



# Teachers in Action

Making the latest trends work  
in the classroom

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XXXIV FAAPI CONFERENCE | CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

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### ***Proceedings Selections Foreword***

Almost a century ago, in his essay on Political Ideas, Bertrand Russel stated ...” Each man has it in his being to develop into something good or bad: there is a best possible for him and a worst possible. His circumstances will determine whether his capacities for good are developed or crushed. This applies to material goods and to the greater part of the present economic life of the world. On the other hand mental and spiritual goods do not belong to one man to the exclusion of another. If one man knows a science, that does not prevent others from knowing it; on the contrary, it helps them to acquire the knowledge. If one man is a great artist or a poet that does not prevent other men from painting pictures or writing poems, but helps to create the atmosphere in which such things are possible. If one man is full of great good will towards others, that does not mean that there is less good will to be shared among the rest: the more good will a man has, the more he is likely to create among others. In such matters, there is no possession, because there is not a definite amount to be shared: any increase anywhere tends to produce an increase everywhere.” ... “There are creative or constructive impulses that aim at bringing into the world or making available for use the kind of goods in which there is no privacy and no possession.”

That is the kind of constructive and creative impulses that drive Teacher Associations to organize events like 2009 FAAPI XXXIV Conference, “Teachers in Action: Making the latest trends work in the classroom”, where ELT professionals can attend plenary sessions delivered by prestigious speakers, get acquainted with the latest trends in EFLT at every possible educational level, share out their own research proposals, their experience, methods and techniques and, above all, enjoy getting together with their peers. The topic selected aptly oriented to the actual ELT practice in the classroom comprehends all educational levels, which ensures catering to most attendees’ needs and interests satisfying a previously unsatisfied query frequently expressed.

Constructive and creative impulses properly nurtured in each TA’s inner circle- usually the handful of committed members who “stoke the engine”- culminate in this extraordinary academic event convening ELT professionals, trainees, academic, institutional, commercial and other sponsors of the ELT related “business”.

The number of proposals produced in response to APIBB’s Call for Papers evinces the great boost that national ELT professional development has undergone over the last decade stimulating academic research plus the willingness to share it: developing both professional and collaborative competence is the mark of professional good will.

But above all, it serves to demonstrate that Teacher Associations are more than ever before ready to face the challenge of conducting it, despite the apparently invincible odds of global economic crisis, flu epidemic and widespread pessimism.

This publication, sponsored by the US Embassy in Argentina, bears witness to their unfailing effort which FAAPI not only celebrates but prides on as it also embodies the commitment of the Academic Committee- all members of other FAAPI TAs- whose diligent work has enabled it.

We hope it will be an appreciated addition to your library.

**Norma Beatriz Boetsch**

**FAAPI President**

Dear readers,

This is the third time in its 32 years of existence that APIBB has been accepted to organize the FAAPI Conference, coincidentally this has happened every eleven years.

When we learned the good news, we had in front of us a new challenge: what the theme would be. So we just looked around and there it was the need for teachers to be in action but... how? Gradually ideas merged and "*Teachers in Action, making the latest trends work in the classroom*" was chosen because we thought it clearly defined what we wanted: to provide participants with opportunities to learn, practice, see, examine, ask and answer about how to apply all that great deal of choices the world of ELT is offering. The market is full of ideas, activities, theories and practices but selecting from them and putting them into practice is time consuming, and if there is something teachers do not have is... time left! Then, that was it! The way to find ideas that work, to look for tools to make teachers' job a bit lighter.

We had an enthusiastic response from presenters from around the country and abroad, whose proposals dealt with a considerable variety of issues, from teaching using interactive whiteboards to teaching in disadvantaged contexts, from teaching babies to teaching adults, from teaching at elementary levels to training teachers.

We would like all participants to leave with a sense of achievement, with the feeling that they are taking something home, that they have done something for what we teachers mostly love, our profession, our students and why not ourselves.

On behalf of APIBB I would like to thank the US Embassy for making the publication of these Proceedings possible.

Sincerely,

**Prof. Patricia Mónica Pérez**

**APIBB President**

**XXXIV FAAPI**

**General Coordinator**

## Table of contents

### Plenaries and semi-plenaries

- *"Communicating Identities: finding a voice in English"*-  
Plenary session  
**Claudia Ferradas –**  
.....
- *"Teachers in Action or Teachers' Inaction?" "A critical  
Approach to an Active Implementation of the Latest  
Trends in our Local Context"- Plenary session*  
**Gustavo Paz – Mariano Quinterno**  
.....
- *"Our Ultimate Teaching Goal: Fostering Resilient attitude  
in our classrooms"* - Semi-plenary  
**Leon Zuna –**  
.....

### Papers

- *"A mobile bilingual library as a means to promote the  
Reading of Literature a PROTRI program for at-risk  
children"*  
**Maria Gabriela Jure-**  
.....

- "Analyzing phraseology in a College EFL Composition-Class" **Susana Tuero – Paula Suarez**  
.....
- 
- "A picture is worth a thousand words. The use of Art to develop literacy"  
**Verónica Di Bin- Ana María Cendoya-**  
.....
- "Bottom up processes in courses of study reform"  
**Ana Armendariz –**  
.....
- "Bringing languages and cultures in contact in the classroom: The role of lexical phrases"  
**Melina Porto -**  
.....
- 
- "Content-based instruction revisited"  
**Darío Banegas –**  
.....
- 
- "Computer-Mediated discourse: Argentine English Teachers as Participants in a Mailing List"  
**Sandra Bayona – Lydia López Aranguren**  
.....
- 
- "Doing More With Less: shorts in the ELT Classroom"  
**Bettiana Blazquez – Maria Palmira Massi.....**
- 
- "EFL teaching to the visually handicapped at Centro de Idiomas, UNL: A response to Diversity"  
**Daniel Fernandez. M. del Valle Gastaldi. De Bianchetti Liliana. Piccirilli Claudia-**  
.....
- 
- "In what sense could "They was follow by the man" be okay?"  
**Magdalena Zinkgräf - Silvina Rodríguez-**  
.....
- 
- "Making ESP work in the classroom"  
**Antonio Irizar - Adita Chiappy-**  
.....
- 
- "Presentation Practice and Types of Grammatical Consciousness-Raising in Elementary EFL Coursebooks"  
**Mario Lopez Barrios – Elba Villanueva de Debat – Gabriela Helale-**  
.....
- 
- "Reading for Meaning vs Reading plus Vocabulary Learning Activities: Which leads to more effective Vocabulary Acquisition?"  
**Maria Gomez Laich – Susana Tuero-**  
.....



- "Researching EFL Learners' Proficiency to Yes/No Vocabulary Test"  
**Magdalena Zinkgräf - Anabel Monteserín-**  
.....
- "Taking action towards the social construction of knowledge in the EFL Classroom"  
**Maria Inés Pistorio-**  
.....
- "The University students reflecting on University Problems. A workshop on critical reading and writing with Appraisal Theory as a Linguistic Tool"  
**Graciela Manzur – Silvia Castro – Ana Atienza – Myriam Arrabal-**  
.....

## Workshops

- "Caring for kinaesthetic ones through music and song"  
**Silvia Schnitzler –**  
.....
- "Challenge and Change: Drama Activities for the English Classroom"  
**Irma Listorti.....**
- "Creative Writing at B2 Level: Fire Your Learners' Imagination!"  
**Analía Kandel –**  
.....
- "Developing Thinking Skills through Reading"  
**Mónica Guerra –**  
.....
- "DISCOVERING LEARNING: Better Ways of Engaging Learners of Literature"  
**Lorraine Ledwith-**  
.....
- "Don't Let Sleeping Dogs Lie. Using Controversial Issues to Teach Adolescents"  
**Mariano Quintero –**  
.....
- "Enriching the Narrative Text by Exploiting the Potential to Mean in the Nominal Group"  
**Elizabeth Di Nardo - Ines Frigerio –Elisa Cadario**  
.....

- *"From Understanding CLIL to Profiting from it in our Classroom"*

**Elisabet Cruz-**

.....

- *"How to teach Intercultural Competence in the EFL Classroom"*

**Rosana Greco – Monserrat Liliana-**

.....

- *"Is there any solution to discipline problems in our secondary schools? A practical approach to conflict resolution in action"*

**Gustavo Paz –**

.....

- *"Increasing Educational Opportunity: The role of ELT in our local system of education, Partido de General Pueyrredon"*

**Elisabet Caieli – Monica Rodriguez Sammartino-  
Laura Spina**

.....

- *"Intercultural constructs across age groups/ social groups/cultural groups"*

**Andrea Assenti del Rio –**

.....

- *"Our teaching beliefs revisited"*

**Patricia Muñoz - Marcela Morchio –**

.....

- *"Putting theory into Practice: An innatist Theory of Language Acquisition and Foreign Language Learning"*

**Lucas Brodersen –**

.....

- *"Reading aloud: its Communicative Value in the Teaching of Phonetics"*

**Elizabeth Di Nardo – Maria Provensal –**

.....

- *"Reading Life through Literature"*

**Patricia Weller-**

.....

- *"Reading of Research Paper Abstracts in Applied Linguistics and Sociology: what can the rhetorical sections communicate?"*

**Silvia Benson- Jorge Sánchez**

.....

- *"Social representation of English as a school subject: how do high school students conceive English as a school subject?"*

**Andrea Vartalitis – Paola Portessio –**

.....

- *"Speech Acts of Politeness in Letters of Complaint"*

**Monica Guerra –**

.....

- *"Teaching EFL or Teaching Art"*

**Claudia Dabove – Eladia Castellani – Colucci  
Luciana –**

.....

- *"Teaching Young learners – A risk or a challenge?"*

**Viviana Valenti –**

.....

- *"Technology doesn't bite: how computers and the internet can help to enhance your teaching and brush up your language skills"*

**Pamela Arrarás –**

.....

- *"Using Young Adult Fiction in The Classroom"*

**De Angelis Alejandro –**

.....

## **Demonstrations**

- *"Designing Tailor-made Language Activities through Content-Based Activity Generators"*

**Cantarutti Marina –**

.....

- *" FACILITATING LEARNING: from General English to English for Specific Purposes"*

**Viviana Valenti –**

.....

- *"Language that gets organized"*

**Sergio Aquino –**

.....

- *"Literacy with Very Young Learners"*

**Myriam Abalos-**

.....

- *"Making Content and English language teaching real"*

**Dario Banegas –**

.....

- "Of Mouse and Book: Using Web 2.0 resources in Literature Teaching"

**Maríel Amez-**

.....

- "Online collaborative project work: A road to real communication"

**Silvana Carnicero**

.....

- "Poetry as a source of inspiration and creativity in the EFL Classroom"

**Maria del Carmen Miró - Dafne Green -**

.....

## **Posters**

- "Responding to literary narrative texts with visual reformulations: A look at the cultural dimension of EFL reading"

**Melina Porto-**

.....

- "When we speak our mind, do we always communicate effectively?"

**Irma Listorti**

.....

## **Special Presentations**

- "A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN: Perspectives on the Teaching of Literature"

**Olga Liberti (APIBB)- Susana Gullco Groisman (APIBA)- Maríel Amez (AprIR)-**

.....

- "Teaching English in Cuba"

**Chiappy Adita- Irizar Antonio**

.....

## **Presenters' Index**

## **Plenaries and Semi-plenaries**

## **“Communicating Identities: finding a voice in English”**

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### **Abstract**

In an increasingly globalised world, learners of English aim at becoming “intercultural speakers”. How can we help them develop the competences necessary to express their multiple identities in the language of international communication, revaluing the self in its encounter with the other?

This paper explores how to approach literary texts in dialogue with other media to help learners develop intercultural awareness and encourage them to produce their own “identity texts” to find their voice in English.

Learning transforms who we are and what we can do. Our identity is transformed by *everything* we learn, but this process is particularly evident in foreign language learning, which involves *an encounter between self and other*:

*Every time language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with their interlocutors; they are organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. They are, in other words, engaged in identity construction and negotiation. (Norton, 1997)*

Traditionally, in foreign language learning progress is assessed by comparing the learner's performance to that of an ideal native speaker, but as discussed in my plenary session at the FAAPI Conference in Rosario (Ferradas 2006) the category "native speaker" is a highly elusive one. What regional and social variety of the language does that speaker use? What accent? What variants can s/he resort to in different circumstances?

Even van Ek (1986:33), who over thirty years ago advocated the '*personal and social development of the learner as an individual*' as one of the objectives of foreign language teaching, suggested that the learner's utterances should bear the meaning that native speakers would normally attach to them (in Byram 1997: 11). Kramsch (1993: 233 - 259), on the other hand, argues that learners have the right to use a foreign language for purposes of their own.

In the light of these considerations and in a context of growing globalisation, the overall aim of foreign language education has become the development of an **intercultural speaker** "*who has skills... to identify cultural norms and values that are often implicit in the language and behaviour of the groups he or she meets, and who can articulate and negotiate a position with respect to those norms and values*" (Corbett 2007: 41). Intercultural learners do not sacrifice their own mother tongue and the culture associated with it but enrich them through the learning of other languages. Within this conception, the foreign language (FL) student is

*a learner with the ability to see and manage the relationships between themselves and their own cultural beliefs, behaviours and meanings as expressed in a FL, and those of their interlocutors, expressed in the same language –or even a combination of languages- which may be the interlocutor's native language or not. (Byram, 1997)*

As foreign language teachers, we wonder how our lesson planning and our selection of materials can contribute to developing an awareness of difference, overcoming stereotypes and leading to a respectful encounter with otherness. But in aiming at intercultural awareness, very often the emphasis is laid on **otherness**, to such an extent that learners may feel they are sacrificing their own linguistic and cultural identity. It is my contention that **the enriching experience of coming into contact with otherness should lead to a reflection on the learners' own values and identity and on the construction of their self-image.**

It is on the basis of this conception that the Council of Europe's *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* advocates an **intercultural approach**:

*In an intercultural approach, it is a central objective of language education to promote the favourable development of the learner's whole personality and sense of identity in response to the enriching experience of otherness in language and culture. (Council of Europe, 2001)*

The *Prediseño Curricular de Lenguas Extranjeras* of the City of Buenos Aires (1999: 13) also highlights the importance of intercultural awareness:

*El contacto con la lengua extranjera hace trizas la ilusión de que existe un punto de vista único. La arbitrariedad del signo lingüístico se vuelve tangible, la constatación de una adecuación ilusoria entre la palabra y la cosa, inevitable. El extrañamiento que produce el contraste y la distancia con lo propio deja al descubierto, en la lengua extranjera, al otro y su alteridad, al otro y sus modos diferentes de constitución de sentidos.*

How can we empower our learners to express their multiple identities in a language that is not their own – “a linguistic reality [which is] is a third culture in its own right”? (Kramsch, 1993:9). The central point of my plenary at the FAAPI Conference in Rosario was that literary materials can help us contribute to the development of intercultural competence:

*By “literary materials” I mean not just the canon but also texts produced and distributed unconventionally, as well as any kind of texts (verbal, auditory or visual) whose “literariness” involves the imagination of the receiver –what John McRae (1991) has called “literature with a small l”: comic strips, advertisements, graffiti, song lyrics, video clips... (Ferradas 2006: 19)*

Such texts are rich in cultural content, often metaphorically expressed. To build meaning out of the text, readers need to adapt their schemata to the new knowledge and values expressed in it. English, as an international language, can open doors into a wide range of cultures that express themselves in a variety of ‘Englishes’.

*We can contribute to intercultural awareness by putting such literary texts from different cultures in contact, making sure texts which may be representative of students’ identities are part of the selection, perhaps in the students’ mother tongue. The varieties of English used in texts from different contexts can encourage reflection on the role of English as an international language and develop awareness of the cultural and linguistic diversity of ‘world englishes’ (Ferradas 2009).*

I would now like to reflect on **ways in which we can encourage written or oral responses to such texts that can help students find their own voice in English**, addressing “the problem of wanting to express one world view through the language normally used to express another society’s world views” (Kramsch, 1993: 20).

- If the variety of **representational texts put in intertextual (or rather, intermedial) dialogue** includes **texts from the students’ own culture**, discussing the way such texts relate to those from other cultures can help students find **the language necessary to talk about themselves in English**. How often do students who are highly proficient in English find themselves fishing for vocabulary to explain how to prepare “mate” in English, for example?
- In terms of intercultural competence, looking at themselves from the perspective of the other may help learners **identify their own prejudices when relating with others and find ways to express dissent respectfully**. The **comparison**



**between both texts** invites students to **read both cultures from a 'third place'** which keeps a critical distance from both worlds.

*At the intersection of multiple native and target cultures, the major task of language learners is to define for themselves what this 'third place' that they have engaged in seeking will look like, whether they are conscious of it or not.*  
(Kramsch 1993)

- Personal response and reflection based on comparison can be encouraged by means of **textual intervention activities** (Pope 1995) that invite students to adapt the text, change it and extend it creatively. The silences in the text (information and opinion gaps) are left for readers to fill in with their own reading (Ferradas 2006).

- To get learners to produce an **identity text** (Norton 2000) where their views are expressed in the language they are learning, we need to make sure students have an **authentic audience** to address in English (rather than "write for the teacher"), which is easily done through publications in blogs, v-logs, webpages... and of course traditional posters, newsletters, school papers, etc.

A song like Kenny Rogers' "The Gambler", for example, can be seen from a critical intercultural perspective if the advice given by the experienced gambler is compared with the pieces of advice of our Viejo Vizcacha in the *Martín Fierro*. Are the values similar? How important is what we call "viveza criolla"? Is it a virtue or a vice? Can the concept be explained in English? As textual intervention, we could invite students to role-play a conversation between the two characters. What differences and similarities would the characters show? How could they explain the results if their reflection to an English-speaking audience?

A short story like Liam O'Flaherty's "The Sniper", a classic found in many anthologies, can be found in numerous short film versions on the Internet –some of them serious, some of them parodic. Those visual texts offer opportunities to revisit the story: are the films "faithful" to the text? What aspects are highlighted? And what episode in Argentine history could be related to those in the Irish civil war depicted in the story? Susan Wilkinson's novel *Sebastian's Pride* offers a fictional account of the days of the caudillos which may be an interesting intertext at Upper Intermediate level. Can such accounts be objective? What would the story and the novel be like if told from a different point of view?

Songs, videos, v-logs, blogs, hyperfiction... A whole world of creative texts is out there for us to explore. Let's encourage our students to respond to those texts by relating them to texts in their own language and producing their own –by expressing their multiple, changing identities in the language they are learning. Seeing ourselves as others may see us and finding the language to express new perspectives can be a stepping stone for the development of intercultural competence.

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# **"Teachers in Action or Teachers' Inaction? A Critical Approach to an Active Implementation of the "Latest Trends" in our Local Contexts"**

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## **Abstract**

The "latest trends" are many times presented as universal solutions valid for any teaching situation. The classroom, from this perspective, is usually perceived as a neutral arena with no anchor in a specific context. If, as teachers, we want to make new approaches work in our country, we first need to reflect on the characteristics of contemporary society, the learners we have in our classrooms and our roles as teachers. During this presentation, we will discuss the implications of a contextualized approach to language teaching and suggest different ways in which we can take

effective action to make the learning experience meaningful to our students.

## 1. The Downfall of a Pedagogy of Certainties

*I happen to believe that questions are hardly ever wrong; it is the answers that might be so. I also believe, though, that refraining from asking is the worst answer of all.*

*Zygmunt Bauman (1999: 8)*

As English language teachers, we were mostly trained in a pedagogy of certainties. This means that, during our initial training, we were often asked to regurgitate bibliography, which usually came from English-speaking countries and had little or no connection with the reality of our classrooms. However, the “ready-to-follow” guidelines we were given made our teaching lives simpler and, up to a certain extent, provided us with the confidence needed to face a class.

