's something for everyone in the book, from enthusiastic and vivid descriptions of the scenery, to information on dances and singing traditions, such as the gaucho 'payadas' – I had no idea you could have a duel with the voice as your only weapon!

'Lost Cowboys' is an excellent read. It is both entertaining and educational and I would highly recommend it to anyone who is interested in travel books."

Too often teachers assume that students know a great deal about their own social history and cultural background but this is often not the case at all. It is our duty as

teachers to motivate and inspire students to delve into their own backgrounds and beyond the confines of the text. Once this has been achieved we need to ensure that what is produced is clear and accurate. *Lost Cowboys* and *Crying with Cockroaches* have certainly helped not only to fill in many gaps, but also to allow students to see themselves in a different light and shed humour on the situation.

Crying with Cockroaches is the story of an incredible journey – on foot and horseback – by South African born Marianne du Toit from Buenos Aires to New York from 2002 to 2004. Aged 32, she undertook the journey alone. The History Channel made a documentary of the trip a shortened version of which will be shown in the workshop. Andy Webb the producer of the documentary had this to say of the journey “This is a story worth celebrating. An amazing journey that can still teach us something about a world that seems to be shrinking by the minute. The courage of the rider and her horses should inspire us all.”

Aim of the Workshop:

Teachers should try and find interesting and entertaining methods of exploiting the text. This can be difficult when our main motivation is to cover the curriculum or to prepare students for exams but adjustments can and should be made.

The following key points will be addressed:

- Give them a reason to read
- Create an atmosphere for reading
- Make the reading seem like fun
- Keep it topical
- Use ‘warm-up’ exercises
- Work to their strengths
- Challenge them
- Remove the stress
- Show that what they are reading and producing is relevant
- Show that writing is important
- Show yourself as interested in the topic
- Offer a reward
- Offer yourself as an inspiration
- Shock them

Procedure:

Bearing in mind that interest can be aroused by the use of unusual or imaginative resources, the workshop will work on chapters of the books relating to Salta, Jujuy and Argentina in general. Many of the objects mentioned in the chapters will be brought to the workshop and a hands-on approach adopted. A fun quiz will start the proceedings to find out just how much the participants know about local customs. This serves as a good ice-breaker and has proved useful in developing many skills including writing. It makes the

subject “real”, captures the students’ attention. A video of the short version of the History Channel’s documentary on Marianne du Toit’s ride will also be shown.

To bring the author Hank Wangford to life, some of his Country and Western music will be heard and his life referred to. In real life the author of *Lost Cowboys* is a doctor, Sam Hutt, who lectures and trains doctors and nurses around Britain. He trained doctors and nurses in Georgia and in Bosnia during the war. He regularly visits Transylvania, Romania where he has had a project for women since 1991 and has helped set up two clinics. Because of deep corruption in the Romanian Health service, he is working on plans for an independent clinic. Hank knows that laughter, tears and music are the greatest healers we have. He is also well known as a country singer and a broadcaster for the BBC and Channel 4 in England.

After relating to the key points the audience will participate in diverse activities which will demonstrate not only how students are motivated, but also how awareness is raised about so many important issues relating specifically to their own culture. After each one of these activities there will be a debriefing to discuss what was learnt. In the real classroom situation ideas were pooled and visits made to the cathedral, museums and other places of interest and used as themes for writing and general knowledge. Some adult students were also privileged to meet Marianne du Toit in person.

Examples of what my own students produced from PET level through CAE to the final year of university, will serve as proof of the motivation provided by *Lost Cowboys* and *Crying with Cockroaches*. It should also show how many skills have been covered: they have learnt to write reviews; they have been led to a better understanding of their own culture and they have learnt to see themselves as they are seen by others, foreigners in this case, and this with a large dose of humour which is one of the key factors in teaching.

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Cultural Awareness in the EFL Classroom- Towards a Closer Understanding of the Target Language Community.

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Abstract

Cultural Awareness in the EFL classroom- Towards a closer understanding of the target language community.

It has been a long time since EFL practitioners solely focused on language teaching. Learning a foreign language is no longer a question of studying only its grammar system and its lexis. The present demands of the globalised world we live in have pushed the EFL teacher to explore other lands, other cultures, other meanings. How can we teachers create opportunities for systematic cultural awareness work in our lessons? How can we raise our students' awareness of the close links between the target language and the cultural elements found in the target linguistic community?

Introduction

Language is a cultural phenomenon. The present globalised society we live in has made us all more aware of this fact. Distances seem to have become shorter. Users of English throughout the world are in contact more and more often with other users of English in different parts of the world; some of them are native speakers, others are not. While not long ago teachers of English felt satisfied with their teaching of the structural, lexical and phonological aspects of the language, nowadays these aims do not seem to meet the ever-increasing demands of communication among English users. Foreign language teaching must include the teaching of cultural elements that help the user of the foreign language improve their communicative competence. Raising awareness of the target culture enables EFL learners to become more sensitive to the new meaning systems of the foreign language culture that will foster more efficient communication.

Objectives

Throughout the first part of the session, we will explore the different issues EFL practitioners need to bear in mind when drawing learners' attention to the many aspects of culture that are closely connected to language. The second half of the workshop will be of a more practical nature. Different materials will be shown and analysed in the light of the previously discussed theoretical background.

The final aim of the workshop will be to propose a model of analysis participants may opt to use in their classroom work in order to sharpen learners' observation skills when analysing cultural elements.

Part I

The teaching of culture

The teaching of culture has gone through different phases over the last few decades: from the culture-free contents of the Council of Europe, Threshold level in the 1970s to the recent tendencies in EFL that call for the integration of the teaching of language and culture.

The present EFL professional feels the urgent need to shift focus from purely linguistic concerns in the teaching of the foreign language to a focus on the user-community of the target language and the complex nature of intercultural communication. Byram (1994) draws attention to the importance of gaining a deeper understanding of cross-cultural communication in order to maximise not only foreign language performance but also acquire new competences to reflect upon their own culture.

The challenge the English Language teacher faces today is that of going beyond language training in their classrooms and stepping into the lands of the media, the beliefs, the stereotypes, the customs, the body language of the foreign language community in order to help students develop their observation, critical thinking and tolerance towards diversity.

Tomalin & Stempleski (1993) have pointed out two aspects of the *culture* we teach. On the one hand, the traditional studies of history, geography, art, etc. known as 'Big C' culture and, on the other, 'little c' or 'behaviour culture'. It is this latter one that refers to all the culturally-influenced beliefs and perceptions which are most often expressed through language and which, most often as well, lead to the breakdown in communication between users of English belonging to different cultural backgrounds.

Teachers of English as a Foreign Language witness the students' process of appropriation of the foreign culture and become agents of all the cultural contexts dealt with as a result of language exchanges in the foreign language, though to a much less dramatic extent if compared to the process in English as a Second Language. Thus, teachers often have to cope with students' feelings of uncertainty and even dissatisfaction as a result of their language learning. As students progress in their learning of the foreign language and are helped to note the myriad cultural meanings attached to it, students' anxieties start disappearing.

It becomes imperative here to highlight that the EFL teacher is not only broadening the scope of their English language lessons through cultural awareness tasks but they are also helping their students to:

- gain a deeper insight into their own culture and cultural identity by increasing their awareness of cultural elements in foreign language situations
- exercise their tolerance towards diversity
- evaluate linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour in foreign language situations
- stimulate their motivation towards language learning

Part II

A model of analysis

In the light of the issues dealt with in Part I, a model of analysis will be presented. The aim of proposing the use of a task sheet is (a) to help both teachers and students focus on elements of culture- which otherwise might go unnoticed and (b) to encourage systematic 'culture-awareness' moments as part of the language lesson.

It would be both impossible and unfair to try and include an exhaustive list of aspects and areas of culture in a worksheet. It is our belief that further improved, adapted and altered worksheets will be produced by the participants of this workshop.

The following worksheets have drawn on information from Lado (1957), Brooks (1964), Tomalin & Stempleski (1993). These authors have attempted to organise different topics which foster exploration into different patterns of culture.

Tomalin & Stempleski (1993), based on Gail Robinson's research (1985), report that the most common elements of culture can be expressed in three interrelated categories:

Products

- Literature
- Folklore
- Art
- Music
- Artefacts

Ideas

- Beliefs
- Values
- Institutions

Behaviours

- Customs
- Habits
- Dress
- Foods
- Leisure

Putting the template to the test: "Spanglish"

During the following part of the workshop, some selected scenes from the film *Spanglish* will be analysed. The *before* and *after* viewing discussion will be geared towards the *cultural topics* highlighted in the task sheet.

Given the flexibility of the task sheet, it can be used to explore cultural elements in miscellaneous materials and also with different groups of students. The teacher participating in this workshop will have access to some of the feedback by students who engaged in cultural-awareness activities. These students' responses show how they feel towards the target language community and how much they can reflect upon their own culture. Though some aspects discussed in connection with the foreign culture have called for some criticism, the aim of the exercise is to create opportunities for understanding and accepting diversity, not to pass negative judgement on how *other people live*.

Task sheet sample:

Topics	Linguistic data (if applicable)	Foreign culture	Learner's culture
<i>Greetings</i>			
<i>Women</i>			
<i>Men</i>			
<i>Children</i>			
<i>Money & Power</i>			
<i>Body Care</i>			
<i>Family Values/Relationship</i>			
<i>Language Use</i>			
<i>Leisure Time</i>			
<i>Gestures</i>			
<i>Celebrations</i>			

When "hot stuff" serves a purpose: "High School Musical"

The use of this hugely popular film has been, without exaggeration, a great success in most of EFL young learners' classrooms. Yet, when the teacher gets hold of something as

popular as a film or a song, he or she needs to make informed, professional and creative choices about it.

Raising awareness of cultural diversity has been one of the issues chosen to highlight during the screening of excerpts from *High School Musical* in the classroom. Opinions about the film are bound to differ. However, learners in various English language classrooms have enjoyed the inclusion of this material in the lesson. It offered variety, opportunity for debate and, what is most important of all, a chance for everybody to value our own cultural heritage.

The opening scene of this film shows a New Year's party. Prior to the screening of this scene, the teacher may ask students to analyse how the coming of a new year is celebrated in their culture. A spidergram with useful and topical vocabulary may be built on the board as different teams report back their discussions. Then, the teacher may ask students if they know of different ways of celebrating a new year. Finally, students are asked to compare their discussion with what is being shown in the opening scenes of *High School Musical*.