With the return to democracy in our country and the advent of Humanistic and Constructivist Approaches in the world, educators were bombarded with the message that it was paramount for our learners to develop “critical thinking skills” and to become “active participants in the learning process.” Perversely enough, we were still told what to do in the classroom, even though the message seemed to be democratic and liberating.

The mid-eighties and the nineties were marked, in the educational field, by an insistence on the importance of a problem-solving approach to almost everything. Most official documents published at the time urged teachers to turn every classroom activity into a problematic situation. The emergence of Task-Based Learning reinforced, within our field, the idea that working on task resolution was at the core of language pedagogy. While we teachers and learners kept ourselves busy solving problems and performing all kinds of tasks, we forgot that we could also *generate problems*. If we do not commit ourselves to questioning the given, we remain mere *implementers* of the theories produced elsewhere, and, worst of all, we “train” our students to be excellent *doers*, rather than *thinkers*.

As Freire suggested in the early seventies, teachers can better help learners develop critical thinking skills by using a *problem-posing* approach. In his own words, “[t]he problem-posing method does not dichotomize the activity of the teacher-student [...]. The students — no longer docile listeners — are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher. The teacher presents the material to the students for their consideration, and re-considers her earlier considerations as the students express their own” (1972: 81).

Therefore, this presentation aims at posing questions rather than providing answers. The only way to truly implement language pedagogies which suit the different contexts that coexist in our country is by problematizing the field of ELT and all the certainties historically imposed upon us.

## 2. Problematizing the Ideologically Aseptic Classroom

*Close your eyes and imagine an ESL classroom. My guess is that the picture in your mind's eye includes a teacher, a group of learners, some desks, chairs, a blackboard, books, papers, four walls, and a door. Have you drawn anything outside the walls of the classroom? Are there any visible ways in which relations of power or authority show up in your picture?*

Elsa Auerbach (1995: 9)

The classroom has often been construed as a neutral territory where value-free knowledge is transmitted. Inside this laboratory-like classroom, teachers seem to limit themselves to teaching; and students, to learning what is taught. In Auerbach's words (1995:9), "[t]he actual teaching that goes on behind closed doors is often conceived of as neutral transfer of skills, knowledge, or competencies, to be left in the hands of trained professionals whose job it is to implement the latest methods and techniques." The teacher is considered an *implementer* who has to put into practice what foreign experts advocate. As a consequence, the gap between the users and producers of theory is widened. The "latest trends" are propounded by specialists who dictate what is needed without listening to our voices and experience, thus rendering us inactive.

Such a passive role on our part results in an approach which conceives of "teachers as 'technicians' delivering pre-prepared materials prescribed by far-away experts; language content as trivial, over-emphasising the exchange of messages at the expense of issues of voice and identity [and] favouring [...] the transmission of a covert ideology of hidden social and cultural values" (Hall, 2004:1).

Instead, we could adopt an active role by combining theory and practice, "reflection and action" (Freire, 1972:96) in search of a *praxis* of ELT. This would imply regarding classrooms as socio-political and historical arenas which cannot be universalized or overgeneralized. Each teaching context calls for a critical assessment of the "latest trends" in order to design courses which best meet our students' needs.

Adolescents cannot be said to be alike within our country, let alone in the world. Even if they share some cognitive, emotional and physical characteristics, they differ according to the context in which they have been raised and the life experiences they have had. Designing courses for a global atemporal adolescent has proved ineffective. When implementing an approach, we need to first reflect on the different adolescent subjectivities we have in our local context nowadays, their concerns and limitations, their possibilities and ambitions, their actual need to learn the target language, among other factors.

## **2. Problematizing the ELT Agenda: The "Latest Trends" in Argentina**

This presentation does not purport to discuss the benefits and limitations of TBL (Task-Based Learning) or CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) or any other acronym standing for the "latest trend" in our profession. Instead, we aim at questioning the ELT agenda itself. Who decides what is best for Argentina in connection with language education? Why is it that we welcome with open arms what experts concoct behind closed doors far away from our realities? What mechanisms are used to convince us that any given "latest trend" is the epitome of

effective language teaching? How do local experts and authors contribute to the spread and implementation of these new fashionable methodologies?

Let us take CLIL as an example. As most experts on the subject have pointed out (Ball, 2008, Mehisto et al, 2008), CLIL has “been around” for almost fifteen years. To be precise, the acronym CLIL was coined in 1994 and a CLIL programme launched in 1996 by the University of Jyväskylä in Finland (Ball, 2008:9). What is more, content-based approaches to language teaching have been implemented for decades. The questions we need to ask ourselves are: Why has CLIL landed in our country only recently? Who does it benefit? Can we “make it work in the classroom”?

We perceive several problems in connection with this “new” approach. First, teaching subject content in another language is not always feasible since we run the risk of exploring a given content with an alarming level of superficiality. To avoid this, we need to defend the teaching of mathematics, physics, biology, etc. in the mother tongue and, if we wish to explore content belonging to those subjects, we can cooperatively work with our colleagues. It would be absolutely arrogant of us to believe that we have the necessary knowledge to teach all those subjects. So the question is: Would it be professional to teach something we weren’t trained for?

Second, we need to understand that every minute devoted to the teaching of a subject in English is a minute of contact with the mother tongue Argentine students are deprived of. Even though you might believe that they have enough exposure in their everyday lives, you can just ask any colleague of yours what the students’ level of “academic” Spanish is. Do we really believe that learning the foreign language is more important than mastering our mother tongue? If English becomes the official language of education, Argentina will surely end up, as Graddol predicted in *The Future of English* (commissioned by the British Council), being a country “in transition from EFL to L2 status” (1997:11).

There are many other arguments against the blind import of CLIL – or any other “latest trend” – into our context, but we believe that the central problem CLIL has set out to solve can be useful as a trigger for the rest of our discussion. According to Philip Ball (2008: 11), the central question “CLIL is attempting to answer [is]: What is the content of language teaching?” As English language teachers, we need to seriously address this issue first in connection with the areas we have always taught: grammar, vocabulary, phonology and the skills, before getting involved with the teaching of content from other subjects.

### **3. Problematising our Teaching Practices**

Far from advocating a set of principles to be followed blindly, our proposal is to problematize the teaching of grammar, vocabulary and the macroskills in search of an alternative approach which gives both teachers and learners back their voice. In the next sections, we will question some preconceptions in relation to the different language areas so that each teacher can work out a possible course of action for his or her specific context.

#### **3.1. The “Grammar and Vocabulary” Problem**

Even though our students are taught grammar and vocabulary for several years at school, they still find it hard to communicate effectively in English. There

seems to be an unbridgeable gap between our students' declarative knowledge – knowledge about the language system – and their procedural knowledge – knowledge of how to use the language – (Anderson, 1983 as cited in Larsen-Freeman, 2003: 13).

Students go through secondary school and are repeatedly "taught" tenses, modal verbs or the passive voice, only to find that, even when they are about to graduate, they cannot express one complex idea in English. Learners obviously complain about this repetition of contents in the language curriculum, which we usually justify by resorting to the "spiral curriculum" metaphor. In a spiral curriculum, contents are revisited with increasing levels of complexity. In our classrooms, very seldom does this happen. What we often do is to repeat explanations just because a given grammatical or lexical content is present in the textbook.

Instead, we suggest approaching the teaching of grammar and vocabulary from a discursive perspective, laying special emphasis on how speakers *choose* structures and lexical items to achieve concrete communicative objectives. This approach calls for a reassessment of the way in which we are currently dealing with grammar and lexis.

As regards grammar, Diane Larsen-Freeman (2003: 13) suggests treating it as the fifth skill. In her own words, "[w]hen we view grammar as a skill, we are much more inclined to create learning situations that overcome the inert knowledge problem. We will not ask our students to merely memorize rules and then wonder why they do not apply them in communication. Skill development takes practice, and learning grammar takes practice. However, as we will come to see, it is not the sort of practice that involves a lot of rote repetition."

For this author, students need to question rules in order to understand the reasons behind them. This approach to language involves studying real instances of discourse to be able to explain and describe how grammar actually works. Larsen-Freeman recommends challenging prescriptive rules in textbooks since, as Lewis has also explained, they are often "partial truths, or temporary fictions" (Lewis, 1993:38). In traditional grammar lessons, students are usually engaged in a "guessing game" where they have to "discover" the pre-fabricated rules the teacher has in mind. To prove the teacher right, textbooks come with artificial texts in which the linguistic forms are profusely used. After focusing on the examples in the text, students magically come to conclusions that reveal no contradiction; within the class, that is. Outside classrooms, however, learners usually find many "exceptions" which contradict the rules learnt in class.

For Larsen-Freeman (2003:50), "[rules] tend to be limited to generalizing about the form of the language, but grammatical forms have meanings and uses as well, which students also need to learn. And proficient speakers of a language will override rules of form when they are motivated to express meanings or are influenced by certain conditions of use. If second language learners know the reasons why a rule exists, they may also know when it is possible to 'violate' it in the service of meaning or use, just as proficient speakers of the language would do."

In the case of lexis, a similar approach can be applied. Learning lists of words in isolation has proved to be ineffective. Students are later unable to retrieve that knowledge or, what is worse, they remember the words and their meanings, but do not know how to use them in real instances of discourse.

To overcome these problems, we need to deal with vocabulary in such a way that all the form (spelling, pronunciation), the meaning (connotation and

denotation) and the use (co-text and context of use) of lexical items or sets are explored.

### **3.2. The “Macroskills” Problem**

As for the macroskills, learners often perform comprehension and production tasks in the class, but very seldom are they explicitly taught strategies to produce and understand written and oral discourse. As a result, they usually have difficulty reading, listening, speaking or writing. Students need to reflect on the strategies needed to unlock the less apparent meanings of texts and to express their ideas effectively.

When it comes to comprehension, several ELT textbooks have incorporated a “Reading / Listening Strategies” section. However, a close analysis of those sections reveals that, in most cases, the suggested procedures are in fact “Task-Solving Strategies,” such as giving learners recommendations on how to re-insert sentences which have been taken out of a text. Does that teach learners how to read more effectively or, rather, to solve that specific task that, not coincidentally, is usually present in the so-called International Exams?

As language teachers we need to identify strategies that we could teach our learners so that they can later read or listen “between the lines.” The tasks we design can then be coherent with our objective of developing those strategies and not a mere repetition of either activities in International Exams or those offered by textbooks (e.g. answering questions or completing a chart). A well-constructed task challenges the reader / listener to put several cognitive processes into practice. Students can be taught to make use of different kinds of inferences, paratextual information, knowledge of textual type and structures, among others (Paz & Quintero, 2009).

Above all, as Freire and Macedo (1987) have explained, teachers are to help learners both “read the word and the world.” As they state (1987: 20), “[r]eading does not consist merely of decoding the written word or language; rather, it is preceded by and intertwined with knowledge of the world. Language and reality are dynamically interconnected. The understanding attained by critical reading of a text implies perceiving the relationship between text and context.” In this respect, we need to question the kind of reading or listening material we usually offer our learners. Unluckily, we often find a mismatch between the reading / listening material in textbooks and what our students need and want to read / listen to.

In the case of production, some typical classroom techniques need to be reconsidered. In general, textbooks offer models for written and oral genres. If we take “essays” as an example, students come to believe that the model provided is the only possible structure and thus create a stereotyped mental picture of the textual type in question. The result is what we have already called the “de-generation” of texts (Paz and Quintero, 2009:116). We corrupt texts by isolating them from their authentic instances of enunciation, their original audience and the intentions of their enunciator. We also de-generate them because they lose the main traits of the genre. An example of this second effect is the use of description in a vacuum, even if this textual type is usually manifested within other discourses (e.g. narratives, e-mails, etc.).

We must re-generate discourse genres so that our students can gradually become more proficient users of the language. To this purpose, we need to: a) work on the context and figures in the process of enunciation (who speaks /



writes?; to whom?; where and why do(es) he / she / they speak / write?); b) contextualize the speaking or writing tasks so that students can clearly identify the communicative purpose and their audience, and as a result, choose the most appropriate lexico-grammatical units to communicate their intentions; c) explore textual types in their complex manifestations in real life so that, when asked to produce discourse, students do not oversimplify the various genres.

As can be seen in the preceding paragraphs, it is difficult to refer to one skill in particular without indirectly involving the others. As Freire and Macedo (1987: 24) state, "reading always involves critical perception, interpretation, and *rewriting* of what is read," and the same can be applied to listening and speaking. Therefore, if the macroskills are integrated through relevant topics which aim at critically assessing the world, the dichotomy comprehension / production no longer holds.

#### 4. Conclusions:

*You are also asking me questions, and I hear you;  
I answer that I cannot answer—you must find out for  
yourself.*

Walt Whitman, *Song of Myself*, 46

It would not be coherent with our proposal here to refer to "conclusions" or even "final reflections." This presentation has the humble aim of encouraging an in-depth discussion of the role of English in Argentina and Latin America, of the relevance of foreign theories and "trends" in our local contexts, of the importance of generating our own *praxis* of English Language Teaching and of the significance of getting together to resist the imposition of unwanted policies.

If we make informed decisions based on the knowledge of the context in which we teach and not on what foreign experts have decided we should do, the approach we choose *actively* will be more beneficial to our learners. Only then will teachers be taking real action.

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**"Our ultimate teaching goal  
Fostering a resilient attitude in our classrooms"**

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**Abstract**

English teaching includes but also goes beyond the teaching of the language itself. As years go by the need to foster other skills than just the academic ones has grown crucial. The affective side of education also needs our attention. When teaching young children we are helping them grow older and mature. Our ultimate educational goal should be to be part of a process that helps them interact effectively with society by the time they are out of our hands. This starts the very first day of Elementary school.

What is to be an English teacher? Does it mean our biggest or only concern/responsibility is to teach the use of a language? The answer is out in the

open for every single one of us to wonder upon. Though answers and positions may vary in style and content, chances are everyone will agree that, in the previous statement, "English" is an adjective and describes the type of teaching we are dealing with and that our job goes beyond the language per se.

Now, what does it mean to go beyond the language? Let's just say it means to understand the responsibility that falls in our hands in the process of children becoming adults. This process is a complex one and as years go by, modern times have made it even more difficult for both comprehension and intervention.

The social side of education needs to be regarded as part of Education itself and not only as a side dish, and as modern world arrives it needs our attention more than ever. When teaching young children we are helping them grow older and mature. Our ultimate educational goal should be to be part of a process that helps them interact effectively with society by the time they are out of our hands.

As years go by the need to foster other skills than just the academic ones has grown crucial. Resiliency is a concept we should all remember when playing such an important role in our students' lives.

The concept refers to the ability to adapt well despite adversity, overcome obstacles and develop hope for the future. Research has shown this is not just something you have or lack. We are all born with an innate capacity for resilience, by which we are able to develop social competence, problem-solving skills, critical consciousness, autonomy and a sense of purpose. It is a personality trait that can be learned and fostered.

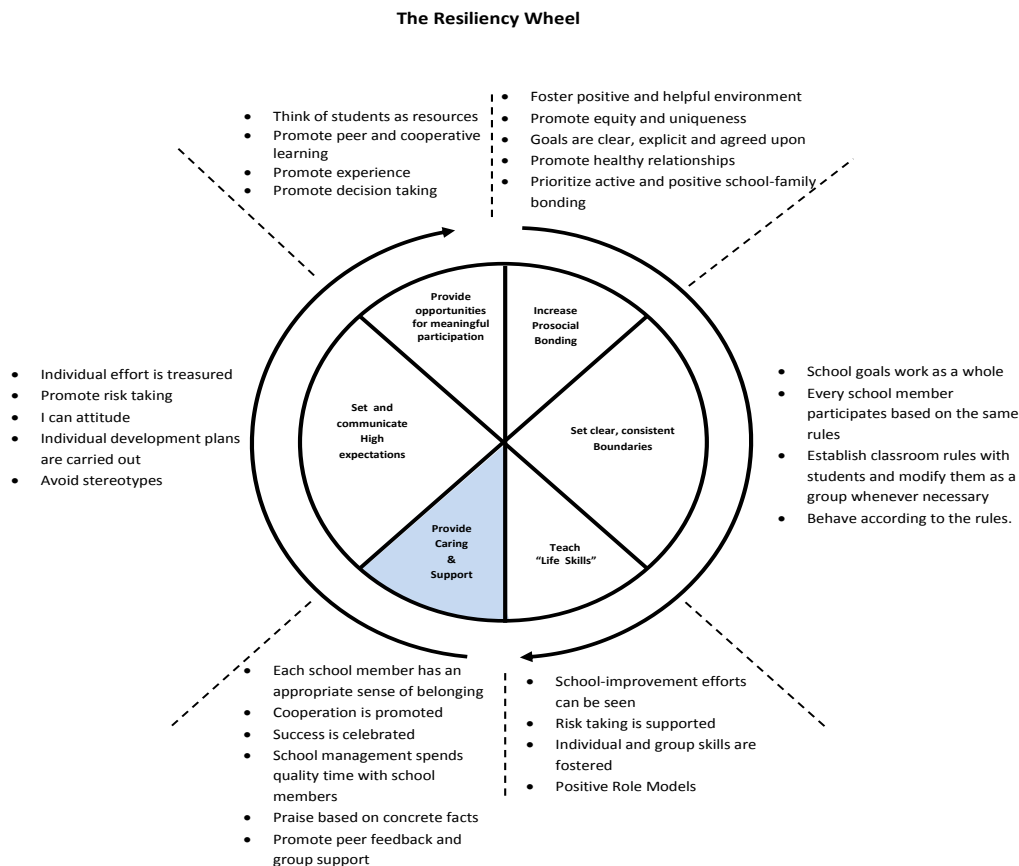
It is in school where the basic human needs for support, respect and belonging are met and where reciprocal caring and participatory relationships should be fostered. By doing this, they will become solid bases not only for an effective learning process but also to help build the character of every single individual involved in the process.

What does it take to be resilient? The following list of personal resiliency builders will help understand the concept and evaluate which ones you have already been fostering in your teaching as well as the ones to be reinforced.

- Sociability
- Humour
- Inner direction
- Perceptiveness
- Independence
- Self-motivation
- Sense of competence
- Feelings of self worth
- Spirituality
- Love of learning
- Flexibility
- Creativity
- Perseverance
- Positive view of Personal future

By analyzing these personal resiliency builders we realise they can all be learned and practised in our own classrooms and schools to help young children

achieve success *in and beyond* the classroom. Needless to say, there are many ways for this to be done but some suggestions might enlighten the process.



Adapted from "*Resiliency in Schools: Making it happen for students and Educators*" by Nan Henderson and Mike M. Milstein.

## What schools can do:

### Increase prosocial bonding

Every school builds its own culture and anyone who walks in will be affected by the sets of rules and expectations that this implies. The culture can be perceived by how people treat each other and the way they relate to education. Some schools have a rigid and cold environment whereas others have a positive one. A positive environment where understanding, growth, cohesion and respect will help promote institutional resiliency.

### Set clear, consistent Boundaries

It is important to understand that limits or boundaries are healthy and necessary in educational organizations. However the negative understanding of limits and boundaries will cause confusion and uncertainty if the school only concentrates on what is forbidden or not allowed. Clear and consistent boundaries will emphasize what can be done instead of what is forbidden. This creates a sense of confidence and support that will have a positive impact on everyone belonging to the institution.