Now it's up to you

Whether teachers opt for the use of the task sheet presented or produce their own, it is absolutely a matter of choice and assessment of their courses' needs and competences in the foreign language. It seems far more important at this stage to stress the need to incorporate cultural awareness tasks in all EFL classrooms, regardless of what kind of task the teaching professional may have in mind.

Other simple but enriching activities can be used in the foreign language classroom. It only takes careful selection of materials and creative planning of tasks. Some suggestions include:

Activities for the EFL classroom		
<i>Sources</i>	<i>Focus on Culture</i>	
	<i>Where and How can we start our exploration?</i>	
Films	Analyse celebrations: Thanksgiving, Xmas, carnival, proms, Halloween, etc	Watch how a foreign character behaves in the host culture in different situations
Sitcoms	Idem as above. The situational comedy format lends itself to the analysis of different situations foreign characters may find themselves: job interviews, going shopping, meeting people, etc.	Misunderstandings in comedies are often the result of a breakdown in communication due to cultural clashes. Nowadays there are plenty of sitcoms, especially on cable/satellite TV that portray the misadventures of immigrants in the US.
Cartoons	Given the nature of this art form, characters often get stereotyped. This often helps to point out cultural differences.	Explore the values transmitted (honesty, concerns, family life, power, success, love, etc.)
TV/ Radio commercials / Comic strips	Listen and/or view a sequence of ads. Students try to figure out what the targeted audience consumes. Compare and contrast lifestyles, consumption patterns, shopping habits, etc.	Analysing the values reflected in commercials (lifestyle, consumer's concerns, family life, comfort, etc.)
Texts of different kinds	Texts written by foreign writers often display elements that reveal their cultural backgrounds. Invite students to spot them.	Writers who belong to ethnic minorities in English-speaking countries offer great texts for cultural exploration (especially poems and short stories).

Conclusion

Some view *culture* 'as consisting primarily of the symbolic, ideational, and intangible aspects of human societies' (Banks, Banks, & McGee, 1989), others refer to the 'patterns and models [that] pervade all aspects of human social interaction' (Damen, 1987). As EFL professionals, it is our greatest challenge to make those elusive aspects of culture more tangible, and help our students appreciate that, though we may have different lifestyles and have inherited culture-specific behaviour, we are all striving hard to pull down the barriers that isolate human beings.

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Teaching Materials for Creative Teachers

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Abstract

A long-standing prejudice among EFL teachers is that texts with an imaginative content can only be used with advanced learners and that creative reading and writing activities should be circumscribed to them. It will be the purpose of the workshop to prove the opposite through the presentation of teaching materials designed by a group of Argentine teachers under the auspices of the British Council. They are based on thought-provoking stories and poems by distinguished contemporary UK writers for young learners at intermediate level.

Teaching Materials for Creative Teachers

The teaching materials that will be discussed in the workshop were designed by a team of primary school teachers and teacher trainers from different parts of Argentina during a three day get-together organized by the British Council in September, 2006. Our aim, to provide EFL and L2 teachers of children aged 9-13 with a corpus of motivating poems and stories by a wide range of distinguished contemporary children's writers, plus their corresponding teaching guidelines: thought-provoking activities to enable young learners to express their feelings and opinions as freely and as creatively as possible in order to develop what McRae(1991) terms the fifth skill, "thinking in English".

A long-standing prejudice among teachers of English is that literary texts can only be used with advanced learners and that creative reading and writing activities should be circumscribed to them. Moreover, texts on how to use literary texts in class have also contributed to strengthen this misconception: most focus on sophisticated texts for learners with a good command of the language being taught. Very few cater to the learner with a modest level of English and fewer still to the young learner. True, stimulating texts in simple language are not easy to find. Besides, it takes longer to devise activities when confined to two or three tenses and elementary vocabulary.

This is why the poems and stories that will be distributed during the workshop together with the teaching materials satisfy several criteria: language-wise, they are readily accessible to intermediate level learners, content-wise, they aim at broadening young learners' social skills and their understanding of the world. Stylistically, they are simple but not simplistic. Mostly comic, alongside a few more serious in tone, they are the work of some of the most popular and accomplished children's writers in the United Kingdom at present.

The materials devised by the team for each text are not language oriented. Teachers won't find any reading comprehension, or cloze exercises, or quizzes to elicit factual information because, regardless of how useful the latter may be, they have little to do with creativity, and literary texts entail the use of the imagination, that of the writers and that of their readers.

In Charles Dickens' *Hard Times*, Chapter I presents a class of "little vessels... arranged in order, ready to have imperial gallons of facts poured into them until they were full to the brim", a metaphor that sums up what many teachers thought, and unfortunately still think, is the role of teaching, more so when it comes to foreign languages: imperial gallons of structures and vocabulary often poured into learners through nonsensical repetitions and banal textbook dialogues. That is why creative writing and reading activities always come as a pleasant surprise to EFL and L2 teachers of young learners. It is stimulating for the teachers to discover, and then prove that, in spite of their limited language competence, their

children can respond creatively to a witty, thought-provoking literary text written in a reader-friendly style. It is even more stimulating for the children to come across motivating texts that engage them as whole persons and to experience all that they can understand and say in a language which is not their mother tongue.

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Nurturing our Students' Sense of Self and Community: Video Production and other e-Projects Made Possible

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Abstract

Students of favorable as well as constrained English language learning contexts can make a video production in which they practice all four skills in a motivating learning environment. We intend to share a variety of stimulating activities that engage students while improving their linguistic ability. Producing a video stimulates students' intelligences, appeals to their imagination, taps their inner creativity, and promotes critical thinking and cultural awareness.

Underlying principles

When we face the task of designing a course tailored to our students' needs and sociocultural context, we tend first to determine the level of proficiency of the students, and then select the textbook that will go along with it. With these two simple steps, most of our work seems to be done in terms of curriculum development. Some more enthusiastic teachers usually try to add readers and other 'extra' activities. This configuration is sound in terms of its consideration of the students' linguistic proficiency, the number of class hours in the program, and the appropriate sequence of linguistic development in all four skills, usually provided by the textbook. However, there's a whole dimension that goes largely ignored: What is the cultural content of our class and how is it to strengthen our students' knowledge foundation?

One of the basic tenets of teaching and learning a foreign language is to acquire an added perspective to our view of the world. Cultural awareness is paramount to the acquisition of other languages. However, when it comes to English, this simple statement takes on a kaleidoscopic dimension. As a *lingua franca*, English is nowadays the language of communication in the international community. Indeed more people speak English as a second or foreign language than the number of people who do so as their first language. It is also a second official language in a number of countries, such as Singapore and India, and the chosen language in the business and entertainment world. It is estimated that over 80% of what gets published on the Internet is in English. On a different level, English has also been the predominantly colonial language in the last two centuries. In addition, such long standing influence of English-speaking hegemonies has led to a quite intricate sociopolitical environment in each country of the periphery. Issues of power, identity, assimilation, imperialism, ownership, and international conflict, as it was our case with the Malvinas War, have determined the way citizens of countries in the periphery view and relate to this language. In this context, the English teacher can become a means to strengthen our subordination to the dominant culture or the facilitator in a nurturing process of our students' identity formation, critical thinking, and global awareness.

Why use video in class?

The objective of this workshop is to present video production as a tool to allow students to explore a variety of topics so that they can inter-relate the target culture with their own in a motivating and fun environment. Video production in the classroom is a goal-oriented activity that encourages students not just to do the bare minimum to get a passing mark, but to become actively involved to achieve an outcome of good quality as well. Some of the

qualities that make this kind of project so engaging are its cultural dimension, the components of fun, creativity and language development, the spell of new technologies, collaborative work, and hands-on experience.

When acting out scenes of a literary text, for example, students are able to live the characters' experiences in the target culture while becoming aware of the differences with their own. In the process of adapting an L2 text to video production, the teacher facilitates the students' encounter with characters from a remote culture that become alive and suddenly human in their imperfections, their moments of happiness, in their trials and tribulations. The universality of their experience becomes apparent when we can identify with their feelings. At the same time, we might not always agree or understand their reactions or decisions precisely because of the cultural differences. When we discuss this with our students, they become aware of their own perception of the world that may not be universally shared. In this process, they begin to understand the nuances and shades of their own identity.

Yet more importantly, this project is fun and rich in opportunities for the practice of all four skills. They write the script to be represented, including stage directions, dialogues, narrative and descriptions. By doing this, students inadvertently use direct and indirect speech in a meaningful context. The speaking and listening skills are intensely developed as students use everyday spoken language with all the necessary verb tenses and appropriate vocabulary. By being exposed to a variety of social contexts, the idea of sociolinguistic competence becomes alive. Grammar awareness is reinforced when students correct their own mistakes as they listen and watch the video in the editing stage. Finally, video production gives the teacher the possibility of assessing students' attitude, participation, responsibility and commitment to work.

Video clip production in class teaches study skills in that students research the content for their videos and subsequently digest the information through script writing and visualization. During this activity, they decide what content will be included in the first draft of the scripts, making practical use of verb tenses, idiomatic expressions, direct or indirect speech, commands, passive voice, formal or informal language, technical language or language for specific purposes. Then, they need to read the scripting so that they learn their words. After that, they need to speak and listen to each other during rehearsals. And eventually, they have to watch themselves after the video is finished. At this stage, students become aware of their body language, their pronunciation, and of how credibly they use their English. All of this happens in a motivating non-threatening environment.

A class-made video induces creative and transparent learning because students enjoy themselves. It improves self-esteem by providing them with a recognized medium for broadcasting their views, exploring their ideas, discovering their perspective on different issues, and finding a voice to express them.

Producing a video with our students can be so popular because they love working creatively and are usually drawn to new technologies. The camcorder is one of them. Even though most of us, teachers, may find it difficult to buy one, this gadget is nowadays more readily accessible. On one hand, they have become more and more affordable, and, on the other, there are alternatives to purchasing one. Nowadays, most of the latest cell phone models come with a video feature. If we can get access to a laptop or a room with a computer in it, a PC camera can be used to cover most video projects. Also the latest digital cameras have a video component that can also be used for shorter clips. There is no doubt that the new toy of technology predisposes students positively, especially when the activity in question gives them free rein to create or bring a story to life.