## **Teach life skills**

Schools that promote resiliency will face challenges in a positive and creative manner instead of just being adjusted by the ever-changing effect of the outside world. An active role towards change and institutional difficulties will not only prove it leads by example but also teach cooperation, cohesion and team work. This is an excellent way to teach crucial life skills such as decision taking, cooperation, critical thinking and a proactive approach to life.

## **Provide Caring & Support**

School life can be felt as aggressive or supportive, caring or cold and this cannot be promoted by just smiling when people come in. Smiling is important only if it is a natural response to an inner feeling. Schools can (and should) struggle to create that inner feeling rather than ask its community to smile. Promoting equity while respecting individuality, motivating creativity and team work, providing support when a member of the community is in need are just a few examples of how an institution can foster that inner feeling.

## **Set and communicate High Standards**

School culture will implicitly communicate what is expected from its community. However, it is important for the message to be explicit as well as to convey an "I can" attitude rather than just fulfilling duties. A school that promotes resiliency will foster growth and challenge instead of control and discipline. Strategies can vary but should include personal and professional development plans, constant review of school procedures, a means to communicate expectations clearly and explicitly. E.g. School newsletter, bulletin board.

## **Provide opportunities for meaningful participation**

School life includes all its members: directors, teachers, staff, students and families. They should all have an active role within the institution and should be able to participate in school activities in a meaningful way. Promoting out of school activities will help foster a sense of belonging to society and provide opportunities for active, meaningful participation.

## **What teachers can do:**

- **Teach Problem-solving skills instead of solving problems yourself**

Teaching kids to solve problems themselves rather than doing it for them fosters autonomy and the skill to interact with people and situations. Solving the problems for them will only foster low self esteem and the feeling of not being able to cope with their problems by themselves.

- **Teach social Interaction skills**

As social beings, every single individual has the need to interact with others effectively and affectively in order to meet one's needs and demands in society.

Empathy and effective communication need to be modelled. This could be done by dealing with real problems that might arise from everyday interaction and modelling proper interaction patterns. This can also help teachers promote interpersonal understanding.

- **Promote a sense of belonging**

Involvement in arts, drama, sports, clubs or any other school activities can increase school bonding and the feeling of belonging to a group of people and the institution. It is important to remember that society can only be understood by the institutions one belongs to. Children's first contact with society is home and school. It is in our hands to promote a healthy sense of belonging to the school and model different ways for students to be involved in school processes.

- **See and believe in each child's worth**

Set clear, high expectations for their work knowing you will only get unique responses. Be ready to acknowledge each and every response and promote a sense of real competence for each and every child in your class. It is only through real but healthy feedback from teachers that they will understand who they are and what makes them special.

- **Help children assess their own work and set goals for themselves**

Asking thoughtful questions rather than just giving a mark will help children think about their performance and foster insight. By helping them assess what they have done; you will also help them anticipate future difficulties. When assigning homework you can help them set their own goals and have them think about the process and come up with ways of dealing with the assignment in such a way to be able to meet their previously-established goals.

- **Help children develop standards for their work**

If you discuss expectations and show them models of what is expected, you are giving them the chance to participate in establishing their own standards and consequently teaching them how to proceed to successfully accomplish what they are working on.

- **Give children opportunities to make choices**

The possibility to choose fosters creativity and autonomy. Sometimes all it takes is to ask children what they would like to do so as to complete a certain task. For instance, after a reading assignment they might create a poster, make a graph, write a letter, draw a mural, etc.

- **Let children play an active role in setting rules for classroom life**

Discussing classroom rules invites them to understand consequences and reflect upon fairness and equality. If children are involved in the process of rulemaking they will develop responsibility for their own behaviour.

- **Accentuate cooperation rather than competition**

As children learn from each other and not against each other, they build meaningful and committed relationships. Round tables are the best way to create collaborative classrooms.

- **Promote out-of-school interaction**

Contact with organizations or institutions outside school boundaries is crucial in order to foster a positive and active attitude towards society. Field trips to governmental institutions, museums, elderly homes and visiting work places are all examples of how to promote interaction with society.

- **Change classroom and school roles constantly. Avoid stereotypes**

Fixed roles are flexibility's worst enemy. The way we interact with people and society is healthy only if we are flexible enough to change roles depending on the situation we are in. If we always ask the same child to lead activities, he won't learn that sometimes it is his turn to cooperate differently and will frustrate easily once he sees he can't always lead.

- **Promote understanding. Respect equity and celebrate differences.**

It is only through the understanding of other people that we can promote equity in such a way that everyone knows and respects other human beings. Ironically, it is the same process that will lead us to celebrate the differences that make us separate and unique individuals.

It is crucial to understand we play an important role in our students' lives. This process includes caring adults, families, schools and the community as a whole. We all have a profound influence upon children's ability to succeed in life in its many ways.

However, there is a warning to be made, Resiliency is not a ready-made kit that you can just apply and expect an immediate response.

The response will come, that's for sure. You might not be there to see it. But trust me, someone, and somewhere out there, will witness the impact you made in the early years.

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## Papers

# **"A mobile bilingual library as a means to promote the Reading of Literature a PROTTRI program for at-risk children"**

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## **Abstract**

The paper contains a description of a project devised at the National University of Río Cuarto and funded by the Ministry of Science and Technology of Córdoba Province through PROTTRI (*Programa de Promoción de la Transferencia de Resultados de la Investigación*). This includes the theoretical framework on which the programme is based and a general report of the activities planned to be carried out which include book selection for the library, and in-service workshops for facilitators. The presentation focuses on the idea that the reading of literature could be used as a form of social inclusion for at-risk children and adolescents.

## **Introduction**

The present paper refers to a project conceived at the National University of Río Cuarto and funded by the Ministry of Science and Technology of Córdoba Province. The proposal meets the requirements of PROTTRI (*Programa de Promoción de la Transferencia de Resultados de la Investigación*) which seeks to apply the results of research activities to the community according to the different demands. The underlying idea that reading is a right and the pressing need to create a context to give children the possibility to read form the basis of the project. The municipal authorities were in charge of selecting schools and community centres that would be benefited by PROTTRI. All of them form part of an extracurricular plan attended by vulnerable children who need educational support as well as social protection. This plan intends to give different workshops that include educational and recreational activities that aim to make children and adolescents be prepared to lead a healthy and happy life.

Included in this general plan, our proposal serves as a complementary support involving the creation of a mobile bilingual library for children and teenagers which becomes one of the main components of the programme for the

promotion of reading. Adopting a dynamic perspective, it represents not only the place for books but also a context for social interaction where students, teachers and even parents are motivated to read with the conviction that family-school interaction is the point of departure to provide children and adolescents with both reading and social opportunities.

This library will eventually serve as the means to carry out workshops for facilitators and students which will allow the possibility of becoming in contact with good quality books that will serve as prompts for innovative approaches to literary texts. It is important to point out that the research group is composed by teachers and students of foreign languages as well as a librarian, facilitating interdisciplinary work. The project has as one of its main objectives the use of literature not only as an educational tool as regards its cognitive, affective and ethical dimensions, but also as a form of social inclusion for at-risk children and adolescents.

Many of the assumptions taken into account for this proposal are based on the research work developed by Petit (2009) about the relationship between literature and social issues:

*"Aprendí mucho de los propios lectores que entrevisté en medios rurales, en barrios marginales o en contextos difíciles de violencia... Lo que más me impactó es que evocan de qué manera la lectura les había permitido construir un poco de sentido a su experiencia humana. La lectura reactiva el pensamiento en contextos difíciles... demuestra la importancia que tiene la lectura en la construcción o reconstrucción de uno mismo".<sup>1</sup>*

### **1.a. Mobile Libraries and the Reading of Literary Texts: creating opportunities for everybody**

Influential research has demonstrated the impact that reading has on the social, intellectual and emotional development of children and young people. Departing from the hypothesis that it is possible to recover reading as a social activity, the PROTRI programme is devised to bring books to those who do not have access to them mainly due to economic reasons. We are convinced that it is precisely the university by means of research projects that has to adopt an active role in response to the deficiencies in the educational system which prevents social equality. Consequently, our objective is to foster reading by means of systematic and continuous actions – an aim that is only possibly achieved through the acquisition of books and the setting up of libraries.

The importance given to libraries is grounded on the belief that they contribute to developing personal values, having access to knowledge, promoting critical thinking, and developing aesthetic sensitivity. Books are not conceived just as academic tools, but also as a source for reflection, entertainment and pleasure. A mobile bilingual library, as the one proposed by the PROTRI project, would facilitate the necessary material as well as a unifying place where all the members of a community would converge serving as a context for social interaction. The fact of being mobile would allow the possibility of circulating among different institutions and thus having a larger scope. When it is not possible to set up libraries because of economic constraints (especially in Latin American countries), Castrillón (1999) asserts that it is more convenient to have small mobile libraries with few but well selected books which can be used by many schools and organizations.

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<sup>1</sup>"I learned a lot from the readers whom I interviewed in rural areas and marginal neighbourhoods or in troublesome and violent contexts... I was really touched by the way they recalled how reading had enabled them to give a bit of sense to their human experience. Reading activates thought in difficult contexts....it demonstrates the importance reading has in the construction or re-construction of oneself". (my own translation).

As a social institution, the cultural importance of a library lies on the fact that it both serves as a support to improve reading strategies and as a stimulus for the development of a democratic and fair society. There are also other reasons why a library becomes an essential component in any community:

- It promotes social inclusion and the idea that reading is a right
- It encourages permanent learning.
- It contributes to the building of personal and cultural identities.
- It brings young readers and books together.
- It improves reading skills
- It develops autonomous readers.
- It offers material for entertainment and pleasure.
- As a place of social encounter, it favours solidarity, cooperation and team work.
- It represents a democratic environment where all members of the community meet regardless of their social position.

Conceived in these terms, the library helps to develop intellectual, social and emotional aspects in children and adolescents who sometimes are deprived of having the necessary tools to achieve this.

### **1.b. Selection of books and in-service workshops for mediators**

A dynamic interaction between reading and libraries is achieved by means of the idea that texts can be approached through stimulating and appealing methods that derive from the reading of quality books. Therefore, the first step is to start with the process of selecting the material to be handled by all the members of the community. The criteria followed to decide if a book has the necessary qualities that make it worth reading depends on certain features such as originality in content and design among others: "...a careful selection of books is crucial to guarantee the presence of essential literary qualities..." (Jure, *et. al.*, 2003: 172).

As well as paying careful attention to the literary features, variables such as reader's interests should also be taken into account to ensure that stories will be appealing to readers and they will stimulate the pleasure for reading. So, the parameters to follow should be text and reader-based maintaining equilibrium between what a good book offers and what readers are attracted to read. Rich aesthetic features will inexorably lead to a creative and imaginative response towards the text implying not only critical thinking but also enjoyment. In this way, and taking into consideration the context in which this project takes place, the content of the books should contribute to developing the exchange of ideas, knowledge of other cultures to reflect on diversity and tolerance, and discussions about values, and social issues without losing sight of personal and emotional reactions towards the texts. This aesthetic response may also result in the exploration of language from another perspective and the discovery of the multiple layers of meaning that a text could offer.

Most of the books chosen are picture books whose distinctive features make them extremely rich as reading material. The interplay between both codes- artistic and literary- creates a process of reading that transcends the purely thematic and argumentative levels to give place to the aesthetic pleasure produced by the combination of image and word. In addition to this, reading picture books also provides the possibility of not relying so much on words but on illustrations to get through the meaning and reach possible interpretations. This aspect is crucial when

one works with children and adolescents who do not possess much reading experience:

*"Because of their generally simple text, they are accessible to all age groups, and provided older children are not given the impression that they are being presented with material which is beneath them, such books can be very useful in allowing the less able reader, or the child with as yet little knowledge of English, to explore ideas which are often too sophisticated for the ostensible audience of very young children to appreciate" (Pinset, 1997: 168).*

Furthermore, as the number of books of this type is increasing, there is the need to focus the attention on another aspect in the process of meaning making: the critical "reading" of illustrations. As far as reading literature is concerned, visual literacy is becoming essential in order to "understand stories in their fullest sense" (Galda, 1993: 506).

After the process of book selection, the in-service workshops are organized with the presence of the future promoters in charge of different workshops. The fact of belonging to other fields of study and not being in contact with the world of literature makes the workshops have peculiar features. Thus, the activities are intended to raise awareness about the importance of literature, re-think about the place it can occupy in real life and the significance of libraries to achieve this. Facilitators are supposed to be in touch with literary books, read and explore them, analyse content and form, and propose practice initiatives, especially in relation to their own activities.

These sessions also point at stressing the importance of the role of literature in children's and adolescent's development as human beings and as a means to becoming active participants in society. According to Eccleshare (2002), nowadays "Children's books also deserve praise for their intelligent and thoughtful coverage of some of the pressing social problems of our society" (2). It is important to highlight that the idea that supports this project is one that sustains that nothing could be imposed and that there should be a process of self-discovery in which the facilitators can become aware of the direct relationship between reading and social inclusion in a kind of self-reflective work in order to gradually construct their own representations in connection to literature and libraries.

As a long-term objective the PROTRI programme intends to organize a network of mediators among the community members where the mobile library becomes the centre. In this sense, the training of reading facilitators who are not specialists in literature makes sure that the functioning of the library will not depend on the presence of a language or literature teacher. To awaken in children and adolescents the desire to read is a task that should be carried out by all participants in schools, and community centres with a cooperative attitude. When reading becomes part of a habit in educational and non-educational institutions, "Los chicos pueden convertirse en lectores competentes, tan capaces de hallar información relevante en diversos documentos (en una enciclopedia, en un catálogo, en la red...) como de analizar, interpretar, o simplemente, gozar de la lectura de un texto narrativo" (Gasol Trullós y Aránega, 2000: 45)<sup>2</sup>. Inviting parents to participate in workshops is also another aspect that will contribute to expand the scope of the project. Guiding them on the way to encouraging their sons to read is essential especially if this means that they themselves could also become motivated. As a result, their conception of literature as something exclusively reserved for a privileged group could be reversed when they come to realize that they are also capable of interacting with literary texts.

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<sup>2</sup> "Young readers can become competent readers with the capacity to find relevant information in different type of texts (in an encyclopedia, in a catalogue, in the internet...) as well as to analyse, interpret or just have fun when reading a narrative text" (my own translation).

## Conclusion

The results of the activities included in the programme are planned to be reported in handbooks which will contain some articles about the importance of developing the habit of reading not just as a means to improve reading comprehension and the use of language but as the enhancement of critical thinking, and personal enrichment. As regards motivation some guidelines will be provided in relation to the varied ways in which mediators (teachers, parents, etc.) can approach the literary text for promotion and motivation. Besides, all the experiences resulting from the activities in the workshops will also be reported. These handbooks are meant to be included as part of the mobile library to be used in other community centres and schools.

The underlying motives which gave impulse to the project were based on the assumption that reading and libraries are crucial to achieving the ambitions for community cohesion, tolerance, social inclusion, lifelong learning and active citizenship. This is reinforced by McRae's (1991) assumption that it is necessary for readers to be in contact with representational material which can offer "the cultural, aesthetic, social and philosophical values that will make them better citizens of the world". We hope that through the PROTRI project, these objectives could be accomplished and the mobile library continues creating more readers and circulating within the community offering possibilities to everyone.

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## **“Analyzing phraseology in a College EFL Composition-Class”**

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### **Abstract**

Collocation is an aspect of language generally considered arbitrary and problematic to L2 learners. This study attempts to gain better understanding of learners' difficulties in the rendering of English collocations. Errors were identified in a 10,000-word corpus and classified as *interlingual* - product of L1 interference or *intralingual*- the result of incomplete knowledge of L2 phraseological restrictions. Results of the study indicate that, although the percentage of intralingual errors was much higher, L1 interference adversely affected the learners' production of English collocations. Findings suggest the need for direct teaching of collocations and contrastive comparison between English and Spanish phraseology.

### **The Importance of Collocations in Language and Language Teaching**

With the birth of corpus studies, collocations, i.e. arbitrarily restricted lexeme combinations, have received increasing attention in language and language teaching. Findings from this area have provided empirical support for the view that most of naturally occurring language, both spoken and written, consists of recurrent patterns that have a prominent role in language. Nesselhauf (2005) identifies several important functions of collocations in language processing, learning and use. First, collocations are essential for fluency in both spoken and written

language. The availability of large numbers of prefabricated units reduces the processing effort required to deliver messages, which is of utmost importance for second language learners who naturally need more processing time to convey messages. Second, the use of native-like collocations also enhances comprehension whereas the use of unnatural collocations can "irritate the recipient and draw attention away from the message" (2). A third function Nesselhauf identifies is the desire to sound or write like a native speaker. Although this is not the goal for most language learners, it certainly becomes a priority for future language teachers. As Howarth (1996) has pointed out, this desire to approximate to the native speaker reflects more strongly in academic writing. Native language users writing in a formal register conform to the expected norms to a great degree. Academic style values "impersonal convergence towards shared conventions of expression rather than idiosyncratic experimentation and creativity" (133). This adherence to the norm is indicated through the use of the most frequent collocations, that is, those in the middle of the phraseological continuum. Students aiming to perform at an advanced academic level need to acquire phraseological competence in order to meet these standards of academic writing.

### **Definition and Classification of Collocation**

Collocations have been labeled in a variety of ways, e.g. *prefabs*, *multi-word units*, etc. and defined in vague terms both in linguistics and language teaching. Although most authors would agree with Nesselhauf in that a collocation is "some like of syntagmatic relation of words" (12), there is still no consensus on the criteria to carefully distinguish collocations from other types of word combinations. Nesselhauf focuses on the feature of *commutability* and considers collocations as combinations in which the elements of the collocations are fixed to some degree but some substitution of the elements is possible. For example, the noun *promise* is restricted in its collocability to a sizable number of verbs (*hold out a promise*, *fulfil*, *honor*, *keep*, *break*) even if substitution is possible (*fulfill*, *honor*). Nesselhauf distinguishes five types of combinability behaviour of English verbs: 1) verbs combinable with practically every noun, e.g. want sth. or. sb. (want a pen, want a car, a baby); 2) verbs combinable with a great group of nouns, e.g. kill+ ALIVE; 3) verbs combinable with a small but well-delimitable semantic word group, e.g. spend + TIME, drink + LIQUID; 4) Verbs combinable with a sizable group of nouns, but there are exceptions, e.g. commit + SOMETHING WRONG OR ILLEGAL, but e.g. \*commit a lie, deceit. According to Nesselhauf, the first two groups are not collocations but combinations of *affinity* and *selection*. *Affinity* refers to the combination of a given lexeme with all lexemes containing a very general semantic feature whereas *selection* concerns a similar combination but less general and comprising a whole lexical field, such as TIME. The two remaining groups correspond to what Nesselhauf considers *collocations*.

This study adopts Nesselhauf's definition of collocations according to the criterion of commutability but also follows the classification proposed by Benson et. al (1997) according to the word classes in which the elements of a given collocation appear. Benson et al. classifies collocations into "lexical collocations" - in which two lexical items co-occur and "grammatical collocations" - in which a lexical word and a preposition co-occur. This study focused on four such combinations, disregarding *affinity* and *selection* combinations such as "have a car" or "spend hours".