Most importantly, this kind of project encourages cooperative learning as the students are part of a production crew and each participant is responsible for overseeing his or her area of the production. The various tasks involved in the production make for excellent collaborative work. Most individuals will find an area where they will be able to contribute significantly, such as:

- Scripting: the process of writing down on paper what the video is about.

- Setting: where the story takes place - indoor, outdoor, studio, customised, school or event.
- Acting
- Transitions: how to change from one scene to the next.
- Audio: Sounds produced in the scene.
- Site survey: preproduction which consists of supplying the necessary equipment for filming.

Teaching the appreciation of literature can be a daunting task when it remains on the theoretical realm and in the artificial classroom setting. Usually our challenge is how to sparkle our students' imagination, how to transport them to the heart of a story or poem or news release that is written on concrete sheets of white paper, in black ink. In producing a sequence of images that reflect the meaning of a text, students become aware of tone and mood, especially when they discuss and make decisions about the setting, the lighting, the colour of the clothes, etc. When they freely choose random pictures to reflect their interpretation of images and events in a literary text, students are reproducing its essence as artists themselves. As a result, they will be better prepared to identify and appreciate the symbols, metaphors, similes, and choice of words that authors use in order to convey their meaning.

The exploration of different themes through video allows for a wide variety of e-projects and activities, such as science demonstrations, visualizing a poem, documentaries, news programs, talk shows, reality shows, interviewing, lunch with ..., video clip, commercial, public or school surveys, a day in the life of ..., eco-reports.

What to expect

Apart from the various advantages of this kind of project, it is not exempt from challenges that will put our patience and resourcefulness to test. Among them, it is worth mentioning the following:

- It is time intensive, as it requires much planning and extra work, at least until we become adept at it.
- At times, it creates chaos in the classroom, and a different type of group management when we go out to find a better setting for a scene.
- The teacher needs to have a basic knowledge of video production, or, at first, work with the computer or technology person at school.
- Sometimes there is equipment failure or straitened school budgets, which may limit access to new technologies.

Conclusion

Producing a video with students is a new kind of experience for most of us. As such, it may be quite intimidating at first and it is only natural that we may hesitate to embark on an activity that implies risks and uncertainty. However, once we jump into it, we learn quite a bit ourselves, such as the value of advanced planning, the flexibility to be able to work on a trial-and-error basis, and the openness to shape a project with mostly student input. And, more importantly, when we witness our students' sense of excitement and their growth as learners and individuals, the experience proves to be very much worthwhile.

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Let's Have a Bit of Culture! Teaching More than Meets the Eye.

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Learners are constantly challenged by “real language”. How can they get to grips with language in use?

In this workshop we analysed data drawn from people's actual use of language and highlighted the essential need of fully appreciating cultural connotations. Participants explored with us the potential value of identifying key cultural items in every aspect of the language we teach. We should not miss the chance to include this important component which informs and enriches communicative competence.

The concept of culture is nothing new to teachers of English as a foreign language. But more recently there has been growing concern about the role of culture in language teaching and learning. This surge of interest has been brought about not only for political and ideological reasons, but also for educational factors.

Culture has always been a broad concept that includes all aspects of human life. Many authors have tried to define the term culture and to determine what should be taught in the foreign language classroom - culture with a capital C or popular culture, great events or everyday facts, shared ideals or individual lifestyles. However, teachers will incorporate in their curricula the concepts which will enable learners to go beyond their current knowledge and stretch their cultural and linguistic resources.

There are several reasons for reconsidering culture in language learning. One good reason is that communicative competence has shown to be not enough for learners to function effectively in another language. Learners also need sociocultural competence to understand language beyond the linguistic system. They need to decode the different meanings embedded in people's personal choice of words. A second reason to consider culture in language learning is the increasing globalization of English which makes awareness of cultural matters relevant to EFL students. When Prodromou explains how English has become a multicultural experience, he writes: “*As English becomes a global language on a scale unprecedented in history, and is adopted by diverse cultures as a second or foreign language, it becomes more urgent to explore its cultural impact and potential*”. (Prodromou 1997:6)

As teachers of a foreign language, we cannot ignore social and cultural issues. We cannot think of language teaching as value free. Therefore, language teaching is culture teaching. As has aptly been supported by Crystal (1997):

“Language has no independent existence: it exists only in the brains and mouths and ears and hands and eyes of its user”.

Kramsch remarks that:

“ (culture) ...It is always in the background, right from day one, ready to unsettle the good language learners when they expect it least, making evident the limitations of their hard won communicative competence, challenging their ability to make sense of the world around them”. (Kramsch 1993:1)

There is a continuous dialectic connection between culture and language. Brown describes their relation as follows: “*A language is a part of a culture and a culture is a part*

of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture". (Brown 1994:165)

However, providing a real sense of sociocultural context is not always an easy task. Teachers themselves need to have a broad view of language in use, a wide perspective on language and well-developed language awareness. If this is not so, many times they choose to focus more on the linguistic system than on contextual features.

An important issue to bear in mind when teaching culture should be that of stereotypes. Stereotypes exist. Many textbooks currently in use deal with the topic of stereotypes as a way of showing differences of behaviour in different cultures. However, as teachers we should be concerned about negative stereotypical representations of national groups in general and the possible effect such representations might exert on students. We should encourage learners to be flexible so that they can interpret personal behaviour as such without generalizing. Learners' attention should be drawn to the fact that not all members of a target culture do the same things or behave in the same way. Universal human needs like love or friendship are not expressed in the same way in different cultures: the concept of love, for example, is thought of as different from one culture to another. People talk differently about love in different cultures. This difference is reflected in language. Jiang describes how words carry different meanings in different languages: *"Being culturally loaded, English words and their (...) translations (or vice-versa) are seldom equivalents, and often give rise to different associations or images". (Jiang 2000:329)*

We need to raise learners' awareness on the fact that cultural differences are natural but by no means can one culture be better than another. In other words, by including culture in language teaching we are cooperating to mutual understanding and as a consequence breaking the dependence on stereotypes. We need to understand a culture's symbolic systems that represent values, thoughts and assumptions without trying to interpret them only under the light of our own culture.

Some authors suggest reconsidering the integration of the learner's native culture and language with that of the target language so that learners do not feel overburdened by new linguistic and cultural information all at once. (Post & Rathet 1996) However, although using the learner's native language and culture in the classroom might be a good idea, exploring another culture through language will help learners achieve a better understanding and a higher level of empathy that might allow them to appreciate the target culture in relation to their own. According to Kramsch, there is a "third place" which learners of a foreign language can create between their native culture and that of a target culture. This space grows *"...between the cultures the learner grew up with and the new cultures he or she is being introduced to". (Kramsch 1993:240)*

Within this space, learners construct their personal meanings taking into consideration the boundaries of both cultures, sometimes accepting the target culture as it is perceived and sometimes challenging it in search of their personal voice. Learners of a foreign language will always find new ways of using the foreign language to express their own unique meanings, because as Fiske points out:

"There is little pleasure in accepting ready-made meanings, however pertinent. The pleasure derives both from the power and process of making meanings out of their resources and from the sense that these meanings are ours as opposed to theirs. (Fiske 1988:127)

In this workshop we exploited the rich meaning potential of language in use and its cultural implications. We started with a warm-up activity in which we examined samples of language, some whose understanding strictly depended on the exposure to and familiarity with the target culture and others which, although fairly straightforward, had a strong cultural connotation.

We then went through a series of activities which gave participants the chance to:

- Analyse data drawn from people's actual use of language and see how we can help students interpret the linguistic forms encoded in appropriate cultural contexts.
- Examine phrases accepted and regularly used by members of a speech community.
- Consider the advantages of teaching materials which are too valuable to remain unexplored.

- Compare different mediums and how language is used in each of them.
- Explore different meanings of a word as used in different contexts.
- Make the most of plays on words which are based on colloquial expressions.
- Further exploit everyday “emotionally- charged” words.
- Generalise from particular examples avoiding the trap of stereotyping.
- See how powerful images can be when there is a strong cultural element behind them.

We also made suggestions on how we teachers can create enabling conditions for developing cultural awareness in the classroom.

Awareness of language in use is a tool for cultural understanding. Besides, becoming aware of the sociocultural dimension of the linguistic system promotes more interest in and knowledge of the subject. At the same time, better-informed teachers will make more competent judgements about language and how it is used. After all, the teacher is the main agent of change in the process of learning a foreign language and why not, its culture.

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Breaking Barriers: Singing *beyond* Borders

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Abstract

The purpose of this workshop is to demonstrate some work I have been doing during the past years, the workshop entitled "More than *just* singing". On this particular occasion, I will focus on the songs which carry a strong cross-cultural component. The participants will be asked to *put themselves into their students' shoes*. By doing the activities first, we will be able to anticipate problem areas and find a way out prior to the implementation of the activities in the classroom.

Paper

The purpose of this workshop is to show how the cultural component can be amalgamated into the language classroom by one of its most outstanding realizations: MUSIC. This paper is related to the workshop entitled "More than *just* singing" which I have been delivering throughout the country in the past two years. On this particular occasion, I will focus on different songs which, aligned with the central theme of this congress, carry a strong cross-cultural component.

The participants will be asked to *put themselves into their students' shoes*. By doing the activities first, we will be able to anticipate problem areas and find a way out prior to the implementation of the activities in the classroom.

Culture: a definition

The term *culture* generally refers to patterns of human activity and the symbolic structures that give such activity significance. Different definitions of "culture" reflect different theoretical bases for understanding, or criteria for evaluating, human activity. In general, the term *culture* denotes the whole product of an individual, group or society of intelligent beings. It includes technology, art, science, as well as moral systems and the characteristic behaviours and habits of the selected intelligent entities. In particular, it has specific more detailed meanings in different domains of human activities.

A common way of understanding culture is to see it as consisting of four elements that are "passed on from generation to generation by learning alone":

1. [*values*](#);
2. [*norms*](#);
3. [*institutions*](#);
4. [*artifacts*](#).