Type of Collocation	Example
<b>Lexical</b> a) Verb + Noun b) Noun + Verb	<i>make an impression, inflict a wound</i> <i>cloud drifts, the heart beats</i>
<b>Grammatical</b> c) Verb + Preposition d) Noun + Preposition	<i>win over, pay for</i> <i>advantage over, admiration for</i>

### Aims of the Study

The present study had four principal aims. The first was to identify the difficulties of a particular group of advanced college learners in the production of lexical and grammatical collocations. The second aim was to determine to what extent collocational errors were the product of L1 (interlingual) and/or intralingual transfer and which types of collocations (lexical or grammatical) caused the most difficulties for students.

### The Learner Corpus Selected

The learner corpus used in the present study comprised 30 argumentative essays (approximately 10,000 words) written by 30 EFL university students of English in 2008. All of the students were native speakers of Spanish and had been studying English as a second language for an average of 5-7 years. They were in their second year in college and taking the course *Proceso de la Escritura II*, a composition class, at the Teacher Training Program, Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata.

The students were asked to respond to the question: *Why are children so aggressive these days?* The average length of the essays was about 300-400 words and the allotted time for completion was 90 minutes. No essay was written with the help of reference materials or the assistance of the professors.

### Data Collection Procedure: Determining acceptability and classifying errors

The first step in the analysis of the data was to identify all the collocations (lexical and grammatical) present in the essays irrespective of considerations of acceptability. As Nesselhauf, argues, each combination should – ideally- “be checked against a large corpora and judged by large numbers of native speakers” (44) but unfortunately, even the biggest available corpora do not allow judgements about the acceptability of a large number of combinations, either because many combinations that native speakers find acceptable are not present or because many others are present in such small numbers that statements about their acceptability cannot be made. Given the unavailability of a panel of native speaker judges, the study adopted a more practical approach.

Two types of sources were used to determine the degree of acceptability of the combinations that had been extracted from the corpus: dictionaries and online corpora. Combinations were judged acceptable if they occurred in identical form and with the same intended meaning in one of three collocation dictionaries: the Oxford Collocations Dictionary for Students of English 2009, the BBI Dictionary of English Word Combinations 1997 (BBI) and Cobuild English Collocations 1995. The collocations were also judged acceptable if they occurred in at least 5 written texts of the *British National Corpus* (100 million words, UK, 1980s-1993) or the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (385 million words, US 1990-2008).

Once all non-acceptable combinations were identified, the errors were classified as interlingual or intralingual. The decision to consider an error as interlingual was made taking into account the existence and frequency of such collocation in Spanish. The acceptability of the literal translation of the collocation in Spanish was checked against the researchers' judgements about their mother tongue and large online corpora. Since there are no Spanish collocational dictionaries available so far, the study relied heavily on two online corpora: *Corpus del Español* (<http://www.corpusdelespanol.org>) and *Corpus de Referencia del Español Actual* ([corpus.rae.es/creanet.html](http://corpus.rae.es/creanet.html)). The combinations were deemed acceptable if they occurred in identical form in 5 texts in any of the two corpora.

## Findings

A total of 290 collocations were found in the data. Out of this number, 95 were grammatical collocations (63 verb+preposition, 32 noun+preposition) and 195 were lexical collocations (184 verb+noun, 11 noun+verb). A total of 116 errors (approximately a 40% of all collocations) were identified. The percentage of intralingual errors was much higher, adding up to 74,1% whereas the percentage of interlingual errors was 25, 8%. In relation to the total number of collocations, the percentage of intralingual errors was 28, 9% and the percentage of interlingual errors was 10, 3%. The percentage of error (both intralingual and interlingual) was much higher in lexical collocations, 54% in noun+verb collocations and 44% in verb+noun combinations compared to 34% in verb+prep combinations and 21% in noun+ prep combinations.

## Conclusions and Implications for Teaching

This study adds to those so far conducted in the area of lexical errors of foreign language learners in general and the errors of Spanish learners of English in particular. It provides empirical data verifying the belief that collocations constitute an area of difficulty in learning English as a foreign language. The findings of this study support the claim that Spanish-speaking students commit errors when producing collocations in English, especially lexical combinations. The results also indicate that EFL students rely to a certain extent on L1 transfer to make up for their incomplete knowledge of L2, especially in lexical collocation. Within both interlingual and intralingual errors, *verb + noun* collocations were the most problematic for students. These results suggest a need to teach collocations directly in addition to exposure to the language through reading and listening. EFL learners could benefit from direct teaching and exercises aimed at raising awareness of collocations.

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# **“A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words. The Use of Art to Develop Visual Literacy”**

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## **Abstract**

In today's world we are surrounded by multimodal texts in which print information blends with other forms of expression mainly with the visual. In this paper our purpose is to explore how visual literacy can be developed in EFL classrooms by using art. We also aim to show how the Arts can be a means to help students learn about, interpret and produce texts using one of the available semiotic systems: the visual.

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this paper is to show how the use of art: paintings, photos and illustrations can be used in the EFL classrooms as a means to facilitate the development of visual literacy in our students.

In the post-industrial age of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the increasing rate of technological innovation produced a plethora of new forms of text. With the advent of film, video, gaming, the Internet, and the increasing visual content in books and magazines came a whole range of texts that were not print based. In this new era of what has become known as the information age, or knowledge economy, this notion of text as only print might be seen as necessary but not sufficient. Knowledge of the linguistic semiotic system that is the basis of print text is still as

necessary as it has always been, but in this highly visual and technological age it is no longer sufficient. (Anstey and Bull, 2006:100).

Contemporary students face a world far different from the print-saturated environment of their parents. In today's world, these new media texts are part of popular culture and are quite different from the more traditional texts. Students are now confronted with a variety of semiotic systems before they reach school such as visual, auditory, spatial, gestural and linguistic. As a result of this exposure the definition of literacy has changed. Whereas some researchers might define literacy as an ability to read, write and understand print based texts, Harste (2000) suggested that literacy involves experience with a variety of semiotic or communication systems in a particular language, drama, music and the visual arts especially if educators want them to gain new perspectives on the world.

In other words students need to become multiliterate in order to negotiate the increasing number of texts that populate their lives. A multiliterate person is able to interpret, use and produce different kinds of texts that employ different semiotic systems for a variety of purposes in diverse contexts. Learning within a semiotic system approach to literacy enables learners to develop richer and more complex literacy practices and allows them to deal with images and messages of popular culture more thoughtfully. It seems necessary then to find space in which educators can work with students to move them toward a more complex understanding and development of literacy that is explicitly linked to the visual arts.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This paper focuses mainly on developing visual literacy in students as an integrating part of a multiliteracies curriculum. Visual literacy, which refers to the learned ability to interpret visual messages or texts accurately and to create such messages or texts, is part of new literacies and multiliteracies conceptualizations that seek to understand the evolving nature of literacy in the new millennium.

When considering visual and multimodal texts, a broader concept of reading is required. Written text unfolds in sequence, over sentences, paragraphs and pages, while an image, with all its design and spacial elements is received 'all at once' when viewed (Callow, 2008). Thus, a multiliterate individual will need to have a variety of skills to make meaning of all types of texts.

This culture of the visual has focused attention on the connection between print text and visual text to see how meaning is created by the interrelationship of print and visual images. The semiotic system associated with visual texts encompasses elements such as colour, format, texture, shape. In order to develop in our students the ability to read visual texts, they need access to a metalanguage both to explain their own visual designs and to develop more sophisticated and critical understandings of how visual texts in general are constructed. For this to occur, teachers require an understanding of visual features as well as the ability to incorporate appropriate pedagogical practices into the classroom environment (Callow, J. 2003).

The use of different pieces of art, such as paintings, photos, illustrations and other visual elements in the EFL class is probably a powerful tool we have at our disposal to enhance comprehension in reading and to display what readers see in a text. Pictures students see in a story and pictures students make illuminate story structure, promote discussion about different elements of the story and aid the learning or recycling of vocabulary. Thus, the enjoyment students show when reading and interpreting texts is an effective response that requires the development of metalinguistic skills to interpret and create pictures. In order to

achieve this goal, students need to be given opportunities to critique the choices illustrators/artists have made bearing in mind what type of world is presented in the pictures.

Jon Callow (2008) states that there are three dimensions involved when visualizing pieces of art: affective, compositional and critical. The first one involves personal interpretation where viewers bring their own experiences and aesthetic preferences to an image. The second dimension implies the use of specific metalanguage to analyse concepts such as actions, symbols, angles, colour, layout which reflect knowledge about visual texts. The last one is probably the most challenging dimension since students are supposed to comment on the effectiveness or clarity of the scene and about how an image positions the viewer to think or feel in a particular way. Visual literacy, then, including students viewing, creating and discussing texts should be considered from affective, compositional and critical aspects. Multiliteracies should also include learning about how texts are constructed and then this knowledge should be used to redesign new texts as part of applied practice (New London Group, 2000).

What are the teaching practices that may be used to foster the development of visual literacy? Callow's Show Me Framework suggests different teacher's interventions to facilitate it such as the following:

*Affective Dimensions:* Can you find a picture you really like or dislike? Why? What may this book be about from the pictures on the cover?

*Compositional Dimensions:* What is happening or what actions are taking place? What story do the pictures tell? Is the picture showing a theme, a feeling or an idea? Are we very close to the characters in the picture, midway or a long way from them? How does it make you feel about the character, scene? Why do you think the illustrator used the particular elements on this page? What do colours tell you about the scene/story? Which part of the picture attracts your attention? Are there any movement lines in it?

*Critical Dimensions:* How are the people in the picture different to you? Are there any people missing from the picture? Who is the most important character? Can you find a picture that shows how important a character is?

The previously described dimensions will be exemplified in the analysis of the anonymous Mexican story "The Most Wonderful One in the World" and in the follow-up productions of the students. After having looked at all the pictures that accompany it, students may probably deduce that the main characters are the members of the Mouse Family as they appear in all the pictures. However, when analyzing picture nº 5 there is a new element in it which stands out: the wall. Even though it is in the background of the picture, it is outstanding because of its colour and size. The illustrator has chosen a bright contrasting colour: red, and has given the wall a predominant role as it covers the background of the picture. Another feature that can be easily noticed on the wall is a face; one whose mouth shows some kind of movement which probably suggests that the wall and the mice are having a conversation. All the above mentioned elements – colour, size, movement- help the illustrator to create a range of different meanings about which students could be guided to analyze. The wall has a life of its own which allows the teacher to guide students to the third dimension: the critical one. Students may be asked to reflect upon whom the most important character of the story is and if its predominance varies along the story. Students may also be questioned if they agree with the illustrator's choice and in case they do not they may be asked which other character they would make the leading one.

The follow-up productions of the students in response to the teacher's task to imagine a new scene for the story somehow show the development of visual literacy. This development is seen in the use of colour, movement and size. The choice of colours places the picture in a particular setting, and differentiates two elements of the same colour by using different shades of blue. As regards movement, this is conveyed, for example, by jagged lines coming out of the sun and arrows that sign the mouse is moving the pram forwards and backwards. Finally, size helps students place the features of the picture at different distances and angles from the viewer. For example, the two mice are the biggest in the pictures because they are the main characters of the scene while the window is at the background and behind them.

This framework developed by Callow has been exemplified so far with visual texts produced as still images. A still image traditionally took the form of an illustration in a picture book, a picture in a magazine or newspaper, or a photograph. Still images can now be found on a website or mobile phone and can include any image that is not moving. Students are constantly faced with still images in a variety of multimodal texts that make up a part of their normal day. (Anstey and Bull, 2006:108).

The semiotic system of still images comes from the discipline of art and design, and as stated above, the Show Me Framework will /can provide students with the necessary tools to talk about these images, to assist in the construction of text, and to make critical meaning of them.

Visual texts can be produced not only as still, but also as moving images. The latter also have a semiotic system and occupy a central part of literate practice. Film, videos, television, and cartoons are part of everyday life as never before, and this trend is augmented by new platforms such as the Internet and video games. These new sites also contain a high proportion of film, video, and cartoons and are often accompanied by music, voiceovers, and sound effects. This semiotic system relies on codes and conventions to interpret elements such as camera, angle, lightning, gesture, setting, and dress. (Anstey and Bull, 2006:102). As with still images, moving images require access to the required vocabulary for talk to take place. These conversations rely on the development of a metalanguage which operates the same way as phrase, sentence, genre, and other elements of the metalanguage of written text. Thus, Callow's framework could also be used in literacy practices in the EFL classroom to enhance development of visual literacy for moving images as well.

The video *The Story of Stuff* available on the Internet serves to exemplify possible teacher's interventions to foster analysis, interpretation and critical construction of meaning of a moving image. Our suggested ones are the following:

*Affective dimensions:* (before watching) Teacher asks what this video might be about from the title and first image (watching the first part of the video without sound). Tell me what this video might be about. What part of the video do you like/dislike? Why?

*Compositional dimensions:* Can you tell me what is happening or what actions are taking place? Is the video showing a theme or an idea? Which are the characters in the story? How are the characters depicted? What colours are being used? How important is the audio in this video to interpret its meaning? Which parts attract your attention? Why? How is movement shown?

*Critical dimensions:* How much do you identify with the video? Does it show images that are really happening? Is there anything missing from the video that you

consider important to include? What? What is the video maker's message? How does he/she accomplish it?

## Conclusion

Today's world demands multiliterate citizens. That is to say individuals able to interpret, use and produce texts that employ different semiotic systems to achieve various purposes in diverse contexts. Texts in the present world are not only print based but they are multimodal with a special emphasis on visual ones. It has been argued in this paper that visual literacy is necessary to meet the challenges of today's society. Thus, educators should aim to assist students in becoming multiliterate learners especially across multimodal and visual texts and they should also incorporate appropriate pedagogical practices such as the ones suggested in Show me Framework. The use of Art in EFL classes can be of help to achieve this goal since it may be the springboard for students to develop the ability to read visual texts as well as explain their own visual productions and have critical understanding of how visual texts are constructed.

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## **"Bottom-Up Processes in Courses of Study Reform"**

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### **Abstract**

In this paper I first review the main tenets of the reform of Foreign Language Teacher Education involving tertiary level colleges of education – and also Departments of Foreign Languages at universities – in the late 90s.

Despite the agitation the official documents implied, the changes purported "more of the same", without a real change of institutional *discourse*.

By contrast, I refer to a reform of a course of studies in the English Department at ISP "Dr. Joaquín V. González", Buenos Aires, carried out recently, and in which the approach was *bottom-up*. I give examples of some of its features and evaluate them.

### **Introduction**

The Foreign Languages Area was incorporated into the Curricular Transformation Programme as from April 1996. This inception was due to the recognition of the complexity of the processes of acquisition, learning and teaching that pertain to the area, which also included from the very start Spanish as a *second* language. The proposal purported the integration of all languages learnt and taught in the country, as well as all school curricular areas.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, Spanish as an L2 with young learners is not within instructed SLA in our country to this date, and, to my knowledge, there's no teacher training, save a couple of instances, either.

The drafts offered for analysis produced a great agitation and turmoil among the teachers, specialists and institutions summoned. In the first place this was because, *for once*, representatives of all the five FLs traditionally taught and learnt in Argentina had to sit together and come to agreements. They were all well aware that their suggestions would make a substantial change to our area. And they were *enthused*.

Years before content-based approaches such as CLIL (see for example Marsh, 2002; Armendáriz, 2008) were brought to light in the country, the work on curricular areas *through* FLs had already been promoted. However, *isolation* was the key word to describe the then state of affairs: isolation not only from other curricular areas, but also of other FLs. This was probably due to the very different linguistic and pedagogical traditions of origin of each FL. (Armendáriz, 2004) I'm glad that such major change was taken as "natural" at FAAPI 2008.

## **The European framework**

The Council of Europe's Modern Languages Project, conceived of as from 1971 to enable lifelong education and university professional mobility, had drawn a shortcut to the development of a common framework applicable to all FLs in our midst. The launch of van Ek's *Threshold Level* (van Ek, 1976, van Ek y Trim, 1986), and the effort of the specialists summoned to configure a communicative approach on the basis of these specifications, were unfortunately *disfigured* by later development attempts. (see, for example, Widdowson, 1978)

In sum, apart from taking into account new areas of Linguistics such as Pragmatics, Discourse, Text Linguistics, Sociolinguistics, Ethnography and Ethnomethodology (Stern, 1983, 1993), van Ek's (1976, *op. cit.*), the scheme of notions and functions achieved a useful level of generalisation which then crystallised in the progressive development of cognitive and procedural contents which then were integrated into standardised contents and communicative objectives. In turn, after the close of the Modern Languages Project in 1997, this led to the development of ALTE – *Association of Language Testers of Europe* (1990), and, more recently, to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (2001), which brings together the 41 ALTE members.

Parallel to the unified contributions made by the European specialists, the psycholinguistic revolution generated by Noam Chomsky (for example, 1986, 2000) in the States, triggered off profuse research into the L1 for a start, which then passed on to L2s, and which were ultimately transposed to FLs. There were many contributors, such as Greenberg (1963) and his universals; Fodor (1983) and his modularity of mind; Brown (1973) and his amazing natural order of acquisition, among many others.

As regards research into L2 development, I must mention the work of Dulay and Burt (1974), who made another even more amazing discovery: the fact that subjects learning an L2/FL follow approximately the same stages of acquisition as those signalled by Brown (*op. cit.*) This meant the downgrading of the role of transfer in L2/FL learning, prevalent up to that moment.

The new challenge was – and still is – to discover to what extent the notion of *Universal Grammar (UG)* – capable of explaining the similarities among languages and the organised sets of differences in terms of *parametric variation*. (Chomsky, *op. cit.*) Then it was also crucial to determine to what extent *Interlanguage*. (Selinker, 1972; White, 1998) was related to UG, the age factor (Lenneberg, 1967; Johnson & Newport, 1998); (L2) learner language, and L2 communication.

The official documents sought to establish a new paradigm, i. e. the need for a substantial update in foreign language teacher education so that newly graduates should be empowered to face the day-to-day vertiginous cultural and social changes that our society is undergoing. (Richards & Nunan, 1990) In addition, professional growth and deep conviction can only come from **bottom up** rather than top down processes. It is only in this way that the new professional will be able to construct, reconstruct and evaluate teaching.

### **The new Argentine framework**

Stuffed with the information developed above, tertiary level language colleges of education started doing introspection into their own courses of study. And what did they find? Very old curriculum designs with a "traditional" rationale based on language development, grammar courses, the history and literature of the UK and the US, and special didactics. In other words, there was no room for language education, which could have led to an understanding of the inner processes leading to *learning* language.

After the transfer of educational services to the Provinces and the City of Buenos Aires, it was indispensable for our institutions to adapt to the new guidelines issued by the National Ministry of Education in the late 90s in order for their degrees to have national validity. The reform purported the development of a scientific mind and professionalism in undergraduates through *research* and more courses in the area of linguistics.

Despite the turmoil and agitation that characterised this period, which lasted a good six years, many new courses of study amounted to "more of the same" since the reform seemed to have bypassed the heart of the changes proposed. The new subjects were confined to a few term curricular spaces with a meagre number of weekly periods. They hadn't been properly distributed and many of them entered in conflict with each other, in terms of content and timetables.

### **A (possible) bottom-up curricular reform**

How can changes be effected so that there is full commitment to them? Is this possible at all?

I have had the good fortune of participating in the debates leading to the development of a new course of studies for primary school that the English Department at Instituto Superior del Profesorado "Dr. Joaquín V. González", Buenos Aires, carried out between December and May 2009. The Director of Studies staged a manifold **bottom-up** scheme which took account of several variables and actions:

- students' difficulties to meet the demands of earlier courses of study: this was based on surveys students and teachers filled in, which were then tabulated: this showed the difficulties had found with correlative subjects, timetables and the like;
- the articulation of pre-school, primary and secondary school courses of study to enable students to do both courses of study if they wish to;
- analysis of the different areas of study – *ejes* and *sub-ejes* – to diagnose academic update needs: several experts were called to make their contributions in terms of topics and bibliography;
- the adaptation of the course of studies in terms of the age factor and educational needs of prospective learners.