Today most social scientists reject the [*monadic*](#) conception of culture, and the opposition of culture to [*nature*](#). They recognize non-[*élites*](#) as just as cultured as *élites* (and non-Westerners as just as civilized) simply regarding them as just cultured in a different way. Thus social observers contrast the "*high*" culture of *élites* to "[*popular*](#)" or [*pop culture*](#), meaning goods and activities produced for, and consumed by the [*masses*](#).

Large societies often have [*subcultures*](#), or groups of people with distinct sets of behaviour and [*beliefs*](#) that differentiate them from a larger culture of which they are a part. The subculture may be distinctive because of the age of its members, or by their [*race*](#), [*ethnicity*](#), [*class*](#) or [*gender*](#). The qualities that determine a subculture as distinct may be [*aesthetic*](#), [*religious*](#), [*occupational*](#), [*political*](#), [*sexual*](#) or a combination of these factors.

In dealing with immigrant groups and their cultures, there are essentially four approaches:

- [*Monoculturalism*](#) (closely linked to [*nationalism*](#))

- [Leitkultur](#) (core culture)
- [Melting Pot](#) (all the immigrant cultures are mixed and amalgamated without state intervention)
- [Multiculturalism](#): A policy that immigrants and others should preserve their cultures with the different cultures interacting peacefully within one nation.

Some [anthropologists](#) have joined the project of cultural studies. Most, however, reject the identification of culture with consumption goods. Furthermore, many now reject the notion of culture as bounded, and consequently reject the notion of [subculture](#). Instead, they see culture as a complex web of shifting patterns that link people in different locales and that link social formations of different scales. According to this view, any group can construct its own [cultural identity](#).

Cultural change

Cultures, by [predisposition](#), both embrace and resist [change](#), depending on culture traits. Thus there are both dynamic influences that encourage acceptance of new things, and conservative forces that resist change.

Humanity is in a global "accelerating culture change period", driven by the expansion of international commerce, the mass media, and above all, the [human population](#) explosion. Culture change is complex and has far-ranging effects. Sociologists and anthropologists believe that a [holistic](#) approach to the study of cultures and their environments is needed to understand all of the various aspects of change. Human existence may best be looked at as a "multifaceted whole." Only from this vantage can one grasp the realities of culture change.

"[Acculturation](#)" has different meanings, but in this context refers to replacement of the traits of one culture with those of another, such as happened to certain [Native American](#) tribes and to many indigenous peoples across the globe during the process of [colonization](#). Related processes on an individual level include [assimilation](#) (adoption of a different culture by an individual) and [transculturation](#).

Multiculturalism is an [ideology](#) advocating that society should consist of, or at least allow and include, distinct [cultural](#) and [religious](#) groups, with equal status.

Transculturation is a term coined by [Fernando Ortiz](#) in [1947](#) to describe the phenomenon of merging and converging cultures.

In one general sense, transculturation covers [war](#), [ethnic conflict](#), [racism](#), [multiculturalism](#), [cross-culturalism](#), [interracial marriage](#), and any other of a number of contexts that deal with more than one culture. In the other general sense, transculturation is the *positive* aspect of global phenomena and human events, where resolutions to conflicts are inevitable.

The term 'diffusion' or diffusionism is used in [cultural anthropology](#) to describe the spread of [cultural](#) items — such as [ideas](#), [styles](#), [religions](#), [technologies](#), etc. — between individuals, whether within a single culture or from one culture to another.

Diffusion across cultures, too, is a well-attested and uncontroversial phenomenon.

Cultural pluralism is a term used when small groups within a larger society maintain their unique cultural identities. In a pluralist culture, unique groups not only coexist side by side

Song: a definition

A *song* is a relatively short [musical composition](#). Many songs contain vocal parts for the human voice, commonly accompanied by other [musical instruments](#) (exceptions would be [scat](#) songs) and feature [words](#) ([lyrics](#)). It is typically for a solo [singer](#), though may also be a [duet](#), [trio](#), or more voices (works with more than one voice to a part, however, are considered [choral](#)). The words of songs are typically of a [poetic](#), [rhyming](#) nature, although they may be [religious verses](#) or free [prose](#). Songs can be broadly divided into many different forms, depending on the criteria used. One division is between "[art](#) songs", "[popular music](#) songs", and "[folk songs](#)".

Popular songs (pop songs) are songs which may be considered in between art songs and folk songs. They are usually accompanied in performance and recording by a [band](#). They are

not anonymous in origin and have known authors. They may be notated by their author(s) or transcribed after recording and may also be composed in [collaboration](#) more often than art songs, for instance by an entire band. Popular songs are often a part of individual and cultural, but seldom national, identity.

Folk songs are songs of often anonymous origin (or are [public domain](#)) that are transmitted [orally](#). They are frequently a major aspect of national or cultural [identity](#). Art songs often approach the status of folk songs when people forget who the author was.

Some considerations about the importance of music and song in language learning (Murphy, T. 1992 – pp 6-8):

- Song actually preceded and aided the development of speech in *homo sapiens* (Livingstone 1973).
- Song precedes and aids the development of language in young children (Murphy 1990a).
- Song is ‘*adolescent motherese*’ – affective and musical language that adults use with infants (Murphy & Alber 1985).
- Song and music occupies ever more of the world around us.
- ‘*the song stuck in my head*’ phenomenon: the echoing in our minds of the last song we heard which can be both enjoyable and unnerving!
- The singing of songs resembles what Piaget (1923) described as egocentric language, in which children talk, with little concern for an addressee.
- Songs use conversational language, with a lot of repetition. They are affective which makes them much more motivating than other texts.
- Songs can be appropriated by listeners for their own purposes. They happen whenever and wherever one hears them. They are about the people in one’s own life.
- Songs are relaxing. They provide variety and fun, and encourage harmony within oneself and within a group.
- In practical terms, for language teachers, songs are short, self-contained texts, recordings, and films that are easy to handle in a lesson. And the supply is inexhaustible!

All in all

Few classroom activities can lead to such feeling of oneness with the group as listening to music and singing along. Songs are an extra-ordinary way to *blend* work with entertainment in the classroom. Students can practise their listening and thinking skills while teachers can introduce grammar, vocabulary and writing practice. Teachers can spice up their lessons and have fun, not just for the sake of it but as a *bonus*.

Note: this workshop is targeted, basically, to adult and adolescent students at different levels of language proficiency.

Songs list:

The following songs will be dealt with in different manners: comparison and contrast of the English and the Spanish versions; web quests about the authors and the background behind the lyrics; topic-based approach – message transmitted, among others.

- 1- If I Could – Paul Simon (Simon & Garfunkel)
 - El Cóndor Pasa – Daniel Alomía Robles (see Appendix 1)
- 2- Only you – The Platters
 - Solo Tú – Estela Raval
- 3- I will Survive – Gloria Gaynor / Cake
 - Resistiré – AQM / Estela Raval / Ataque 77; Yo Viviré – Celia Cruz / Lorena Herrera
- 4- What a wonderful world – Louis Armstrong / The Ramones

- Color Esperanza – Diego Torres
- 5- My way – Frank Sinatra / Tom Jones
- A mi Manera – Ma. Marta Serra Lima / Estela Raval / Gypsy Kings / Il Divo
- 6- An Englishman in New York – Sting

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Web sites:

www.lyrics.com
www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture
www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Songs

Appendix 1

"El Condor Pasa (If I Could)"
 By [Simon & Garfunkel](#) – 1970.
 album "[Bridge over Troubled Water](#)"

I'd rather be a sparrow than a snail.
 Yes I would. If I could, I surely would.
 I'd rather be a hammer than a nail.
 Yes I would. If I could, I surely would.
 [CHORUS]

Away, I'd rather sail away
 Like a swan that's here and gone
 A man grows older every day
 It gives the world. Its saddest sound.
 Its saddest sound.

I'd rather be a forest than a street.
 Yes I would. If I could, I surely would.
 I'd rather feel the earth beneath my feet,
 Yes I would. If I could, I surely would.
 [CHORUS]

"El Cóndor Pasa"
 Por [Daniel Alomía Robles](#) - 1913
 (copyright 1933)
 lyrics *Julio de La Paz* ([Julio Baudouin](#))

El amor como un cóndor bajará,
 mi corazón golpeará,
 después se irá...
 La luna en el desierto brillará
 y tú vendrás solamente un beso me dejarás.
 Quién sabe mañana donde irás
 qué harás, me pensarás?
 Yo sé que nunca volverás
 mas pienso que no viviré.
 Cómo podré?
 La angustia y el dolor me dejarás
 mi corazón sufrirá y morirá.
 El amor como un cóndor volará,
 partirá, y así nunca más regresará.
 Yo sé que nunca...

Read both versions. Surf the web and find out why there are two versions of the song.
 Download the authors' biographies. Mention their nationalities and their backgrounds.

Letra en [quechua](#)

Yaw kuntur llaqtay urqupi tiyaq
 maymantam qawamuwachkanki,
 kuntur, kuntur
 apallaway llaqtanchikman, wasinchikman
 chay chiri urqupi, kutiytam munani,
 kuntur, kuntur.
 Qusqu llaqtapim plazachallanpim
 suyaykamullaway,
 Machu Picchupi Wayna Picchupi
 purikunanchikpaq.

Versión en español

Oh majestuoso Cóndor de los Andes,
 llévame, a mi hogar, en los Andes,
 Oh Cóndor.
 Quiero volver a mi tierra querida y vivir
 con mis hermanos Incas, que es lo que más añoro
 oh Cóndor.
 En el Cusco, en la plaza principal,
 espérame
 para que a Machu Picchu y Huayna Picchu
 vayamos a pasear.

Read both versions. Surf the web and find some information about the *Quechua* language.



Nurturing Our Students' Sense of Self and Community: Acting, Learning and Personal Growth

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Underlying principles: A Critical Approach to Selecting Cultural Content

When we face the task of designing a course tailored to our students' needs and socio-cultural context, we tend first to determine the level of proficiency of the students, and then select the textbook that will go along with it. With these two simple steps, most of our work seems to be done in terms of curriculum development. Some more enthusiastic teachers usually try to add readers and other 'extra' activities. This configuration is sound in terms of its consideration of the students' linguistic proficiency level, the number of class hours in the program, and the appropriate sequence of linguistic development in all four skills, usually provided by the textbook. However, there's a whole dimension that goes largely ignored: What is the cultural content of our class and how is it to strengthen our students' knowledge foundation?

One of the basic tenets of teaching and learning a foreign language is to acquire an added perspective to our view of the world. Cultural awareness is paramount to the acquisition of other languages. However, when it comes to English, this simple statement takes on a kaleidoscopic dimension. As a *lingua franca*, English is nowadays the language of communication in the international community. Indeed more people speak English as a second or foreign language than the number of people who do so as their first language. It is also a second official language in a number of countries, such as Singapore and India, and the chosen language in the business and entertainment world. It is estimated that over 80% of what gets published on the Internet is in English. On a different level, English has also been the predominantly colonial language in the last two centuries. In addition, such long standing influence of English-speaking hegemonies has led to a quite intricate sociopolitical environment in each country of the periphery. Issues of power, identity, assimilation, imperialism, ownership, and international conflict, as it was our case with the Malvinas War, have determined the way citizens of countries in the periphery view and relate to this language. In this context, the English teacher can become a means to strengthen our subordination to the dominant culture or the facilitator in a nurturing process of our students' identity formation, critical thinking, and global awareness.

The focus of this workshop

This presentation aims to explore the use of drama in the classroom as a source to promote learning on the cognitive, socio-cultural and psychological levels. When planning a class, it is important for teachers to consider the social environment that surrounds their students as well as the inter-relationships among them as these aspects are reflected on each individual performance as a learner. The choice of material should consider thematic units to be discussed in class that are connected and relevant to students' reality. This sometimes implies that teachers should adapt this material in order to cater for their students' needs. Through drama activities, students may develop a receptive mind that, as Mandell and Wolf state, can make students "participate enthusiastically, stop and think about what is going on, be a good audience, concentrate and stay focused, keep open to new ideas..." (Wolf and Mandell, 2003, p. 2)

Drama activities can help students to acquire the language almost unconsciously. As Burke and O'Sullivan (2002, p. XIV) explain, role-play and improvisation techniques are helpful to encourage students to use the language and use it effectively and in context.

Furthermore, as regards phonetics and phonology, students who practise drama skills in the classroom seem to evidence more confidence and fluency in the language. Learners are exposed to language used in context, sometimes more complex than the one usually presented in textbooks: therefore, they undergo a process which implies not only the understanding and interpretation of a text, but also the challenge of finding suitable gestures and sounds to perform it, while exercising their memory skills. Thus, the text is internalized not only grammatically, but also phonologically, taking the vocabulary, rhythm and intonation necessary into account to perform the text properly.

Learners are motivated and they are not aware that they are exercising the language: they are carried away by the enjoyment of doing a pleasurable activity. As a byproduct, the class tends to become a less formal environment in which they can all walk around and interact with each other. Students have the opportunity to develop their own creativity even from the early stages of learning. Jan Mandell and Jennifer Wolf state that “when adolescents create and act in their own plays, something more than a production and performance results”.

In our workshop, we intend to share our experience including the research and implementation of a variety of drama activities designed as bridge between language learning and personal growth. We have worked on long-term projects to produce a longer play and a musical, and have also incorporated drama related activities in other lesson plans not related to the longer projects. Adapting a novel or a short story written by an author from an English-speaking community as material for dramatization and role-play deepens the students’ understanding of the characters’ motivation and inner drive, characteristics that portray their culture. Furthermore, when adapting the plot to our own environment, students are encouraged to change any part of the original action to make it fit their local issues and their own personal interests and attitudes. This process makes them aware of cross-cultural differences and strengthens their sense of identity. We are therefore not only teaching the language and communication skills but providing strategies that will give students tools to relate to other members of the community, explore their own personalities, enhance their critical thinking and promote global awareness. “The power of arts can lead to a real passion for justice and courage to question.”

It is important to consider that by including drama activities in our classrooms certain guidelines should be taken into account as regards discipline and motivation:

- Keep your students alert and interested in the project.
- Be prepared to change the activities when necessary. “We view students’ tension, lack of energy, boredom, and discomfort with the topic as potential reasons for switching gears.” (Wolf and Mandell, 2003, p. 20)
- Promote mutual respect: everybody has to listen to what each other says. This is a learning process that takes time, patience and constant practice.
- Risk looking silly. Behave calm and sure of our tasks and then students will immediately co-operate.
- Be supportive and allow them to explore the language and feel comfortable with it. There is plenty of time for error correction.
- Remember that students are not professional actors or native speakers of English: as Mandell and Wolf propose, we do not focus on their ability but on their willingness to learn. (Wolf and Mandell, 2003, p. 2)
- Keep the class under control: Theatre techniques such as shouting “FREEZE!” to get the students’ attention during fast pace work is useful. Try to speak in a low key tone of voice and avoid shouting. Turning the lights on and off, knocking a rhythm on the desk are also recommended signals.
- Be energetic: Both mental and physical energy are vital elements to get the message through.
- Set a time limit: it promotes organisation.

- Be aware that performing a play may cause great excitement and raise students' expectations in the final outcome, but it also takes us into the unknown in which failure or success are viable possibilities. We must remember to present failure as challenges rather than reasons to quit: "the failures that are most discouraging in the moment lead to the greatest learning in the end. We try to laugh as much as possible." (Wolf and Mandell, 2003, p. XXIII)

Our presentation will be structured in three stages –breaking the ice, revising content and producing a play and a musical-, each with a complete set of activities that fit their aims. The goal is to go deeper into topics that are part of the syllabus in an active way, so that students can not only acquire the content but also develop social skills and interpersonal relationships. The tasks will involve the active participation of pairs or groups of attendants, who will be asked to carry out different motivating assignments which can be used in different group size, age and language level. They should be ready to work hands-on and have a good time.

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Culturally-Responsive Literacy Instruction: A Practical Application for Foreign Language Educators.

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Abstract

The framework of an increasingly globalized world where the monolingual and monocultural classroom in varied contexts (literacy education, content area instruction, EFL, ESL) is naturally disappearing has ascribed a prominent role to the issue of culture in education. The tendency towards the multilingual, multiethnic and multicultural classroom also points to the importance of cultural factors in language education and education in general. The pervasive presence of cultural diversity in varied educational contexts suggests the need to understand what culturally-responsive literacy instruction means and entails. Educators need the knowledge, procedures, and strategies to see to the complexity that the integration of language and culture involves in the practical reality of the classroom. This paper will explore these issues theoretically, and will offer a practical application for the EFL classroom at different levels.

Brief Framework

Conceptions of reading, writing, and literacy

Reading and writing are multidimensional and multivalent processes (Bernhardt, 2003) which occur in specific social, cultural, political, geographical, historical, and other contexts (Berg, 2003; Fitzgerald, 2003; Jiménez, 2003). Although this is generally acknowledged, there is a tendency to narrow the teaching of reading and writing to independent decontextualised skills, which misses the point of reading and writing as genuine social and communicative practice (Berg, 2003).

Learners need the capacity to participate in a multiplicity of ways of reading and writing in a plurality of discourses in the framework of socially and culturally diverse contexts (Fitzgerald, 2003; Jiménez, 2003). If we accept that culture is involved in all learning, all practice needs to be culturally responsive in order to be best practice. Culturally responsive teachers make connections with their students as individuals while understanding the socio-cultural and historical contexts that influence their interactions with reading and writing (Edwards & Pleasants, 1998; Klingner & Edwards, 2006). This implies that it is essential to find out what works with whom, by whom, and in what contexts, looking across the multiple layers of the home, the community, the school, and the society at large.

A Practical Example for Foreign Language Educators

The activities that follow have two different aims. The first sequence of tasks is designed to raise the teachers' awareness about what the notion of culturally responsive literacy instruction means in the reality of classroom life. They could be included in EFL teacher education programs, in-service sessions, teacher-development courses, etc. The second sequence of tasks is intended to offer a concrete application of this notion

for classroom use, applicable to different levels of instruction and varied educational contexts. Due to space limitations, additional information about how to organize, sequence, and handle the tasks in the classroom is not offered here.

Awareness-raising tasks for educators: integrating culture in the foreign language classroom

Task 1. Culture and culturally responsive instruction.

What does this quote mean in relation to the notion of culturally responsive literacy instruction?

“Culture can be likened to an iceberg -only 10 percent of the whole is seen above the surface of the water. It is the 90 percent of the iceberg that is hidden beneath the surface of the water that most concerns the ship's captain who must navigate the water. Like an iceberg, the most meaningful (and potentially dangerous) part of culture is the invisible or subjective part that is continually operating on the unconscious level to shape our perceptions and our responses to these perceptions. It is this aspect of culture that leads to the most intercultural misunderstandings.” (Cushner, McClelland, and Safford, 1996, 50).

Which of the following, in your view, does the notion of culturally responsive literacy instruction entail? Justify.

- Seeing all learners as the same, attempting to build a fair, impartial, and objective classroom environment;
- Adopting a colour-blind, gender-blind, socio-economic status-blind, ethnicity-blind, language-blind, etc. attitude towards learners;
- Promoting the acquisition of intercultural competence only when minority community learners are in the classroom;
- Embracing the national and the patriotic;
- Encouraging learners to deepen their understanding of their own culture;
- Honouring linguistic, social, cultural, etc. diversity in the classroom;
- Providing abundant cultural information;
- Presenting a positive image of the foreign culture;
- Presenting a realistic image of the foreign culture;
- Helping learners describe the life of a “typical” American, British, etc.;
- Blurring cultural boundaries;
- Locating “cultural informants” who are familiar with the target group and can explain their ways;
- Identifying and using different manifestations of a culture in the classroom (food, artwork, dress, etc.), in particular in relation to the four Fs: Food, Fashion, Festivals, and Folklore.
- Eliminating stereotypes from teaching materials;
- Foregrounding stereotypes in teaching materials;
- Using multicultural literature;
- Using textbooks that promote tourist views of unchanging cultures and routines;
- Using textbooks based on the principles of critical pedagogy and multicultural education;

- Using textbooks that challenge the idea of monolithic national cultures by introducing characters with multiple cultural identities;
- Using materials that stress what unites human beings, with a focus on commonalities and bonds;
- Using materials that avoid reference to the tensions and conflicts within societies;
- Using culture simulators, cultural capsules, and culturally competent support services (e.g. counseling, social work, reading consultation);
- Helping learners retain their heritage culture and language;
- Using experiential approaches to language-and-culture teaching;
- Helping students acquire intercultural skills and attitudes;
- Building a culturally pluralistic classroom environment which promotes tolerance, respect, care, mutual understanding, diversity, acceptance of equality, commitment to antiracism; etc.
- Seeing learners as “citizens of the world” or “cosmopolitan citizens”;
- Avoiding cultural complexity;
- Seeing yourself (teacher, educator) as having an ascribed identity as ambassador or representative of a culture;
- Addressing issues of xenophobia, prejudice, and hostility to cultural difference;
- Promoting an understanding and awareness of the universal principles which underpin democratic societies (e.g. diversity, unity, global interconnectedness, human rights).