- the appointment of an *ad hoc* team to help lecturers of different areas come to agreements and coordinate their contributions via e-mail: lecturer *consensus* was paramount;
- structural coherence of the overall course of studies in terms of the distribution of curricular spaces, weekly periods and correlative subjects;

As regards special curricular spaces:

- the inclusion of literacy and biliteracy development and the value of play and body use with a view to enhancing our students' power to diagnose prospective learner development in the FL;
- the development of a curricular space destined to articulating the role of the course teacher – *maestro de grado* – and the teacher of English;

With reference to teacher appointments:

- A general education lecturer was appointed to work together with a specialist of English in several curricular spaces.

To exemplify some of the major changes launched, I can mention the area of Geography, History and Literature: these curricular spaces adopted a new bias: that of English as a Global Language, so, without giving up the contributions of the UK and the US, other cultures have been taken into account leading on to *post colonialism*.

The area of Grammar I and II and Linguistics have been deeply rooted in Generative Linguistics for over 40 years. As a member of the area, I can be a spokesperson and argue that this approach has provided us with a sound framework in teacher education. (Simeone & Armendáriz, 2008) The contents of Language Acquisition – included on the new curriculum – followed the same trend, and topics such as the accessibility to UG and interlanguage were included as part of the core.

Linguistics managed to conflate micro-and macro linguistics with aspects of linguistic variation in our country, apart from others, the speech of youngsters and urban tribes. Discourse Analysis comes to complete the area to broaden the scope of linguistic analysis.

A new curricular space was incorporated to the area of Phonology and Phonetics, that of teaching the phonology of the FL. Needless to say, *all* subjects make their contribution to the teaching of each area.

Finally for this partial account, a proposal for distance learning was made in conjunction with face-to-face lessons. This was submitted in January 2009, and it came in handy for many of us given the number of lessons that were called off.

## Conclusion

In documents issued by INFoD – Instituto Nacional de Formación Docente, coming under the National Ministry of Education – it was *determined* that there would be only *one* degree in FLs. I consider this decision arbitrary since it goes against previous consensus of 1998-1999, period during which the issue was debated deeply and extensively. Luckily the issue has been postponed for the time being. And the Unit of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education of the City of Buenos Aires is in agreement with the development of two degrees.

In the light of the topics discussed – in part – as the national scheme characterised above, I find that the changes in the curriculum plan analysed meet the demands of a *modern* course of studies. I keep my fingers crossed until its implementation is effected next year. We'll watch whether the spirit, the institutional and academic discourses have really changed.

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# **"Bringing languages and cultures in contact in the classroom: The role of lexical phrases"**

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## **Abstract**

This paper explores the role of lexical phrases in language education in general, both in native language (L1) and second/foreign language (L2) contexts. Even though this topic has been addressed by researchers and linguists for over 30 years now, it does not seem to be a prominent one among classroom teachers, teacher educators, reading specialists, and others directly involved in classroom settings. I suggest here that lexical phrases contribute to serving the interests of these learners in different dimensions, namely linguistic, social and cultural. I propose that they are an ideal unit for teaching children in linguistically and culturally diverse settings.

## **Objectives**

Specifically, the aims of this paper are threefold:

1. to familiarize readers with the role of lexical phrases in education. To this aim, different definitions of the term *lexical phrase* will be shared, including an overview of the work of the most important researchers and linguists who have coined similar terms since 1973.
2. to offer a rationale in favour of the use of lexical phrases in language education (L1 and L2). These patterns are a pervasive feature in adult native language use, and in L1 and L2 acquisition.
3. to inspect the characteristics of lexical phrases which make them an ideal unit for teaching and to discuss pedagogic implications.

## **Evidence Base**

1. Research in computer analysis of language has revealed a widespread occurrence of lexical patterns in adult language use. "Lexicalized sentence stems and other memorized strings form the main building blocks of fluent connected speech" (Syder and Pawley, 1983: 214).
2. Such stereotyping in language performance applies to language acquisition as well. Research into L1 (Peters, 1983; Clark, 1993) and L2 acquisition (Hakuta, 1974; Kasper and Rose, 2002; Peters, 1983; Vihman, 1982) has shown that routinized patterns are a recurrent feature in the process.

## **What is a lexical phrase?**

Linguists and researchers from diverse specific fields have been talking about lexical phrases for over 30 years now. Each one has coined different terms. For instance, Corder (1973: 130-31) refers to "subroutines or ready-made subplans". Hakuta (1974: 289) distinguishes between "routines" and "prefabricated patterns". Peters (1983: 6) uses the terms "formulaic frames" and "unit." Syder and Pawley (1983: 214) opt for "lexicalized sentence stems" and "memorized strings".

What all of these terms have in common is this idea that when we talk about lexis, the lexicon, vocabulary, etc., we must distance ourselves, at some point, from its conception as *individual, unitary* words. The underlying notion behind all of these technical terms can be summarized in what Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992: 1) define as "lexical phrases", i.e. "multi-word lexical phenomena (...) conventionalized form/function composites that occur more frequently and have more idiomatically determined meaning than the language that is put together each time". This is the term I adopt here.

## **Characteristics of lexical phrases: rationale for their use in the classroom**

In itself, however, the fact that lexical phrases are a recurrent feature of adult language use and language acquisition does not justify their inclusion in the classroom. I would like to explore now the characteristics which make them ideal for use in real classrooms. In 21<sup>st</sup> century classrooms worldwide, you can expect diversity in different fronts (linguistic, socio-economic, educational, cultural, ethnic, etc.) to be paramount. Lexical phrases, I argue in what follows, serve diverse classroom populations.

### *Fluency at early stages of language acquisition*

Lexical phrases allow for fluency at early stages of language acquisition because they may be treated as wholes (either as completely or partially pre-assembled units) without the need to know their underlying structure (Rydland and Aukrust, 2005). Being stored in the lexicon as unanalyzed chunks just like words (ready-made), learners become conversationally competent despite their limited linguistic knowledge at early stages. Lexical phrases are therefore highly motivating and promote a sense of achievement.

### *Growth in language development*

Lexical phrases allow for growth in L1 and L2 development because they are analyzable by the rules of grammar (Kasper, 2001; Kasper and Rose, 2002).



Depending on the situation they may be treated as unanalyzed units in the lexicon or produced afresh using the rules of syntax. Because these phrases have associated functional uses (e.g. they may be used to maintain a conversation, change the topic, make a request, greet people, etc.), they offer learners the possibility of expressing the same function in increasingly more difficult ways by expanding an initial formula. Therefore, they constitute a springboard for language development.

#### *Processing constraints overcome*

Lexical phrases allow L1 and L2 learners and users to overcome processing constraints (Cook, 1977; Rydland and Aukrust, 2005), or in other words, allow them to produce long stretches of language (oral and written) which exceed their encoding and decoding capacities.

#### *Easy acquisition and efficient device for use*

Lexical phrases are easy to acquire for two reasons. First, they are very frequent, which provides for the natural recycling of such frames. Second, these formulas are context-bound and have situational meaning associated with them. Being recurrently associated with a certain context (socio-culturally specific), learners are able to recall these phrases in similar or socio-culturally equivalent situations (Huang and Hatch, 1978; Kasper, 2001; Kasper and Rose, 2002; Rydland and Aukrust, 2005).

#### *Cultural dimension of L1 and L2 learning*

Lexical phrases consider the cultural dimension in language education, i.e. the cultural dimension of L1 and L2 acquisition and development, allowing learners to continually compare and contrast these phrases in socio-culturally specific contexts of use, bringing the native and the target cultures (and/or subcultures) into contact.

### **Some implications for teaching**

#### *Linguistic and pragmatic competence: a balance*

Following Widdowson (1989: 132), "competence has two components: knowledge and ability (...). Knowledge can be characterized in terms of degrees of analyzability; ability can be characterized in terms of degrees of accessibility". In this framework, linguistic competence accounts for the learners' knowledge of lexical forms and their syntactic behaviour (among other things). It encompasses knowledge of prefabricated language as well as knowledge of how to generate sentences by the rules of syntax. Pragmatic competence, by contrast, is responsible for the learners' ability to access lexical phrases ready for use in socio-culturally appropriate contexts and through varied and multiple media (oral, written, visual, technology based, etc.).

A strong emphasis on linguistic competence fails to give learners the tools they need to access all the analyzed knowledge they possess. By contrast, an excessive focus on a performance repertoire of patterns to be accessed in socio-culturally appropriate contexts of use may result in shadowed linguistic competence. Lexical phrases foster both dimensions, i.e. analyzability and accessibility, and thus contribute to the development of the learners' linguistic and pragmatic competence.

#### *Problem of selection: degrees of variability and flexibility*

Issues of variability and flexibility need to be considered when selecting lexical phrases. At one end there are fixed phrases such as *by the way*, *have a nice day*, etc., which are not subject to alterations. Other phrases, by contrast, allow some degree of

modification, whether syntactic or lexical. Sometimes the degree of syntactic modification possible is highly variable. For example, *not only... but also...*, and *as well as...* are extremely flexible. Similarly, variation of lexical content within a syntactic structure is also a matter of degree. For instance, a phrase like *a... ago* accepts variations such as *a day ago, a week ago, a month ago, a year ago* and so on.

These factors are to be taken into account when deciding which phrases to select for classroom use in addition to frequency of occurrence as revealed by concordance data. Focusing on fixed non-productive phrases may have a hindering effect in the sense that there is no scope for expanding the frames as a way of enhancing learning. While fixed phrases may be convenient to foster self-esteem and motivation at very early stages of language acquisition, less fixed phrases, i.e. those which allow for different degrees of analyzability, will lead to language development (by expanding previously acquired phrases in order to fit in with new contexts of use).

### **Learner awareness**

Learners need awareness of two facts. Firstly, they need to know that not all easily accessible phrases are appropriate for all contexts. Given a set of phrases like *hello, hi, good (morning/afternoon/evening)*, their naturalness, unmarkedness, or appropriateness depends on the situation. Put differently, a given function may be fulfilled only by a limited set of phrases in a specific context. As way of example, even though the range of phrases available to express gratitude is wide and may encompass expressions like *thanks (very much/a lot) (for)\_\_\_\_, I (really) appreciate your \_\_\_\_\_*, etc., these options are not interchangeable. Appropriateness depends on the context, which means that some generalizations are impermissible in certain contexts of use.

Secondly, learners must be sensitive to the fact that there are limits to the extent that a phrase is analyzable. Some syntactic modifications may be grammatically correct but impossible in any context of use. If the greeting *How are you?* was analyzed and *How are you going to be?* was produced, the function of the phrase as a greeting would be lost. Similarly, some lexical changes may be ungrammatical. We say *a short time ago* but not *two short times ago*. Making learners aware of these subtleties of the language is part of the task of developing their competence.

Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) suggest that syntactically simple phrases which allow a considerable amount of lexical variation may be the most powerful pattern generators. The frame *modal + you +VP (verbal pattern)* constitutes one example. The syntactic pattern is simple and it is paradigmatically flexible - i.e., several modals and VPs may be easily substituted. This ensures a steady growth in language development. Learners may generate increasingly more complex phrases as they become more proficient (e.g. *Can you open the window? Could you lend me some money? Would you type this for me?* etc. with optional slots such as *please, kindly* and so on).

### **Grammaticalised lexis, not lexicalised grammar**

Several researchers have shown that both in L1 and in L2 acquisition children start by selecting pre-assembled unanalyzed chunks to fit different situations. Only gradually do they expand those patterns by applying syntactic or grammatical rules as the link between lexis and context becomes insufficient to meet new and more complex communicative needs. The creative process of generating sentences by the rules of grammar would have the supporting role of adjusting already known formulas to new, culturally specific contexts of use.

This shift of focus from grammar to lexis is significant for L1 and L2 language acquisition and development in two ways. First, some patterns which have traditionally received grammatical pedagogic treatment in the classroom might indeed

be best introduced as lexical phrases. This may apply to the first, second and third conditionals; the passive; reported speech; the *ing* form; the past participle; *will*, *would*, and *going to*. Also, irregular past tense forms such as *was*, *had*, *got*, *said*, *did*, *made*, *came*, *thought*, *went* may be first learned as lexical items, which means that in these cases the concept of *time* may be most efficiently presented through lexis rather than tense. Second, some patterns which have been relegated for years in L2 teaching (being usually reserved to advanced learners) might have a more primary role than often assumed. This is the case of idioms, metaphorical expressions, collocations, phrasal verbs, and institutionalized units like *Not yet*; *certainly*; *I see your point but...*; *as far as I know*; *for that matter*, among others.

### **Teaching with a lexical focus**

Presenting learners with a set of prototypical examples of a chosen phrase in clear contexts (through oral, written, visual, technology based or other channels) is a good starting point. The phrase would be introduced as an unanalyzed whole. Learners would be encouraged to globally understand the pragmatic meaning of the whole phrase (not its constituents) in relation to the context in which it occurs. This means understanding its function, or in other words, how this phrase is actually used in a certain culturally specific situation (context). In the case of L2 learners, finding socio-culturally equivalent phrases in the L1 and the L2 in different contexts is a good option.

Following Lewis (1993), grammatical explanations provided by the teacher have a minor role. Instead, learners explore grammar by themselves and construct their own personal, provisional rules. "Grammar is primarily receptive" (Lewis, 1993: 149) and its development is encouraged through learner awareness. Awareness of this kind starts when learners observe language (oral, written, visual, or other) in multiple and varied contexts of use. Learners observe, observe, and observe language in different formats and varied media. Then, with the teacher's help, they critically reflect on what they perceive. What are these stretches of language, these data, evidence of? What do they reflect? What linguistic, pragmatic and sociocultural aspects of the language do they illustrate? In collaboration, teacher and learners describe, analyze, exemplify, illustrate, and discuss. Using real language as a springboard, teacher and learners interact with and manipulate language. The final step is to draw conclusions related to how language (L1 and/or L2) works in different contexts and to create linguistic, pragmatic and sociocultural rules, directly derived from such observation, analysis, and discussion – rules which are developmentally appropriate for specific learners at a certain stage of language acquisition.

Congruent with the foregoing, this proposal highlights the use of identifying, sorting, matching and comparing activities whose goal is consciousness raising. Questions like these, among many others, are crucial:

**To raise general awareness and linguistic awareness in the native, foreign, and/or second language:** *Can you find...?, Did you notice...?, What do you notice here?, Is there anything that calls your attention in...?, What can you say about...?, What does this example suggest in relation to the (grammar, lexis, phonology, etc.) of (English, Spanish, etc.), etc.*

**To raise socio-linguistic and socio-cultural awareness in the native, foreign, and/or second language:** *Does this phrase have any specific cultural connotation?, Who would use this phrase in (X) culture?, In which situations and to do what?, In which other situations could you use this phrase?, What impression would you give if you used this other phrase in the same situation?, And in a different situation?, For a different purpose?, What does this phrase tell you about...?, etc.*

**To raise linguistic and socio-cultural awareness through a contrastive perspective:** What would be an equivalent phrase in your native language?, In which aspects is this phrase in your native language equivalent to this phrase in the foreign/second language?, Can you use these two phrases in the same situations?, Can you use these two phrases to do the same things in both cultures?, What does each phrase tell you about the members of each culture?, How do you know?, Can you find more examples of equivalent phrases of this kind in books, magazines, films, TV, the internet, and other sources?, etc.

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# **"Computer-mediated Discourse: Argentine English Teachers as Participants in a Mailing List"**

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## **Abstract**

"The electronic age has changed our lives as communicating human beings" (Crystal, 1995:392). "How do users respond to these new pressures, and compensate linguistically?" (Crystal, 2006:26). This paper focuses on how Argentine English teachers - engaged in an instance of professional development offered in distance mode through electronic devices - build requests and express anxiety in computer-mediated communication (CMC).

## **Setting**

In April 2008, Facultad de Humanidades, Artes y Ciencias Sociales, UADER, accepted a project to offer a distance course for English teachers and advanced students of English teacher education programs. The course was to be run by means of a mailing listserver - a Yahoo group - that would allow the distribution of the material and communication among all participants. All members were allowed to post, and received all messages posted. Private individual communication with the tutors was also a possibility, and the participants' choice.

The course developed between May and October though communication continued until December. A total of 484 mails dealing mainly with the topic under

study were posted; there were a few, though, that served other purposes. The analysis that follows considers two of these other purposes: the realization of requests and the expression of anxiety.

## Requests

Trosborg (1995:15) claims that directive speech acts (and requests fall into this category) are attempts made by the addresser "to involve the hearer in some future action which has positive consequences for the speaker and may imply cost to the hearer". This cost turns the request into an act that endangers the hearer's self- and social image (Brown and Levinson's 'face-saving' theory of politeness, see Watts, 2003:85); in an attempt to reduce the danger to the addressee's image, the addresser may build the request using a variety of means.

In the structures of requests, two elements can be identified: "the request head act, and those peripheral modification devices that accompany it" (Alcón Soler et al., 2005:2). Table 1 shows the two elements in the requests posted by the participants during the course.

**Table 1**

Request head act	Peripheral modification
HEEEEEEEELLLLPPPP!!!	Sorry if I'm misunderstanding something here... but... are those 2 the only activities we have to do or there's something missing...? I thought they were 3 or more...
Maybe you could send it directly to my e-mail	Sorry! I don't know whether this is a problem with my computer or with the file, but the attached file appears as not saved (no guardado) so I can't open it.  (if that's not too much asking!)  Thanx (sic) a lot!!!
looking forward to getting it!!!	I don't know if it was just me or you haven't sent the fourth story yet, but I didn't get an attachment with your message  :))
Could you send them asap to me?	I think there's been a problem with this file 'cause I haven't received neither the story nor the 1st part of the tasks.  Thanks! 😊
I'd like to know if it is possible to change the deadline for the final work.	I don't think I'll be able to do it for next week.

	Pleeeeeeease
Can anybody forward the second part of "The Man..." to me?	I don't know why I didn't get it. But I did receive the final task.  Thanks!
I want to know what will (sic) you choose to complete the information about this course in the page of C.G.E with evaluation or without?  ok you tell me before Monday pleaseee help meeee!!!	, because I know we didn't get marks , but it was a course with practicals,
I'd like to know if you could get the certificate(...) If you got it, could you tell me the exact name it has (or how you asked for it) so as to go again and get it this time?	Thanks!

*Table 1. Request head acts and peripheral modification.*

These request head acts share a number of features:

- both direct (commands) and indirect requests are used;
- for the indirect requests, the participants use modal constructions, either in questions or statements, and other structures which are not exclusively indicators of requests;
- there is a tendency to seek involvement from the addressee.

Alcón Soler et al. (2005:17) propose a taxonomy for peripheral modification in requests, which consists of internal and external devices. In the exchanges under analysis, the following devices were found:

- grounders – *reasons and justifications for the request being made* (Alcón Soler et al., 2005:24) – are the most frequent type of modification; they appear both before and after the core requests;
- please: the adverb appears in only two of the posts analysed.

Interestingly, there are other features both in the head request acts and the peripheral modifications which are used by Argentine teachers. The most significant are:

- the expression *thanks (thanx)* appears frequently;
- the emoticons selected indicate a friendly smile;

- some letters are repeated within the word;
- block capitals are used;
- exclamation marks are profusely used.