Task 2. Reading of bibliography.

Read the following fragment from Edwards & Pleasants (1998, 99) and create a two-column response using these instructions:

“As the children entering school are recognized as increasingly diverse, teachers have become more sophisticated in their understanding of culture and the meaning of culture in the classroom. Many teachers have acknowledged that culture is made up of much more than food, artwork, or ways of dressing ourselves. (...) Teachers also understand that adopting a color-blind attitude toward students is not the answer to becoming culturally responsive literacy teachers. Although being color blind toward students is one way of attempting to build a fair, impartial, and objective classroom environment, it can also lead to classrooms in which differences are seen as deficits. In attempting to see all students as the same, teachers can inadvertently treat students unfairly by denying the differences in students that help make them who they are.”

- Fold a sheet of paper to form two columns.
- In the left column, record quotes that strike you because they:
 - raise questions
 - remind you of a prior experience
 - seem important to interpret
 - elicit an opinion
- Directly opposite each quote in the right column, record personal responses. You may:
 - interpret the quote
 - state opinions

- raise questions
- discuss related topics

Task 3. Appropriation of bibliography.

Consider the notion of culturally responsive literacy instruction from six points of view:

- Define and describe it
- Compare it
- Associate it
- Analyze it
- Apply it
- Argue for or against it

A culturally responsive lesson: Using multicultural literature in the foreign language classroom

The tasks below are based on the use of multicultural literature with the purpose of integrating language-and-culture in the foreign language classroom. The underlying assumption is that a focus on cultural voices offers an ideal opportunity to examine the traditional tales of countries, cultures, and communities (Johnson & Giorgis, 2001). Stories and legends from different cultures help learners develop a more global understanding and appreciation of others (Leavell & Ramos-Machail, 2000), enter another culture, recognize the universality of the wishes, dreams, and problems of people around the world, and increase their sensitivity to linguistic and cultural diversity.

To include cultural voices in our classroom, we can read different versions and variants of the same tale (e.g. *Cinderella*), discovering similarities as well as differences. The steps involved in this lesson (or sequence of lessons) follow.

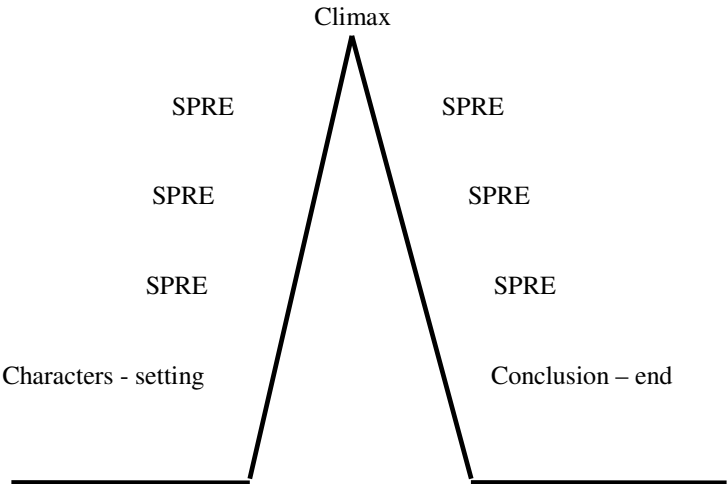
Step 1. Prior knowledge.

Which version of Cinderella were you read as a child? Retell the story as it comes to mind now.

Draw, list, write about, organize visually, etc. what you remember about the story. Then discuss and compare your versions using your drawings, lists, written productions, charts, grids, mind maps, graphic organizers, etc. as prompts. What similarities and differences do you observe?

Step 2. Discovering the macrostructure of the stories, or story-grammars.

Discover the macrostructure for each tale. This macrostructure can be conceived as cycles of the problem-solution pattern of text organization. This recursive pattern consists of four elements: Situation, Problem, Response, Evaluation (SPRE).



Step 3. Exploring the cultural similarities and differences in the tales.

Use a Venn diagram to compare Grimm’s traditional version of *Cinderella* with each of its cultural variations.

Step 4. Visual display of similarities and differences in the tales.

Using all of the Venn diagrams created in step 3, complete a chart comparing the versions of this folk tale.

		Main		How does main character prove	she	is	What the
happens to	Country of	character's	Magical	one	who	the	prince
stepsisters	origin	name	symbol	is seeking?			in the
Folk tale							
end?							

Discussion questions

In which ways do all these versions of Cinderella portray universal values and beliefs, moral dilemmas, central topics of appeal to humankind in general, and transnational and crosscultural perspectives?

In which ways are these tales culturally bound to particular and idiosyncratic norms of behavior and patterns of beliefs?

Step 5. Critical questions which foster culturally responsive literacy development.

- Whose voices are not heard in each of these versions of *Cinderella*?
- What does the author of each tale want you, the reader, to think and feel about the characters? How does he or she achieve this?
- What kinds of people, contexts, and experiences are either ignored or devalued in these tales?
- Are there any bits that puzzle you? Why?
- If you had written or illustrated these books, are there any pages you would have done differently or filled in or told more about? How? What haven't you been told that you would like to know?
- Which picture tells you most about each character's situation in each tale?
- What do you think is the most important thing for people to talk about in relation to each character?

Step 6. Interdisciplinary, cross-curricular focus.

Choose one cross-curricular area (arts, music, literature, maths, science, etc.) and develop an interdisciplinary project using the Cinderella tales as a foundation. An example follows.

SOCIAL STUDIES

GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY

- Discover worldwide variants of the Cinderella story.
- Collect Cinderella tales from various countries and cultures.
- Locate, read, and discuss Cinderella variants from many parts of the world.
- Discuss the cultural similarities and differences.
- Prepare a note card with the story title, the author's and illustrator's names, and the country and culture of origin.
- Research the country and culture of origin by designing inquiry questions for investigation which are interesting and personally relevant to group members.

Concluding Comments

In the framework of globalisation, the tendency towards the multilingual, multiethnic and multicultural classroom in foreign language learning contexts points to the importance of

cultural factors in language education and education in general. Educators in the 21st century need the knowledge, procedures, and strategies to see to the complexity that the integration of language and culture involves in the practical reality of the classroom. The tasks described here have been designed, on the one hand, to raise the awareness of educators working in different contexts about what the notion of culturally responsive literacy instruction means and entails in the reality of everyday classroom life, and on the other hand, to offer a concrete application of this notion for classroom use, applicable to different levels of instruction and varied educational contexts.

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“Enter Sandman”: Intercultural Explorations in the Classroom

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Building a Sphere of Interculturality

“Language is bound up with culture in multiple ways.” (Kramsch, 1994). Because of this many teachers may regard how important it is to build a sphere of interculturality between the linguistic forms to be taught and the social structure those forms come from. In order to understand how a foreign language works it becomes essential to know about the culture of that language, English is foreign to Spanish speaking students in Argentina, learners that are taught how to relate the culture of the target language with their own depart from the idea that learning a language is a mere transfer of information and may adhere to the notion that learning a foreign language is a much more complex process that involves fostering reflection on the target and on the native culture. One way of achieving this is to resort to Literature, one of the tools in which language and culture converge, it is the tool that enables learners to widen their perceptions and views of the world, on the grounds that interculturalism is rooted in knowledge of self and others: “Interculturalism is not a prenational, utopian stage of cultural homogeneity and human unity. Its definition does not escape from the construction of two “othernesses”: interculturalism is a meeting of two fabrications of otherness from varying moments in history within the structure of an artistic media, be it a music recording, a theatrical production or simply an oil painting.”(Sze,F.2003)

Moreover, the literary work, according to Eagleton (1994), is a vehicle for ideas, a reflection of social reality, the incarnation of some transcendental truth; and Walsh (2001) uses the term “outside world”, social reality, to talk about the importance of bringing together the two worlds: the one of the outside and the one that comes into being in the classrooms. So, the important thing, according to these authors, is to bring together the social reality of the native culture, of the target culture and the one of the classroom.

Let's consider the idea that Literature and the learning of a second language, in this case, English, make the contact of cultures, Spanish and English, come true. It is in song lyrics where teachers may find a very successful way to introduce students into the cultures of the world because of the fact that music is universal and specific to human beings. Music provides the scenario and lyrics, because of their culture specific nature, the vehicle through which expression finds its way. Through listening to the word and through further reading the word, people interpret song lyrics and adequate them to their own cultural social reality, they fill in “the gaps of indeterminacy” (Rossenblatt, 1978) that there exist in the lyrics with their own stories / histories and so they go back into their past, visualize their present and get forwards into a projection of their future. Sometimes it does happen that the culture the lyrics reflect does not resemble the culture of the people who listen to it, these kinds of lyrics are the ones that let teachers explore intercultural matters.

Adolescents do get to lyrics more readily than to written texts, they start by first feeling identified with the tunes to then become interested in the lyrics. The pleasure music awakens in students allows teachers to profit from the learners' curiosity to know what the lyrics mean. In Argentina a great number of teens adhere to foreign bands, namely English/American ones. Students, then, may experience appropriation of some songs or lyrics because of the added value that music has. This added value can become a propeller to make students reflect on the values of their native culture and on those of the foreign culture in order to build a bridge to otherness.

Teaching Culture as an Interpersonal Process

If interculturalism is fostered, a critical attitude in students; a critical stand that will make them better appreciate their own culture and respect the culture of others will follow. One way of doing this is using song lyrics as literature in order to foster interculturalism.

Song lyrics allow students:

- to reach out and connect: open discussion is fostered in the lessons and the students have the opportunity to voice their opinions and discover what their mates think;
- to facilitate processes and relationships: students get to know their mates deeper and are encouraged to widen their views about people from other cultures;
- to talk authentically: to talk authentically: new vocabulary related to what the Sandman represents and to similar characters eg. the bunyip in New Zealand open the way to view different cultural realities that are related to feelings, namely fears;
- to develop empathy: to encourage tolerance for different ways of thinking;
- to experience and express emotions: by talking about their own experiences and emotions students feel that they are using the language meaningfully;
- and, to promote the understanding of people from different cultures: by the careful selection of lyrics -on the part of teachers- that foster respect and understanding between cultures.

The following is an account of a whole topic unit and of how an intercultural approach was implemented in a state school in Buenos Aires Province in Argentina, in a classroom of 30 seventeen-year-old students of pre-intermediate level.

It was the first day of the academic year and the students, who up to that moment, had been always taught English under a traditional grammar-oriented method that focused mainly on the testing of how much grammatical knowledge had been acquired, were now introduced into a somewhat different proposal. They were going to follow a syllabus that had been organized into topic-units. The first one, the one this article is about, was called “Fears”, no textbook was going to be used, the material designed for the whole year had to do with song lyrics, and the evaluation centered on portfolios and oral presentations.

The first class started with the teacher writing the name of the first unit “Fears” on the blackboard and followed with the presentation of these lines:

“Say your prayers little one
don’t forget, my son
to include everyone.”

The students were asked to discuss in groups and then answer the following:

- Who is saying this? Who to?
- What personal experience/s do these lines remind you of?
- Where do these lines come from?
- What time is it? How do you know?

All the students answered the first question by saying that the speaker was a woman talking to her son / daughter, none of them thought it could have been a man; an answer very coherent with the culture these students are immersed in, a culture that generally positions women as the ones that may be in charge of their children’s

religious education. As for the other questions they said that the lines reminded them of their childhood, and some said of their grandmothers; again, a very much culturally-loaded that highlights the importance of grandparents in the culture of this country. Question 3 had different answers: "these lines are from a letter... a religious book ... a prayer ... a note someone wrote... etc." As for question 4 all the answers were coincidental: "bed time because people pray at night." This answer provided the basis for the next set of questions:

- Do you pray at night?
- Did you use to pray at night?
- Do old people pray at night? Why?

The answer to these questions had as common ground that people pray at night because they fear night and sleep and that the most terrifying fear is to die in one's sleep. All the students were able to give an answer to this set of questions, even the ones who never pray or profess no religion at all.

At this point the students were told that the lines came from a song by Metallica called "Enter Sandman"; most of them knew the song but they did not know what the song lyrics were about, so their assignment for the next lesson was to download the lyrics and bring them to class.

On the following lesson they listened to the song while reading the lyrics and they answered the following:

1-What's this song about?

2-What are lines 25, 26, 27, and 28 about?

"Now Y lay me down to sleep
pray the Lord my soul to keep
if I die before I wake
pray the Lord my soul to take."

3-What is the Sandman?

"Say your prayers little one
don't forget, my son
to include everyone
tuck you in, warm within
keep you free from sin
till the Sandman he comes."

4-Who or what is the beast?

"Hush little baby, don't say a word
and never mind that noise you heard
it's just the beast under your bed,
in your closet, in your head."

Crossing Boundaries: from the Interpersonal to the Intrapersonal

At this point, the work started to be much more personalized, the students themselves decided to leave their groups, for it was very difficult to reach an agreement as regards the answers, though they were rather similar, each of them wanted to talk about their very own mental representations, that is their own memories. For example, Cecilia said: "the beast perhaps is death or everything that you are scared or frightened of"; Luisa said: "the beast are (sic) the nightmares"; for

Julio: “the beast is monsters children are afraid of, in my case the beast is clowns, I was very much afraid of clowns when I was a child”. However, the interesting part was, in fact, when they had to answer the question about the Sandman, in Spanish “el hombre de arena”, literally “the man made of sand”; which did not make any sense to them. They could not fill in the gap that this word provided, for their culture did not give them the necessary elements to apply their schemata to the meaning of the new word; so they just had context of the song to rely on. Some said the Sandman was a kind of hero, others a monster, others said it was a bad character that frightened little children.

Then, they were given the answer: “The [sandman](#), in [folklore](#), is a figure who brings good [sleep](#) and [dreams](#) by sprinkling magic sand onto sleeping children. The sandman is also a symbol of the passage of time to death; he is sometimes depicted as the [grim reaper](#) holding an [hourglass](#) and [scythe](#).” (www.wikipedia.org)

Reaching the Other

At this point they were asked to associate the Sandman with other characters they knew from their childhood to see whether there were any similarities. They mentioned characters such as: “el hombre de la bolsa” (the man with the bag: a man who carries a bag and puts little children who misbehave in it); “el viejo” (the old man: an old man who scares children who misbehave); “la llorona” (ghost of a woman said to roam the streets wailing); “el cuco” (the bogey man: an evil spirit who scares children); but they found no coincidence between these legendary characters and the Sandman.

The next activity had to do with their own fears when they were little children, and then, they wrote twelve words they associated with the word nightmare as an assignment for the next lesson.

On the next lesson they were asked to read aloud the words they had chosen and they were told that they had to borrow words – 5 words – from their mates’ lists in order to enlarge their own. This is one example:

horror – monsters – scream – fear – darkness – knives
death – storm – fire – twister – thieves – cold – people

After that, they were asked to classify the words in groups under headings. The following is a sample of how one of the students did the task:

Weather and Disaster	Black and Cold	Frightening	Disgusting
Storm Twister Fire	Darkness Cold Death	Horror Scream Fear Knives	People Monsters Thieves

The next activity was to write a poem or a text using the words chosen. Here is a couple of examples:

“On a dark night at a cemetery
skulls and bones all around me

A stranger came with a knife
I shouted and spiders
And snakes came over me
A thunder storm started
And a ghost appeared...
NEXT TO ME!"
By Patricia

"In my dreams
I see monsters
At night
I'm very scared.

The dark of the night
the lightning of the storms
and the ghosts of the old castle
are my fears.
The fiction of my nightmares
are huge dinosaurs

horrible beasts
and old crocodiles.
The darkness is the problem
the witches,
my fears."
By Cecilia

After writing the poems, and for a coming lesson, the students answered these questions:

- What's your most terrifying dream?
- Do you have recurrent dreams?
- How do you fight back nightmares?
- Do you daydream?
-
- Which is your most cherished dream?
- If you could write a message on a wall for the whole world to see about your most cherished dream what would you write?

I imagine there's no Heaven

It's easy if you try

No Hell below us

Above us only Skv.

This is a student's message

John Lennon imagines a perfect world and that is our dream too!

For the coming lesson they brought the lyrics of the song "Fear of the Dark" by Iron Maiden and wrote a few lines about how they interpreted it. For a last activity each group brought posters about the Sandman, about how the Sandman looked for them, and a collage that represented their dreams. Each group had to talk about the

meaning/s hidden in their productions. They also brought songs that talked about their dreams. “Imagine” by J. Lennon was the song everybody said was the best choice for this activity because these lyrics promote equality and understanding through cultures.

When the unit finished, they were given these questions to answer:

How do you rate these activities in terms of:

- complexity
- your involvement
- What did you learn?
- What’s your conclusion on this work?

Here are the answers given by two of the students:

“The activities weren’t very complicated but the song was a bit difficult to understand.

I learnt a lot of vocabulary, and things about my mates and their dreams, and about the Sandman. Learning English is not only vocabulary and grammar. The culture is important.”

“It was a very nice work which I enjoyed doing, and I learnt a lot, I liked the song very much.”

After this, the students did research into what legendary characters children from other cultures are afraid of. The topic “fears” was used to promote response, encourage creativity, make the students use the language meaningfully, and foster understanding between cultures. “Fears” is a universal feeling though children from different cultures experience it in different ways. Because of the questions, research on legendary characters from other cultures apart from the English or the Argentinean was included. The aim of the activities was double sided; on one way the activities aimed at an Intrapersonal level: through the exercises the students could find the way to minimize their fears and understand the fears other students feel; and on the other hand, at an Interpersonal level, the activities promoted cultural awareness because the topic made them widen their views on different cultures and ways of being.

Follow-up activities:

- Find the different voices in the text/ song: Who is speaking? - Who to?.
- Story telling: write a scary story about the Sandman to then tell it to your classmates. Find background music to create the atmosphere you want.
- Research: surf the net and find information about the DC comics called “The Sandman”; bring information to class about the main topic; and the characters. Write a description of the Sandman that is the central character in the comics. Write a few lines about the author.
- Look up bunyip, a character that is very scary to children in Australia, find information about the bogeyman in the USA and el coco in Latin America.
- Draw your own version of the Sandman. Give a title to your drawing.
- Make a chart of the similarities and the differences between The Sandman and the legendary characters of your childhood.

The song Enter Sandman by Metallica acted as the door that opened the way to cultural awareness, The Sandman became the starting point to share, analyze, and compare experiences. The song “Imagine” by J. Lennon that the students brought marks the success of the experience for the students were able to connect two worlds: the one outside and the classroom by understanding that though culturally different people inhabit it, the world is only one, that we may use different symbols,

but we share fears, and that learning a second language through creative texts can help us become aware of this.

Learning a language implies learning about different ways of thinking and seeing the world. Interpreting texts means interpreting cultures and understanding differences by finding meanings in intertextual relations across texts.

All the activities mentioned above position students as producers of meanings that stem from the transfer: their own culture and take the meaning/s of the target culture, transform them, adapt them and appropriate them, so as to allow students to construct their own personal understanding.

“Fears” was the first topic unit developed and opened the way to the following topic unit which also had to do with understanding how important it is to consider that the native culture is the one element that lets individuals understand the target culture/s. This understanding may allow people to grow into open-mindedness and tolerance. The word “Sandman” was the one that held all the work together because, by filling the gap the word left the students were able to make sense of the cultural differences that there exist between different cultures as regards fears. This, in turn, led them to have a deeper and wider perception of the world they live in and of the world that surrounds them. May be this small step will lead these students to build the places in the future.