An interpretation for these features may be found in our culture and its influence over our production in the L2. The inclusion of "thanks" (associated with expressives rather than directives) seems to have an intensifying effect: the addresser is in a way pressing the addressee into granting the request, by thanking in advance for an action that has not yet been taken. Álvarez Menéndez (2005:77), describing Spanish, explains that, as part of a request, using thanks or its synonyms carries "una fuerte carga exhortativa, de petición cortés, mediante la cual se suaviza el efecto impositivo sobre nuestro interlocutor". We, Argentine teachers of English exchanging emails, include thanking in our requests –even if writing in English.

An attempt is made to include paralinguistic elements. Block capitals indicate the sender is shouting (Crystal 2006:37); letter and punctuation mark repetition is also intended to convey not only the words themselves, but how the user wants them to be interpreted. In all cases, there is an intensifying force added by the selection of these specific forms.

The inclusion of emoticons in a request may indicate "the sender is worried about the effect a sentence might have" (Crystal 2006:41). As such, a smiley in a request acts as a softener; the addresser tries to minimise the imposition on the recipient.

## **Anxiety**

As language teachers, we are highly aware of the stress involved in learning and using a foreign language -most of us have experienced anxiety directly. Anxiety is related to a combination of external (e.g., impending situations or tasks) and internal factors (e.g. self-evaluation, self-doubt, preoccupation about others' opinions) (Eysenck 1979; MacIntyre and Gardner 1994b in Young 1999). The anxious person is apprehensive not only about threatening situations in his/her environment but also about self-related concerns.

In a relevant series of studies MacIntyre and Gardner (1989, 1991b, in Young 1999:27) proposed that foreign language learning produces a unique type of anxiety. Based on this perspective, they defined language anxiety as "the subjective feeling of fear, tension, nervousness, worry or apprehension and negative emotional reaction occurring when learning or using a foreign language".

Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986, in Horwitz and Young 1991:25) proposed a tripartite description of language anxiety with three well-known performance anxieties associated with first language use and everyday life as the components. These are: communication apprehension, fear of negative social evaluation, and test anxiety. As to Argentine students/teachers, the most important problem according to a study carried out by López Aranguren and Saldaña (2004) is fear of negative social evaluation, defined as "apprehension about others' evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively" (Watson and Friend, 1969 in Horwitz and Young, 1991:30). It is likely to be manifested in a student's over concern with academic and personal evaluations of his or her performance and competence in the target language.

In asynchronous computer-mediated communication participants do not have to engage in "face-to-face" communication or discussion of different topics; thus there is no evaluation of pronunciation, for example, and the type of



interaction may turn to reduce anxiety. Participants, either students or teachers of the foreign language, have time to compose messages, think about the answers to the different tasks and can download information for further discussion. Nevertheless, if participants are highly anxious they may continue feeling uneasy because they know that what they write is evaluated by their peers and teacher moderator.

However, some participants are constantly showing that they are not sure about the tasks they did and beg the moderator to tell them if they are mistaken. These are examples of posts in which anxiety is manifested:

- Well, here are the last points, hope they are ok!
- Hi everybody! here I am, back to work, after a weekend in the sun (I highly recommend Thermal Spas on the Uruguay coast, -grin-) I hope my brain hasn't been damaged by the heat and you find my ideas coherent.
- I don't know if I'm complicating things a little bit here (I tend to analyse (sic) everything so much that I end up not knowing what the point was!), but I think all the words have either a negative or neutral meaning according to the definitions given!

Notwithstanding, Young (1992) states that "the spirit of a community of speakers of a foreign language also seems to alleviate the fear of ridicule associated with expressing oneself in a foreign language". Thus, group members sometimes send affirming messages, as follows:

- I agree with the other girls, I don't think he's using sap...
- Like some people in the group, I found it a bit difficult to understand (and boring!) at the beginning, most of all because of so many names I don't know (like Mensa, to start with).
- As most of the other teachers, I found myself not using the correct tag questions when I talk to my students"
- i completely agree with you!!!!i think i'm visual and auditory but also my sense of smell is highly developed, i need to smell everything, or almost everything, by doing this i get a weird sensation and if i concentrate i can recall the experience later i couldn't help noticing the smell of the sea full of salt and mysterious

This type of feedback help create bonds among the members of the group, which, in turn, may encourage more anxious participants to feel more at ease.

## **Final thoughts**

From this brief analysis, it can be surmised, on the one hand, that Argentine teachers of English transfer their pragmatic competence from face-to-face interaction to CMC successfully. The fact that there is a bicultural component seems to affect their production in online asynchronous interaction, providing it with specific features of what may be considered a strong cultural meaning.

On the other hand, there is evidence of feelings of anxiety, which may arise from two combined sources: fear of evaluation of performance in the L2 and little or no experience in using computer mediated communication for interaction with colleagues in professional environments.

It is to be further observed whether the two aspects presented here (features of requests and expressions of anxiety) either simply constitute a transient behaviour or represent a feature in CMC among (future) Argentine teachers of English.

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## **"Content Based Instruction revisited"**

DARIO LUIS BANEGAS

### **Abstract**

This paper discusses the rationale behind the integration of language and content in ELT. Whether called CBI, CLIL or Whole Language, this integration is present in different areas of inquiry such as applied linguistics, pedagogy, and sociocultural psychology. Pedagogical principles and approaches rooted in sociocultural theory and the role of language as a mediating tool in learning are described, so as to establish a link between CBI and CLIL. Examples of this approach are presented.

### **Integrating language and content**

In reference to names given to approaches that integrate content and language, Dalton-Puffer (2007:1) states that even though there are many terms in use which carry different implications, such as CBI, Bilingual Teaching, and English Across the Curriculum among others, the term CLIL is now established in the academic and educational spheres. However, Navés (2000) simply suggests that while CLIL is a term used in Europe, CBI is the preferred choice in the USA and Canada, this latter being generally recognised as the country where this trend originated in the 1960's.

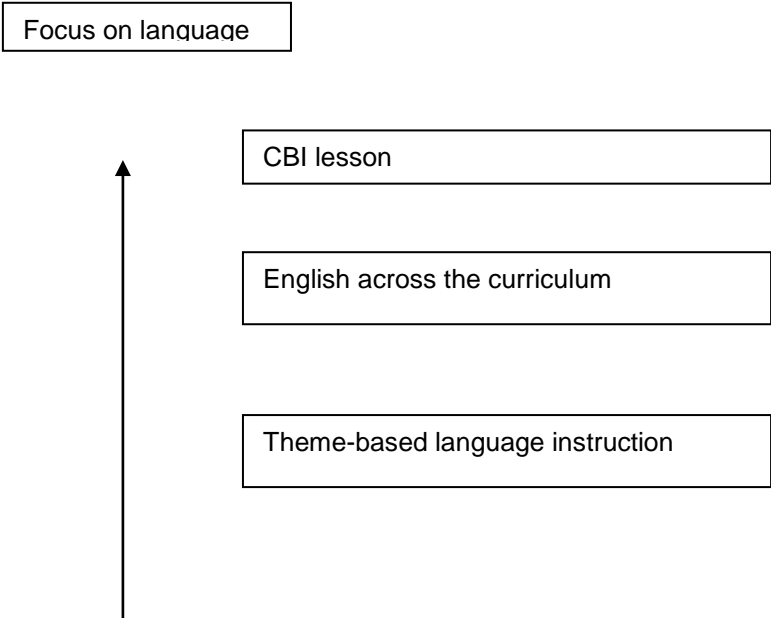
However, we might say that Content-Based Instruction, or Content-Based Learning (Wolff, 2003:214), could be viewed as a branch that has evolved in its own right with different underpinning principles. Brinton *et al.* (2003: 265) define CBI as 'teaching that integrates particular content with language-teaching aims, with a goal to develop use-oriented second or foreign language skills; concurrent teaching of academic subject matter and second language skills, following a

sequence determined by a particular subject matter with a content-driven curriculum.’ Thus, even though the main goal is foreign or second language acquisition, the emphasis is not on learning the language (Davies, 2003) but acquiring content in a context where language becomes a psychological tool, one which mediates between learners and subject matter. This mediation and integration should be a dual commitment (Stoller, 2002) made by teachers who truly believe that CBI can offer a better environment for language acquisition. Consequently, it is expected that learners will benefit from both language and content since, as they improve their L2 competence (Murphy and Stoller, 2001:3-4), they will be able to learn more content and, in turn, by acquiring more content knowledge, they will master the target language used as medium of instruction (Stoller, 2002). Not only will content knowledge affect their performance in the L2 but it will also transfer to their mother tongue as they might integrate new concepts in the traditional curriculum.

With the purpose of establishing some founding principles in context, Brinton *et al.* (2003:1-4) propose five different rationales. First, learners’ needs and potential uses of the target language must be taken into account. Second, such needs should be met by the use of relevant content so as to promote subject and language development. Third, this approach works best if it is anchored in learners’ previous knowledge of both subject matter and language. Fourth, its focus should be on the macroaspects of language, that is, on discourse organisation rather than on sentence level. Last, even though it has been suggested that one of the features of CBI is the use of authentic material, input in the target language should be understood by learners and offer the possibility to continue improving their linguistic knowledge.

From its incipient implementation to current trends, the integration of content and language has evolved in many different directions and it might be better comprehended if we see it as a continuum (Shang, 2006; Hernández Herrero, 2005) where language is at one end and content at the other. Met (1999) offers a clear continuum where CLIL/CBI experiences could be language-driven thus resulting in theme-based learning, this being the case in Argentinian secondary education, or content-driven where school subjects in the curriculum are taught in English.

It goes without saying that within this continuum, varied models are found. Table 1 shows the continuum proposed here.



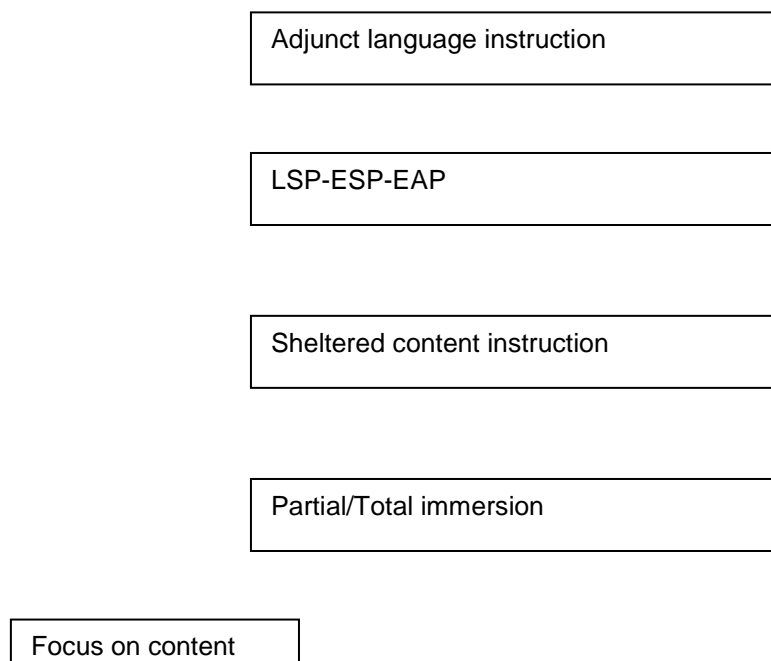


Table 1:  
CBI continuum

Beginning at the language extreme, CBI lessons are a reduced perspective suggested by Peachey (2003). CBI is equated to a lesson in which the topic responds to learners' interests ranging from pop stars to scientific issues. One of its features is that though it focuses on content and collaborative work, it is not sustained in time. It is seen rather as a lesson within the EFL syllabus.

In each unit of his book *Dream Team 3* (2002) -- a textbook adopted by a large number of secondary schools in Argentina-- Whitney proposes a section called *English Across the Curriculum*. This reading section consists of a set of new lexical items related to any subject and within the range of learners' grammatical competence. In my opinion, this is close to the language extreme since it is neither content-related with reference to the school curriculum nor coherent as regards context.

Theme-based instruction is very common in ESL/EFL courses in which,, though the context is given by specific content areas, the focus of evaluation lies on language skills and functions. A theme-based course will be structured around unrelated topics which will provide the context for language instruction (Brinton *et al.* 2003: 14-15).

At the centre of the continuum, the adjunct model (Met, 1999) combines a language course with a content course. Both courses share the same content base and the aim is to help learners at university level master academic content, materials, as well as language skills.

The Language for Specific Purposes models, on the other hand, are aimed at preparing learners to meet the demands coming from academic instruction as well as job requirements. Although the focus is on content, materials can be

structured around microskills, functions and specific vocabulary (Brinton *et al.* 2003: 7).

Next in the continuum, the sheltered-content approach consists of a content course taught by a content area specialist in the target language. The student population consists of non-native speakers who are expected to master authentic material and, most of all, the content course syllabus (Brinton *et al.* 2003: 15-22).

Last, total immersion programmes can be mainly found in Canada and the USA at elementary and secondary levels. It has been applied to second language acquisition, in settings where language is learnt incidentally through content instruction and interaction within the classroom context (Dalton-Puffer, 2007; Brinton *et al.* 2003; Grabe and Stoller, 1997:80).

Regardless of their location in the CBI continuum, all these models share the view that language knowledge is best acquired when situated in a context where content knowledge provides the basis of instruction. However, it should be pointed out that the varied perspectives described above seem to work best when learners already have some knowledge of the target language.

### **The Role of Sociocultural Theory**

In this approach, language becomes a psychological tool which mediates between the text and the reader making learners explore new modes of discourse. For Vygotsky, everyday concepts mediate the acquisition of scientific concepts, which will in turn mediate between school knowledge and the analysis of everyday life. When introducing sociocultural theory, Lantolf and Thorne (2006: 59-60) assert that the human mind is mediated through physical and symbolic tools, such as language, which mediate the relationship between us and the objects of our experience. Since Vygotsky regarded education as a central sociocultural activity, they placed great emphasis on the interaction between teachers and learners. In learning activities, educators provide mediation so that learners assume little by little full control of their learning process.

Richards and Rodgers (2001:204-215) agree on the fact that people learn another language more successfully when they acquire information through it. Moreover, they state that CBI reflects learners' needs for learning a second language. Consequently, these authors view language learning as text discourse-based, drawn on purposeful integrated skills which should be built on learners' experience, and the information provided by a CBI programme should be perceived as leading to a desired concrete goal. As an example of CBI, they claim that Geography is a useful content area as it is highly visual, spatial and contextual. Moreover, authentic material can come from textbooks as well as the media in the form of documentaries, news reports and short articles. Richards and Rodgers (2001:215) also point out that CBI has two major goals: autonomous learning, and a learner who takes different roles such as interpreter, explorer, source of content, and joint participant in content and activities selection. By advancing these aims, the idea that learning and teaching should be seen as a dialectical and collaborative work between educators and learners is once again established on solid ground.

While CBI can be viewed as an approach to integrate language and content in foreign language teaching, CLIL, that is, content language integrated learning, is considered an umbrella term to cover a whole range of models and approaches. According to Wolff (2003:211-215), CLIL is a framework for the development of learner autonomy. Within this framework, Wolff identifies four essential concepts for CLIL: authenticity, reflection on the learning process, self-evaluation, that is, learners are encouraged to evaluate their own process of development, and

learning as social mediation. It is this last concept which Wolff explores the most as he unfolds learning into several issues. These concerns refer to the fact that, first, learning content must be represented in all its complexity with authentic materials which even learners can contribute to collect. Second, since learning is socially mediated, social co-operation in the pattern of group work must be favoured as it is a dominant feature in the process of learner autonomy. Last, as learning is the product of social constructions and collaboration, learners are encouraged to participate in the learning context by setting learning objectives and becoming responsible for their own roles in this socially embedded process (Gibbons, 2002:10).

### **In practice**

In my professional experience I have introduced the teaching of Literature in the last two years of a bilingual secondary school where learners' level of English is between upper-intermediate and advanced. As part of my explorations with a literature syllabus and personal interest in creative writing, I have designed different syllabi. One type of syllabus is mainly structured following a theme/topic-based approach. However, learners are first introduced to the foundations of Literature with particular emphasis on figures of speech. This unit in the syllabus serves as a bridge between learners' prior knowledge of the subject as a result of Literature instructed in Spanish and the building of new knowledge. Their previous experiences, therefore, mediate between their cultural capital and the contents proposed in the curriculum. Once a common framework is set, students are invited to become more involved in content selection by bringing stories, song lyrics or short extracts meaningful to them so as to analyse figures of speech and react to ideas relevant to their interests. Next we move on to group readings organised by topics. Both topics and literary examples can vary, since the main purpose is to facilitate a wide range of views and styles so that learners have a broader context at their disposal to write reaction papers or essays comparing some specific features or themes. Activities tend to be carried out in pairs so as to promote collaboration and peer-peer scaffolding which, in addition, allows students to have more chances of exchanging opinions and negotiating meaning when they are asked to report to the class answers based on content, comprehension and interpretation.

Another type of syllabus which I have devised organises Literature in four broad areas: Creative Writing, Prose, Drama, and Poetry. This order is not arbitrary, it responds to some particular situations in the context where this experience occurs. We start by exploring different literary techniques with a hands-on approach, which allows learners to try for themselves creative ways of producing a short-story while looking at language as a whole. Since this approach is generally adopted in Spanish Literature classes, this unit in the syllabus acts as a transition between both Literatures. Following this creative writing experience, prose is introduced by means of some focus on theory and texts they can choose from a wide range of genres. Even though it is their responsibility to choose texts according to their interests, students sometimes decide not to leave any option unread so that they know what those texts are about and are better able to choose which to read from the reviews presented.. The same procedure is followed for drama and poetry. Normally, poetry is left for the end of the school year to reduce stress on students and, secondly, to revisit Stylistics, as it were, theory and apply it once again to the creative writing of poetry.

These two approaches share the fact that even though language and content are equally important, it is content that is in focus. Language is not taught explicitly but is referred to within the rich context Literature provides. Literary terms are presented by the use of everyday concepts and applied to authentic tasks and

materials. Selected readings such as short stories or novel extracts are unabridged and learners have them compiled in the form of a sourcebook.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, our theoretical rationale and follow-up illustrations attempt to demonstrate that CBI could be considered an approach to integrate language and content since, in general terms, it seems to meet the principles and concerns present in sociocultural theory, a theory which suggests a new way of viewing the social processes of learning and teaching. Moreover, Literature could be regarded as an example of how subject content can materialize concepts such as mediation, scaffolding, ZPD, motivation and autonomy. This latter will eventually allow our learners to become aware of the fact that in society they can fly together with others, but, if they decide to do so, they can also fly by themselves.

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## **“Doing More with Less: Shorts in the ELT Classroom”**

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### **Abstract**

Audiovisual materials, and shorts in particular, are engaging and motivating tools for integrated skills development. This article presents an analysis of the most relevant features of short films and their pedagogical potential in the EFL setting. General guidelines for exploiting different types of shorts are outlined and illustrated with a variety of tasks that focus on meaning or form. Likewise, some practical aspects related to the implementation of a task-based approach are addressed.

### **Introduction**

In present times of globalisation, when our students are immersed in a new cultural world of technology, it is necessary to establish connections between new modes of communication and the ELT setting. Towards this end, this work aims at providing a framework for the use of shorts on DVD format in the classroom.

This article presents an analysis of the distinctive features of *animated shorts* and their potential for educational purposes. Animated shorts offer dynamism and fun by means of the combination of sound and visuals in contextualised situations. As their main asset is their brevity, they can be watched several times during a lesson. Likewise, they provide a useful tool for teachers to prompt students to go beyond the story and develop their ability to interpret the linguistic and visual input they are exposed to. An additional benefit is that these texts provide insights into the culture where they were produced, thus reflecting customs, traditions and values of the target language.

Shorts – with and without linguistic input – are examined in order to assess their potential. A task-based approach to the design of worksheets is presented with the objective of exploring the many pedagogical uses that these audiovisual texts can be put to in our lessons. Finally, the study emphasises the relevance of a methodology that includes short audiovisual texts on DVD in a systematic way in the ELT classroom.

### **Previous Work**

Films and videos have traditionally been used in the EFL context, as reported in the extensive bibliography on the use of these media (Stempleski and Arcario, 1992; Braddock, 1996; Brinton, 2001; King, 2002). DVDs – in particular – are new resources in the ELT setting and their benefits and drawbacks have been explored by Chun (1996) and King (2002), among others. Our previous work has focused on the potential of DVDs and the advantages of using a single-scene approach rather than whole films in the English class (Massi and Blázquez, 2006). Additionally, a wide variety of extra features has been addressed, such as previews, documentaries, shorts, deleted scenes, interviews, interactive games, video clips, the making of and the like (Massi and Blázquez, 2008). In fact, these bonus features provide a wealth of material that illustrates different genres and can thus be used as the basis for class activities in the language classroom. In this paper, we focus our interest on one of these audiovisual texts: *shorts*.

### **Shorts on DVD format**

Short films offer interesting opportunities for language development in the ELT classroom. Their main asset is their brevity – they usually run from five to twenty minutes – so they can be viewed several times. Besides, these texts are self-contained as they depict contextualised situations that have a beginning and an end. This feature makes them highly suitable to be used as freestanding audiovisual texts which can easily be accommodated at any moment during a lesson. As to the main functions of the language, interaction predominates, with short chunks that display most of the characteristics of oral discourse. Redundancy and repetition are complemented by prosodic and paralinguistic features such as speed, volume, gestures, eye contact, proximity and the like, and they become key aspects which have to be interpreted by the audience. Likewise, these audiovisual texts reflect the customs and traditions of the culture in which they were produced. Thus, they activate and enrich learners' background knowledge and pre-existing schemata, while stimulating the development of cultural awareness (Tomalin and Stempleski, 1993).

From a pedagogical perspective, it is challenging to provide extensive exposure to these texts so that students can get training in reconstructing the story, describing the characters, the setting and the conflict, which are key elements in narrative pieces. As short films focus on a single idea, they are adequate prompts for engaging students in the discussion of meaningful events and alternative endings. In addition, short films are widely available online. Art schools often require students to complete short films which are often posted on the Internet and can easily be accessed on YouTube.

### **Animation in ELT**

Animated shorts are films in which individual drawings, paintings or illustrations are photographed frame by frame. A common misconception about animated films views them as cartoons ideally suited to entertain children on a rainy Saturday afternoon. Though it is true that they are often directed to or appeal

to most to children and that they can easily be enjoyed by people of all ages. Besides, cinema scholars consider it a serious artistic medium, so it is advisable to provide some background about each film before viewing it in order to lead our learners to appreciate its aesthetic dimension.

Nowadays, the world of animation is a rich and powerful one. Students of all ages love this type of text and are very familiar with the latest releases. Where else can sharks speak other than in *Finding Nemo*? In which film can zoo animals travel to faraway lands all by themselves, if not in *Madagascar*?

Another characteristic is that the situations are usually humorous, with quirky characters and imaginative storylines that may lead to creative activities after watching the film. Finally, animated shorts convey a wide variety of complex emotions and ideas, which can create strong and lasting images of concepts such as sadness, happiness, embarrassment and the like. These unique features of animated films make them interesting and effective tools to stimulate the development and consolidation of the target language.

### Types of animated shorts

There are two types of animated shorts: those that offer a rich display of visual elements and verbal input and those that provide a set of visual images and have no linguistic input. The former offer a narrative piece in which the characters interact verbally throughout the story (see sample 1 below). By contrast, the latter present a sequence of events accompanied by background music and sound effects (see sample 2).



Sample 1

**A Christmas Caper** is a computer-animated 10-minute short produced by DreamWorks Animation. It was included on the *Madagascar* DVD in 2005, when the film was released.

The story is about four penguins – Private, Skipper, Kowalski and Rico – who are getting ready for Christmas. Private feels sorry for a lonely polar bear, so he goes to town to buy him a present. After he is mistaken for a toy and bought by an elderly lady, the three other penguins must save him from the lady's evil small dog.



Sample 2

**Lifted** is a computer-animated 5-minute silent short produced by Pixar. It was included as supporting material of the *Ratatouille* DVD which was released in 2006.

The story is about a young alien, Stu, who is inside a spaceship taking an exam in abduction. He must snatch a sleeping farmer under the watchful eye of his instructor, Mr. B. To pass his exam, Stu must follow the right procedure to lift the farmer and take him into the ship. After he fails the exam, Mr. B. takes over to complete the operation.

Both texts in the samples above can be used for the following purposes:

- to introduce a topic, for example, feelings and emotions, childhood, environmental problems, etc.
- to provide content material for students to get information on a particular topic
- to generate opinion on a controversial issue
- to round off a unit of work

Besides, these text-types contribute to the development of learning strategies such as predicting, inferring or guessing from context (by using visual clues, facial expressions, music, sound effects and the like). Additionally, cognitive strategies like note-taking for narrative reconstruction of events as well as compensation strategies such as using linguistic and other clues can be fostered.

However, if the teaching purpose is to provide wide exposure to phonological features, accents and intonation patterns, particular language functions, grammar points or lexical domains, or to reinforce the listening skill, then the most appropriate choice would be visual texts with linguistic input. On the other hand, when the overall aim is to provide training in image decoding and interpretation or to promote students' verbal output to further develop their productive skills, visual texts without linguistic input become the best option. Which of these two types of shorts will benefit our students most? The answer is that each of them may serve different purposes depending on our pedagogical objectives. For this reason, it is advisable to alternate so that students do not get used to one type of text – which may turn into a habit that will later become hard to break – and they can develop flexibility and adaptability to different options.

### **Methodological approach**

The approach to the use of shorts in the ELT classroom follows a strategy-based framework that adheres to the research line developed by Oxford, 1990; Mendelsohn, 1994; Mendelsohn and Rubin, 1995; Chamot 1995; Morley, 2001 and Herbert, 2004 in the area of listening to audio and audiovisual material. They have demonstrated that learning occurs in three phases:

(a). Preparing for learning or *pre-viewing stage*: learners activate prior knowledge, make hypotheses and predictions. They get ready to obtain information from visual and/or auditory clues and relate this information to what they already know. Some pre-viewing tasks involve asking warm-up questions to introduce a scene, speculating about characters or settings, creating a purpose for viewing or identifying specific lexical domains. The main objective of this stage is to generate expectations for viewing the text by means of a pre-set clear task (Brinton, 2001).

(b). On-line processing or *while-viewing stage*: learners select part of the incoming information and focus on general ideas first and specific ones later on. While-viewing tasks include taking down notes, jotting down new or interesting words or expressions, re-arranging the different parts of the story, etc.

(c). Consolidating and extending tasks or *post-viewing stage*: learners check comprehension and interpret the text, i.e. they use their background knowledge as well as the new information to establish connections and relationships. In the learning situation, students are expected to transfer some key aspects of the audiovisual text to similar real-life situations. Post-viewing tasks may involve completing multiple-choice texts, open-ended chunks or gapped texts, reconstructing the story, detecting main issues, carrying out role-plays, dramatisations, discussions and debates, writing a follow-up (e.g. a letter, a review, a report, etc.) and doing project work.

### **Types of tasks**

Tasks are important in foreign language learning as they lead learners to develop the skills they need to carry out real-world communicative tasks outside and beyond the classroom. Within the framework briefly sketched above, tasks are broadly defined as "activities in which the target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose in order to achieve an outcome" (Willis, 2007: 12). Two types of tasks are considered relevant:

(a). *Meaning-focused tasks*, which are designed to give students opportunities to use the target language for learning, to negotiate meaning and to make relevant linguistic choices. Additionally, they provide practice in viewing to get meaning from the input with the express purpose of making functional use of it immediately afterwards. Thus, they can also be called *language-in-use tasks*.

(b). *Form-focused tasks*, which are aimed at leading learners to the consolidation of specific language functions or forms, and also at drawing their attention to particular collocations and use of lexis. Because they are primarily designed to reflect on the structure and organisation of the target language, they can also be labelled *language-analysis tasks*.

The tasks can be used as templates of flexible nature that can be modified according to the objectives of a particular lesson. Because meaning-focused and form-focused tasks have a complementary role as they lead to the development of cognitive and metacognitive language learning strategies, it is advisable to design both task types to cater for students' different learning styles and individual preferences.

### **Conclusion: Doing more with less...**

Given the role media play in the world outside the classroom, students expect to find media inside the ELT classroom as well. Because watching complete films in class is time-consuming, shorts are interesting alternatives as they offer contextualised situations which have unity and coherence. Their brevity allows for repeated viewings, and this encourages our learners to assimilate and fully acquire different aspects of the target language. The lack of linguistic overload can help us establish clear focal points that can serve as the basis for both meaning and form-focused tasks.

We live in the age of the development of digital technology as much of our interaction with our globalised world is mediated by audiovisual messages. The nature and the specific features of shorts, films and animation appeal to a wide range of learning styles and cannot fail to enrich a teacher's portfolio of valuable classroom resources.

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## **“EFL teaching to the visually handicapped at Centro de Idiomas, UNL: A response to Diversity”**

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### **Abstract**

Ever since attempts have been made to describe the processes of L1 and L2 development, references to exceptional circumstances have been made, very often, though, in an *ad hoc* manner. In this paper we describe an academic endeavour under development at Centro de Idiomas, UNL, Santa Fe: EFL teaching to literate visually handicapped adults. We deal with the description of the target group, the methodology implemented and the materials used in the course, and report briefly on the results obtained so far.

### **Introduction**

*The way to help the blind ... is to understand, correct and remove the incapacities and inequalities of our entire civilization.*

Helen Keller, 1913:40



Two main principles underlie our presentation:

- a) Languages are learnt in interaction
- b) The process of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) in contexts of instruction is basically a question of input manipulation

The ideas we put forward here derive from studies in Language Acquisition (LA) in "normal circumstances" (NC). However, we find it relevant to bring them into the context of our proposal. It is important to begin this presentation explaining what is meant by "exceptional circumstances" (EC), a concept that is used profusely in the literature on LA in mentally or physically handicapped individuals. EC refers to situations in which communicative input to the learner is altered in quality and/or quantity. That is, circumstances in which (a) the quality and quantity of input is deficient or insufficient or (b) the input provided is normal and adequate, but sensory impairments limit the learner's ability to process all or some aspects of that input. These two types of circumstances may interact; the presence of sensory impairment may urge input providers to accommodate their production to meet the demands of the addressee, which in turn, affects language development. These aspects of LA relate directly with Chomsky's notion of *poverty of stimulus*:

*the deep structure which the child must learn to become a competent language user is not transparently obvious from the surface structure of sentences provided by parents [...] the child must learn grammar from positive instances only (Chomsky in Mills, 1994:240).*

Mills (1994) explains that it is not immediately obvious, as in the case of the deaf, why visual handicap should impact on second language development. However, the author adds, there are four ways in which blindness may affect communication: (a) In the blind, verbal communication is restricted to the auditory mode. (b) Even when the blind can create an image and relate word to meaning by amalgamating sound, touch and smell, they cannot see referents, which reduces contextualisation remarkably. (c) It has been empirically proved that lip movement provides important hints to learn phonology. (d) People, in their role of input providers, communicate with the sighted and the blind in different ways. This affects linguistic data in quantity and quality.

When teaching the handicapped one important question needs to be answered: Faced with some kind of physical impairment, what alternative routes to language learning are available for use? The response we give to this question will impact directly on the methodology we opt for.

It is understood that (1) if experience is an essential prerequisite for LA, then the blind will obviously learn language differently from the sighted, as their experience of the world is different, and (2) if we assume that there is a connection between language and cognition (not everybody agrees on this. See Piatelli-Palmarini, 1980), it is necessary to know more about cognitive development in the blind.

It is also relevant to point out that legally "blind" may mean any of the following: no light perception, minimal light perception, perception of contours, extreme short-sightedness; to which we may add "with a concomitant handicap". Then, if we agree that the most appropriate methodology is that which teaches in response to the ways in which people learn, obviously all the factors we point out

above will have a bearing on what we do in our classrooms and will undoubtedly impinge on our practices.

Adult educators, in most cases, are ill-equipped to assess and address the literacy needs of adults who are visually handicapped. According to Luke and Freebody (2000: 56), 'Literacy is the flexible and sustainable mastery of a repertoire of practices with the texts of traditional and new communication technologies via spoken, print, and multimedia'.

A literate person is flexible, that is, positive and strategically responsive to changing literacies; is able to sustain mastery as he/she knows enough to be able to reformulate current knowledge or access and learn new literate practices; has a range of knowledge, skills and strategies to use when appropriate; is able to use traditional texts: print and paper, and interact in face-to-face oral encounters; and is able to use digital and electronic texts that have multiple modes.

Often educational programmes for the blind have been based on Braille, which has special psychological connotations since it has become synonymous with absolute blindness. Learning Braille is a relatively slow process, and lack of tactile sensitivity may prevent certain individuals from accessing it. However, additional information related to social and cultural dimensions of the individual's life are relevant to develop plans and courses that are effective and personally meaningful for the handicapped.

The steadily growing population of adults who are visually impaired presents new challenges for those whose task it is to provide appropriate services. Foreign language educators interested in teaching English under exceptional circumstances should be aware of different techniques which go beyond a focus on specific task completion to address more situated and affective aspects. Attitude towards work, attention to detail, willingness to follow rules, tenacity in problem solving, and ability to interact with others are some of the key factors to be taken into consideration when designing a course, selecting and adapting the material to the target group and assessing learners.

Milian & Erin (2001) state that a sociocultural perspective examines the ways in which language is defined, valued, and used within the culture and community context of the individual. When applied to visual impairment, a sociocultural perspective includes the social, psychological, and cultural aspects associated with low vision. This social-constructivist view recognises that a person uses literacy and adapts to visual impairment in unique, contextually dynamic ways.

According to Sleeter and Grant (1994), the five goals of multicultural education promote: the strength and value of cultural diversity; human rights and respect for those who are different from oneself; alternative life choices for people; social justice and equal opportunities for all people and equity in the distribution of power among groups. These goals can help individuals who are visually impaired to understand the multiple dimensions of their identity and to provide services that are culturally relevant to these individuals and their family members.

For the purpose of this presentation, we will focus our attention on the experience we are carrying out at Centro de Idiomas, Universidad Nacional del Litoral. (Santa Fe - Argentina). Under this exceptional circumstance the teacher is expected to be flexible tailoring the syllabus in terms of learners' needs and their special learning styles. In so doing, educators support students to learn the way that is best for them.

Following Vygotsky's (1978) view of reading as a constructivist process and Freire's (1970) belief that we use our knowledge and beliefs to read the word and

read the world, we agree on the view that individuals can construct meaning from printed materials, signs, and computer messages as well as nontraditional "texts," such as music, gestures, religious symbols, rites, uniforms, and anything else we use to communicate or make sense of our world. Multiliteracies focus on technology and the emergence of multimedia texts and a multiliterate person must be literate with a range of texts and technologies. In the field of pedagogy, this implies examining the definition of text in a multimedia age. A text conveys meaning to a group of people. It is delivered by a platform and may comprise one or more modes. The platform by which it is delivered may be electronic, live or paper. Live texts are multisemiotic. They include music, drama or art. Having identified the texts students need to become familiar with, it is necessary to identify what students want to know and be able to do with those texts.

Depending on the context in which they will be used, the intended audience, and the platforms of delivery available, texts will comprise a particular set of semiotic systems. The MULTI in multiliteracies is about the necessity to have multiple forms of knowledge and understandings about literacy and social contexts that enable appropriate and successful performance in all aspects of life.

### **Practical Issues: The context, the learners, the classroom, the lessons**

With these principles in mind, we would like to share with you the piloting experience which has been undertaken since August 2008 at Centro de Idiomas (CI) - UNL.

CI, founded in September 2004, is a multilingual space created as part of the UNL Institutional Development Plan. It offers a wide range of university-certified courses and cultural activities meant to provide high-quality standards in foreign language education. Courses for both general and specific purposes and cultural activities are available to all community members. These adult-learner oriented courses are meant to enhance candidates' communicative competence in listening, speaking, reading and writing through a variety of multimedia support tools. This language diversity includes German, Chinese, Basque, French, Hebrew, English, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese and Spanish as a foreign language. Within this framework and taking into account linguistic, cultural and functional diversities, we have recently implemented a course in Argentine Sign Language and English for the blind.

We will now refer specifically to the English for the blind course. This innovative proposal has been designed to cover an A2 level syllabus according to the European Framework of Reference for the teaching, learning and assessment of languages. By the end of the course students are expected to: understand straightforward information on familiar matters; understand basic information and take part in a simple factual conversation on a predictable topic; complete forms and write short simple letters or postcards related to personal information; express simple opinions or requirements in a familiar context using the appropriate vocabulary and applying the rules of the target language; develop a positive cultural awareness towards the English-speaking people and identify different registers in the target language.

As regards the material, both student's book and workbook were made available in the digital mode in .doc format. Images and photos were replaced by the corresponding description of the situation in Spanish or in English, depending

on the students' level of proficiency. As JAWS<sup>4</sup> (Job Access With Speech) reads tables and graphs providing so many details that would work only as background noise, they were deleted or readjusted.

Students attend ninety-minute lessons twice a week. As the course started, they were informed about the methodology to be adopted and the characteristics of the course. A blind tutor showed both the teacher and the students how JAWS works. In an attempt to optimise the project, each student works with a computer and headphones. This technology becomes their textbook, complemented by the audio CD which accompanies the book. In this way, learning becomes more significant since opportunities are provided for students to develop both audio and tactile skills. Students are assessed following a formative approach. By the end of the term, a formal written and oral exam is taken which includes the four macro skills. At the end of each level, students are awarded an official certificate from the University.

The material chosen for this experience was the same that is used in regular English courses at CI: Oxenden, C, C Latham-Koenig, P Seligson & J Hudson (2004). *New English File Elementary* Student's Book. Oxford University Press. Unit one of the Students' book and the Workbook was loaded in two separate files in the students' PCs. There are different choices to be made concerning the programme configuration. JAWS reads letter by letter, word by word, line by line or a whole text. Students make the choices that suit the activity they are involved in.

Learners receive input from the teacher, the audio material of the course and the computer, which is their textbook. They try to understand everything they hear. Their auditory perception is quite accurate. They can identify the different English vowels; they can also identify certain features of GA and RP.

As for writing, some lessons were exclusively devoted to work on spelling because students did not have access to the software in their computers at home. Their attention was directed to spelling in order to avoid potential mistakes when they were required to write. The procedure was the following: JAWS was configured in Spanish, students read each word letter by letter and the teacher pronounced the word for them to associate spelling with pronunciation, then students were asked to repeat. Students were given some spelling and pronunciation rules which they were able to recover when they found a word representative of the rule. This work was done in Spanish until students were taught the alphabet. From that moment, they were expected to spell and revise spelling in English.