“The only way to start building a more complete and less partial understanding of both C1 and C2 is to develop a third perspective, that would enable learners to take both an insider’s and an outsider’s view on C1 and C2. It is precisely that third place that cross-cultural education should seek to establish.” (Kramsch 1994: p. 210)

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PROYECT your WORK to your Community

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Abstract

The purpose of this demonstration is show the programme we have started last year in the career “Tecnatura en Administración Hotelera”. In 2006, the teachers organized a bilingual city tour with beginner students of English. This activity was preceded by a web surf of Rosario city, and followed by a web surf, with a later production of a brochure, of each participant home town. In 2007, we continue with that group with the project “*Project your town to the World*”.

Summary

The word culture comes from the Latin root *colere* (to inhabit, to cultivate, or to honour) and can be defined as a set of learned beliefs, values and behaviours, the way of life shared by the members of a society. In this paper, I intend to tackle the cultural integration of foreign language teaching with a purposeful perspective through the means of *Project Work*.

Much has been said but little has been done concerning *Project Work* in our country. This methodology helps teachers working in a non English-speaking environment to bridge the gap there is between the language students are taught and the language they in fact require (Fried-Booth, 1996). What is taught in the classroom may in theory be useful, but the usefulness does not always extend to practice. A project moves through three stages: beginning in the classroom, moving out into the world, and returning to the classroom. The level of linguistic control, then, moves from: controlled use of language → bridging activities (less controlled) → ‘free’ use of language. There is a great deal of involvement from the students since it is student-centred: the motivation comes from within as the project is *theirs* – they decide what they will do and how they will do it (content and language requirements). The role of the teacher is that of a counsellor and consultant, co-ordinator and ‘facilitator’.

The aim of this demonstration is to show the programme we have started last year in the career “Tecnatura en Administración Hotelera” in the “Instituto de Hotelería y Restaurateur” in the city of Rosario, Santa Fe province. This is a cross-curricular endeavour since the subjects *English Language* and *Alojamiento I* have been working cooperatively in the process.

The programme is divided into three parts:

- 1- The Rosario City Tour (appendix 1)
- 2- The Home Town Brochure
- 3- The Home Town City Tour

Each part, in turn, has three main stages:

- a- The Planning stage, where specific language needs are predicted, objectives are set, tools are established and possible problems are logistically sorted out.
- b- The Implementation stage, where the tasks to achieve the objective are carried out. It involves working both inside and outside the classroom.
- c- The End Product stage, where the *tangible* outcome is produced. In some instances, other members of the community are invited to share the final production. Feedback is given *and* collected as well. It becomes the springboard of the following part of the programme.

The Why, When and How

In 2006, the teachers of first year realized that the majority of our students came from different towns of the region, and therefore knew nothing about the place where they were studying. With this reality in mind, and for the purpose of socializing too, we organized a bilingual city tour with the company "Rosario Visión". It offers a bus with headphones in each seat with three plugs to choose the language the passenger wants to listen to: Spanish, English or Portuguese. The participants were supposed to plug in the English version but were able to switch to Spanish if comprehension was too demanding for them (a great number of students had an elementary/pre-intermediate level of proficiency in English).

The tour was preceded by a web surf of Rosario city, as a lead-in activity to activate the students' schematic knowledge. In this way, they were able to predict the sights we were going to see and anticipated something about places of interest as well as some history of the region. When the tour finished, participants had to report to the class the info they had obtained and any surprising news they had learnt. During the following week, they had to carry out a web surf of their home town and, after several revisions following the procedure of *process writing*, they produced a brochure. It had to 'sell' their town and the area to outsiders: people from other parts of Argentina and prospective foreign visitors. Both personalization and involvement were heightened.

The strength of a project is that it relies on the involvement and commitment of individuals. It draws together students of mixed-abilities and creates opportunities for them to contribute in ways which reflect their different talents and creativity. The less linguistically-gifted person may gain self-esteem, which would be unlikely in a more conventional language lesson.

In 2007, we continue with that group with the project "*Project your town to the World*". Students continue their research about their place of origin interviewing residents, browsing the web, consulting written materials (newspapers, magazines, brochures) or any other means of gathering information. Once they have collected sufficient data, they will design a city tour of their home town with explanations concerning highlights of the place, present and past facts, and so on. They will produce a booklet and add an itinerary to promote *their own* city tour to their companions and *to the world!* This information will eventually be included in the web site of the institute, and hopefully, in other sites as well. I will demonstrate the steps that have been accomplished so far with samples of the students' productions.

The cultural component of the programme is very strong as the educational intention is to 'use' the foreign language within as well as beyond the frontiers of our country. What we most cherish and consider worthy of promotion, our culture and our land, is shown to the world. Values, such as respect and tolerance, are enhanced. We can only respect and learn about other peoples' culture if we first respect and know about ours. Therefore, we hope this project will foster students' growth not only from a practical point of view- progress in their knowledge of the English language- but from an experiential standpoint- development as a committed citizen of Argentina and of the World.

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Appendix 1:



**ROSARIO CITY TOUR
CROSS-CURRICULAR PROJECT ENGLISH I & ALOJAMIENTO I**

➤ Before-touring activities:

A) Warm up: HOTEL OFF-SITE SERVICES – Speaking: in small groups discuss:
What are the hotel *off-site services*? What duties does a concierge have? How interesting are the activities carried out by the concierge in a hotel? How can you relate his /her activities with city attractions?

B) Jigsaw Research Webtask: surf the web and find the following information about Rosario and surrounding cities:

- 1-Tourist attractions and their history
- 2-Famous buildings, historical sites
- 3-Maps of the area
- 4-Factories and companies (such as *Paladini, Swift, Celulosa, La Virginia*)
- 5-Neighbouring cities/towns (e.g. *San Lorenzo, Victoria, and San Nicolás*).

Suggested Websites:

www.rosariovision.com
www.rosario.com.ar/depaseo/htm
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/rosario>
www.welcomeargentina.com/rosario
www.rosarioturistica.com.ar/turismo/laciudad.php

➤ While-touring activities:

A) Historical Itinerary: Listen and look: number the sites in the order you hear them.

- Bar Olimpo
- Monumento Nacional a la Bandera
- Estatuas de Lola Mora
- Barrio Martin
- Barrio Pichincha
- Facultad de Derecho
- Plaza San Martín
- Catedral Nuestra Señora del Rosario
- Sala Lavarden
- Pasaje juramento
- Escuela Normal N°1
- Bolsa de Comercio, La inmobiliaria, ex Hotel Palace
- Teatro El Círculo
- Patio Cívico
- Plaza 25 de Mayo
- Parque Urquiza: Complejo Astronómico Municipal
- Municipalidad de Rosario
- Correo (ex jefatura)

B) Note-Taking:

As you listen, take notes on the historical facts of the following rosario city landmarks and complete the chart below:

The “National Flag Memorial”	“El Círculo” Theatre	“Rosario Norte” Railway Station
It lies on...	It was built in...	In the past it used to be...
It represents...	It dates from...century	Its former name was...
It was inaugurated on...	Its catacombs display...	Famous people have been lodged in this old station such as...
It was built in...	Rooms were used for...	
It was designed by...	It was first called...	
The architectural style has been ornamented with...	Well-known opera singers were...	
It displays three parts: ...		

C) Listen and circle the Correct Answer:

1-The MACRO (Rosario Museum of Contemporary Fine Arts) is...

- a- part of the Juan B. Castagnino Museum of Fine Arts
- b- an independent modern museum
- c- an annex of Museo Municipal de Arte Decorativo

2- The Pichincha Neighbourhood, the Abasto and Central Markets were the home of...

- a- The Spaniards
- b- The Italian mob
- c- The foreigners

3- Rosario, "*The Argentinian Chicago*", used to be inhabited by mafia leaders nicknamed *Chicho Grande* and *Chicho chico*. Their real names were:

- a- Juan Canals and Santiago de Montenegro
- b- Luis Romero Pineda and José Bonaparte
- c- Juan Galiffi and Francisco Monroe

4- Between the *Cathedral* and the *Palacio de los Leones* (Lions Palace), there lies...

- a- The Lola Mora Statues
- b- The Monumento a los Caídos
- c- The Pasaje Juramento (Oath Path)

5- The Neo-Renaissance *Palacio de los Leones* City Hall Building, the government headquarters, was built by Architect...

- a- Angel Guido
- b- Erminio Blotta
- c- Gaetano Rezzara

6- The *Nuestra Señora del Perpetuo Socorro Church* was built in Arroyito Neighbourhood in 1925. This building belongs to the historical city patrimony due to its...

- a- Greco Latin style
- b- Baroque style
- c- Romantic Gothic style

➤ After-touring activities

Speaking Activities

- 1- Make a presentation *Rosario City and its tourist attractions* (description)
- 2- Advantages and disadvantages of visiting Rosario (discussion)
- 3- Re-design the itinerary: *Creating a New Itinerary*. (justifying changes; suggesting)
- 4- *Rosario Tourist Attractions* (role-play)

Role Play Cards

STUDENT A: You are a tourist in Rosario. You decide to see the sights. Ask the tour guide about Rosario City tourist attractions. Find some of the following:

- A place where you can see the stars and planets
 - A boat trip to the Rosario surrounding islands
 - A visit to a place that exhibits paintings, sculptures and many other pieces of art.
 - A theatre that features plays, musicals comedies and concerts.
 - A historical waterfront monument that resembles a ship if observed from an aerial sight.
 - A place youngsters can visit every day
 - A place where many contemporary paintings are displayed.
 - A place that used to be a train station in the past.
 - A far-away place from the downtown area where you can shop all the leading national and international brands next to a big supermarket
 - A place where you can buy old objects and antiques.
 - A place where you can enjoy sea animals in the water.
 - Somewhere you can take the children! They will be able to discover the excitement of the many activities this site offers.
-

STUDENT B: You are a tour guide. Tourists ask you about the many *tourist attractions* the city offers. Recommend places of interest and give information about the different sights they can see.

Useful language: *You could always visit... If I were you, I'd..., The ... is worth visiting, You should visit..., Why don't you visit...?*



Writing Activities

a) Comparing Styles: Formal Vs Informal

- 1- Write an e-mail to *Rosario Vision S.A.* asking for information about boat trips in the Paraná River.
- 2- Write an e-mail to a friend telling about the city tour bus ride experience.

b) Using Language for Information and Persuasion

- 3- Make a *City Guide* of your home town for prospective visitors.
- 4- Design a *City Tour* of your home town.



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