All the reading was done with the computer. Although the input came from the auditory channel, the strategy students were working on was reading and they did all the activities planned for that sake. Given the amount of input through the auditory channel and their ability to perceive, these students show a real interest in pronunciation. Pronunciation is approached following the material chosen for the course as well as students' demands. There is a careful work with different suprasegmental features, particularly rhythm. The purpose is to facilitate the production of short meaningful phrases. The work on rhythm contributes to intelligibility. This has an impact on students' production when they work on role play or when they have little text as cue and they are supposed to provide content by themselves.

The written production is just beginning to be developed. At this stage of the course they are producing texts of four to five lines. These are generally done as homework. In class, they only have to write phrases or longer chunks. We infer,

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<sup>4</sup> JAWS is a screen Reading software designed for the visually handicapped by the Blind and Low Vision Group at Freedom Scientific, Florida, USA.

from what we observe and from the students' comments that they find it difficult to check spelling and to identify the places where corrections should be made. Activities students have to solve on their own are similar to those done in class. Students get these activities loaded in their USB device in class or get them via e-mail. Evaluation was a part of the whole process. Both teacher and students agreed on the changes that needed to be made. These changes affected different aspects: format of (course) material, the time required by students to learn certain contents, the characteristics of the homework activities.

The final exam had two modalities: written and oral. The written exam consisted of four parts: listening comprehension, grammar, vocabulary and communication activities. The oral exam had three parts: a brief personal introduction on the part of the student, questions to answer and ask as the teacher indicated and an instance of interaction.

The pace of work was quite slow at the beginning. This may have been due to the inexperience of all the actors involved in the process. Then there was also the problem of the software. Students needed time to get used to working with it. Another reason might be the students' interest in cultural aspects, which very often led to incidental teaching. Their keen interest in pronunciation meant that more time was devoted to this aspect than in regular courses.

The tutor's teaching style had to be altered to address these particular learners. In any language course, the ideal would be for the students' voices to be the ones most frequently heard. But in this case, explanations are longer than usual to compensate the lack of the visual channel. Presentation of new language had to be made through contextualisations, in the students' L1 when necessary. New contents have to be anchored in prior knowledge. This aspect was enhanced by the students' need to associate everything done in class with their personal experiences.

The use of gestures is definitely different from what it is in other courses and it is tightly linked to the use of voice. Gestures cannot be used as scaffolding to meaning. The teacher cannot rely on gaze to appoint students to speak. Instead, she has to name them or touch them.

The use of space is another aspect that asked for special attention. Due to the disposition of the computers in the room, students have to sit next to each other. The CD player is placed behind them and so is the teacher. The teacher speaks to them from behind. This is not very comfortable for them because in order to interact with the teacher or their classmates they have to turn to their back and change their orientation. The distance between teacher and student is not the one conventionally kept. The teacher has to stand behind them. When they need help either with adjustments in the software configuration or with some activity they are involved with, the teacher has to stand too close to them. This is an intrusion to their intimate zone. Yet, they do not seem to feel invaded.

At this moment, another teacher is observing lessons so that she can start working with another group of students. We are also working on the preparation of new material for higher levels and revising what has already been done. So far the experience has been highly profitable from the academic viewpoint and certainly rewarding to all the people involved. We have taken the first steps to make English accessible to a population with special characteristics. Yet, we know that there is still a long way to go.

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## **"In what sense could "*They was follow by the man*" be ok?"**<sup>5</sup>

RODRÍGUEZ, SILVINA

ZINKGRÄF MAGDALENA

### **Abstract**

In this paper we analyse the recurrent mistakes produced by primary-school Spanish-speaking children learning English in two tasks designed to research the acquisition of passive constructions and unaccusative<sup>6</sup> verbs. The regularity and systematicity with which they occur and the directionality in terms of preference for a particular incorrect form (White, 2003) point to stages in their developing IL systems and reveal that the different subsystems of learners' IL grammar interact in the path until each structure is fully acquired.

### **1. Context**

Our research was carried out in a private primary school context where the teaching/learning environment resembles an English-as-a-Second-Language setting because of the three 50-minute periods taught every afternoon. The school provides students with an English-all-around atmosphere, which ensures ample

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<sup>5</sup> This paper presents results obtained within the Research Project (J014), *Estructuras tempranas y tardías en el desarrollo del lenguaje*, subsidised by Universidad Nacional del Comahue.

<sup>6</sup> Unaccusative verbs denote non-agentive events, like *exist*, or a change of state, like *fall* and *bloom*. They take only one argument, the role of which is that of "theme" or "patient". Like in passive constructions, this argument behaves as the syntactic subject of the sentence (although semantically it is not).

opportunities for learners to be exposed to the foreign language and use it naturally and purposefully. Thus, instances of structures, lexical bundles, discourse markers and organisers are part of the input they receive, which eventually leads to unconscious and implicit acquisition.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Objectives

The aim of the research was to study the acquisition of both unaccusative verbs and passive constructions and explore the difficulties participants experienced at an early stage in their learning process.

### 2.2. Participants

Twelve 5<sup>th</sup> graders were asked to participate in the study. Subjects' mean age is 9; 7, ranging between 9 and 12. Seven of the participants were girls and 4, boys. They have been learning English for 2 to 9 years (mean: 5). During the oral task, however, only 11 students were present (the twelfth dropped English lessons).

### 2.3. Data gathering procedures

The experimental design included a written and an oral task that would complement each other in the type of data gathered: while the written task (WT) would provide researchers with information on learners' use of passive truncated and/or full constructions and unaccusative verbs in a controlled setting, the oral task (OT) would show more spontaneous language use, even when some prompts were given. The WT was administered during one period in the afternoon and the OT took place one week later on two different days due to the number of children to be interviewed.

#### 2.3.1. The written elicited production task

The verbs selected for this task, which have been grouped below, were presented in two conditions each: a) plural subject + singular object (*The boy and the girl pushed Tom*) and b) singular subject + plural object (*The boy found Tom and his sister*). As can be noted, two of the verbs were irregular and the other two were regular.

Passive constructions		Unaccusative verbs		
follow	bite	arrive	appear	fall
find	push	leave	melt	float

Subjects in the cases of the verbs *follow* and *find* varied according to the feature [+/- human] (*The cat found the parrot and the bird*). For obvious reasons the verb *bite* was used only with animals as subjects and objects.



Each of the unaccusative verbs was illustrated in a picture. The structure was supposed to shed light on what learners knew about word order in the use of unaccusative verbs, since in English they always follow the syntactic subject (unlike Spanish where the order can be SV or VS.) To this purpose, participants were given a copy of the task which included 18 test items organised into three types of activities (see sample in Appendix A):

- 1) Transform 12 sentences in the active voice (describing an accompanying picture) into its passive counterpart starting each sentence with the given subject and using the appropriate form of the verb in brackets.
- 2) Answer the question "What's going on?" to describe the situation in the adjoining picture making use of the unaccusative verb provided.
- 3) Write a possible L1 version for each of their answers (passives and unaccusatives) to ensure participants' understanding of the situation and show their L1 knowledge of the structures.

The time allotted for the task was 50 minutes, with some learners handing in earlier.

### 2.3.2. The elicited imitation oral task

Participants listened to two sets of 5 and 6 situations respectively described by one researcher while looking at some pictures illustrating the actions (see Appendix B). After each stretch, learners retold the events when they were shown the corresponding picture. Before the test proper, participants were taught how the elicited imitation task worked with three additional verbs that were not unaccusative (*sleep, eat and kick*).

Learners were interviewed one at a time during approximately 10 minutes and their responses were recorded with an mp3. Even though the task is characterised as "imitation", participants are actually producing spontaneous language prompted by the picture and the auditory stimuli given by the interviewer earlier. Because participants needed to have looked at one whole set of pictures and listened to the interviewer's description before turning to their own production, the time elapsed between the stimulus and their response was long enough for them not to be able to "imitate" the stimulus unless equipped with the language to do so. Learners' production was elicited through the question "What's going on here/in this picture?" The verbs selected for this task were ***melt, fall, float, slip, arrive, appear, stand, fly, leave/ go home, break*** (2) and *live* (those in bold-face type were also used in the written task).

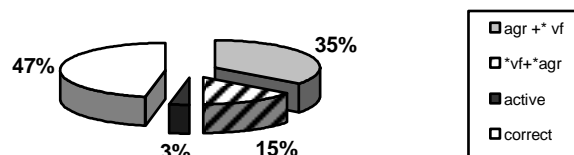
## 3. Results and discussion

### 3.1. The written elicited production task

The answers in this task indicate that participants know both structures, even though the passive voice had not been taught formally and explicitly at the time of the experiment.

### 3.1.1. The use of the passive voice

141 sentences containing a passive construction were produced, out of which 42, 55% were correct. The remaining answers presented inaccuracies of various types<sup>7</sup> (see Graph 1 below).



Graph 1.: Distribution of responses for the passive construction

Careful analysis of these categories reveals that two subgroups contain agreement inaccuracies (\*agr + vf and \*vf+\*agr), the sum of which is 22, 68%. Only two participants misused a plural form of the auxiliary verb accompanying a singular subject (the Spanish version indicating a correct passive interpretation), while in all other cases, a singular form of *be* follows a plural subject, as in (4) and (5):

(4)\**Paul and his sister was found.*

(5)\**The parrot and the bird was find.*

As regards incorrect verb forms, the results show that both *follow* and *bite* presented equal percentages of mistakes (50% of the answers given for them). Bearing in mind that *bite* – *bit* – *bitten* are lexically unknown words, it is quite unexpected to find the same percentage of error in a regular verb as *follow*. Three participants consistently made mistakes in the verb forms of both verbs, always resorting to the bare infinitive form. Five other participants produced incorrect forms of *follow*, while four produced incorrect forms of *bite*, always choosing the same form. While some learners appeared not to doubt as regards verb form and systematically chose an incorrect one, others selected either one or the other alternatively. This variability might be directly related to the fact that in their interlanguages both forms might coexist and compete, indicating an unstable IL grammar at this stage.

### 3.1.2. The use of unaccusative verbs

Against our predictions, participants in general did not use the six unaccusative verbs correctly (36,70%) and only *arrive* and *leave* obtained 50% of correct answers. Most of the inaccuracies encountered involve an auxiliary verb accompanied by either an incorrect form of the main verb as in (6), where a past form appears, or in (7), where the participant has resorted to an infinitive form.

(6)\**The peoples are arrived the house*

(7)\**The ice-cream is melt.*

<sup>7</sup> Since the structure had not been taught, productions presented the agent as introduced by many prepositions different from *by*. These mistakes exceed the scope of our paper.

These mistakes seem to respond to attempted progressive tenses in that both types include the auxiliary *be*. Another important source of inaccuracy lies in the agreement between subject and auxiliary verb or main verb. The data indicate a significant tendency towards the use of singular forms of auxiliary *be* and bare infinitive forms of main verbs when compound verb tenses are attempted.

(8) *They leave of [sic] the house.*

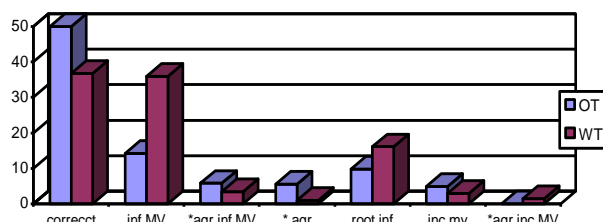
(9) *\*The moon appear.*

In fact, when participants did not use the progressive tense, they resorted to structures involving plural subjects like (8) to produce correct sentences. Three participants who used unaccusatives as in (8) also answered one or two questions as in (9). Thus, sentences like (8) might have been unintentionally made correct by inserting what White (2003) terms “a default form”, i.e. one that substitutes for others (p.196), which some of these learners use at this stage due to its similarity to the form in (9) and the root infinitive form. This default form appears to be their choice in sentences like (7) when unable to select the correct *-ing* participle to form a progressive tense or to indicate present simple form for the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular as in (9).

Despite the numerous errors made when using unaccusative verbs, there is no single instance in the data of transitivity of the verb (attaching a direct object to it), or of VSO word order, typical of and acceptable in their L1 (*Salió la luna*) but characteristically incorrect in English (*\*Appeared the moon*). These findings clearly reveal participants’ knowledge of the use of this type of verbs, the problems they may be experiencing with the necessary morphological processes relative to inflection and verb forms as well as their strategies to overcome these obstacles from the structures and forms available in their interlanguages.

### 3.2. The oral task

Because of the unexpectedly large number of morphological mistakes found in the written task with respect to the use of unaccusative verbs<sup>8</sup>, an experiment was carried out in order to get participants to produce these verbs in a less controlled situation. In the oral task (OT) participants in general successfully produced the expected verbs and when their memory or knowledge of the verb failed, they resorted to other unaccusative verbs available in their lexicons. While some of the errors that appeared in the written task (WT) were also recorded in the oral data, this was the case to a much lesser degree, as shown in Graph 2.



Graph 2.: Distribution of responses per task

<sup>8</sup> Since the passive voice had not been explicitly taught in the L2 classroom, such a large number of mistakes was expected for passive constructions but not for unaccusatives.

The comparison reveals that at the oral task participants were, on the whole, more accurate in their production of unaccusative verbs. The percentages of the No-agreement (\*agr) category, \*agr + infinitive form of the main verb (\*agr inf MV) and incorrect form of the main verb (Inc MV) appear to have slightly increased in the oral task, although the difference is not significant. Instances of the infinitive form of the main verb, as in example (5), appear to have reduced by more than half.

For both tasks the percentage of use of the progressive tense is similar (45,8 % in the oral task and 56% for the written), but the contrast lies in the distribution of answers in this tense across participants: the eleven participants in the oral task produced at least one correct instance of the present progressive tense (some learners providing 4, 5 and even 7), whereas in the written task only three out of twelve learners used it accurately. Moreover, correct answers in the deferred imitation task were also expressed in a variety of other tenses used correctly: 30% are like those in (8), 7% are 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular simple present instances and the remaining 17% are instances of the simple past tense, which had not so far appeared.

#### **4. Conclusion and implications for language teaching**

The mistakes observed in the two structures and across tasks are clustered around the forms chosen for the auxiliary verb and for the main verb. In the former, learners mostly tend to use the singular form with a plural subject, mainly in the simple past tense (*was*) for the written task, and in the present for the oral task (*is*). As regards the main verb, participants show a marked preference for the bare infinitive form, instead of the past participle, in passive sentences, and instead of the -ing form, in unaccusative progressive constructions. These choices reveal that some morphological aspects are lagging behind in L2 acquisition. There is reason to believe that eventually these participants may be able to accurately retrieve inflected verb forms, since most of them have successfully used them at least once.

The regularity and systematicity with which these errors occur and the directionality in terms of preference for a particular incorrect form (White, 2003) provide an insight into these learners' real competence, pointing to stages in their developing IL systems. While it is no news that the acquisition of these structures will take some time to be accurately produced, there is evidence to claim that word order appears to be acquired earlier than morphology, since no word order errors were observed. A second claim that can be made is that the different subsystems of learners' IL grammar seem to interact until each structure is fully acquired. Learners' auxiliary system develops concurrently with verbal morphology, not *after* or *before* it as much teaching and many textbooks would seem to assume. This strengthens the claim that language acquisition is not a linear process, and changes in one part of the grammatical system (for example, gaining knowledge of the passive voice) will necessarily affect the rest. The fact that learners show inconsistencies and great variability in the use of auxiliaries and verbal morphology at a pre-intermediate level would indicate that formal instruction in the form of explicit teaching (by way of intensive practice, explanation and over-correction) may not lead to implicit knowledge directly. However, correct instances of passive constructions prove that formal instruction is not of essence to the development of implicit knowledge, which is intuitive since the learner "is unlikely to be aware of having ever learnt and is probably unaware of its existence" (Ellis, 1997:111).

On the basis of the data obtained, we can assert that responses like the one in the title, “\**They was follow by the girl*”, are evidence of some of the typical steps in L2 acquisition, according to the literature and could be considered “right” because they evince how the word order rules typically governing L2 structures are respected. Besides, these responses (and the variability found across tasks for one same participant) indicate that learners are aware of the need for a certain inflected form of the verb, which on occasions they cannot retrieve. The fact that they sometimes make use of this correct finite form points to its availability in their interlanguage, which may or may not be accessed at different times (Ellis, 1997: 67). The two structures studied in our experiments interact with one another and affect the way each of them is produced, as reflected by the similarities found in the errors across structure.

As foreign language acquisition researchers, there is evidence for us to claim that participants in our studies have knowledge of the passive voice and of the use of unaccusative verbs. As EFL teachers, we cannot, however, overlook the fact that sentences like the one in the title are inaccurate. And in our roles of teachers, we will be faced with the task of assessing our learners’ performance in the target language, and will eventually deduct points in formal tests due to this type of inaccuracies. Yet, as we have shown through the analysis of the data, these errors are good signs of the typical acquisition process of passives and unaccusatives.


One further issue to be raised relates to the approach to teaching English. The relatively important percentage of correct (as well as the attempted incorrect) instances of passive structures obtained from the written elicited production task in this English-all-around environment lends support to the claim that the provision of input resembling that of a native-like setting contributes to implicit knowledge of certain structures, even if these have not been taught formally. In due course, however, instruction will be needed to make learners “consciously attend to the formal properties of the input” (Ellis, 1997: 116).

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**Appendix A: The Written Elicitation Task**

2



The boy and the girl pushed Tom. (push – pushed – pushed)


Tom .....

.....

Versión en castellano .....

.....

3



The boy found Tom and his sister (find – found – found)

Tom and his sister .....

.....

Versión en castellano .....

.....

**Appendix B: The Oral elicited Imitation Task**

1. Oh look! The ice-cream is melting.
2. How nice! The eggs are breaking  
Three chicks are born.
3. Oh, no! The yellow pig is slipping and it's falling into the water.
4. The other pigs are jumping into the water too.  
And look! The pigs are floating, they are not sinking.
5. The tree has got so many apples that ... look! One branch is breaking.

## **“Making ESP work in the classroom”**

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### **Abstract**

The discussion of ESP has moved mainly around the specification of learners' needs and the elaboration of syllabuses based on those needs. These topics do not exhaust the complex and varied aspects involved in an ESP strategy. We would like to present other aspects, such as the Process of Immersion, the Organization of the Teaching-Learning Process, The Teachers' Attitude, and The Monitoring of the Process, as well as some methodological elements that can play a decisive role in the final outcome of ESP courses and their realization in the context of the classroom. This paper is based on what we have learned from the ESP experience, in Cuba, over the past twenty years and identifies elements that may contribute to building a comprehensive ESP program strategy.

## Introduction

The development of ideas and concepts in support of a rationale for ESP as a valid alternative to the older view of "general English", has attracted wide attention and recognition and, as a result of its growing importance over the last three decades, many teachers moved from "*the comforts and certainties of the city of ELT, to the brave new world of ESP*". (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

From the beginning, the initial and final letters of ESP, that is, E and P stood with unanimous acceptance for English and Purposes. The S, however, at the beginning meant "specific", then turned to "special", and was finally replaced by far more direct connotations such as: A for Academic, O, for Occupational, or more precise titles such as: English for Aviation, English for Hotel Workers, English for Medical Sciences, English for Science and Technology, and so on...I fully agree, however, with John Swales who, since 1986, prefers the "S" to mean specifiable. So it reads English for Specifiable Purposes.

Apart from the theoretical debate on ESP, which has emerged from time to time, for example, Widdowson (1983-84), Richards (1989), the discussion of ESP has moved mainly around the specification of learners' needs and the elaboration of syllabuses based on those needs. These topics, however, important as they are, do not exhaust the complex and varied aspects involved in an ESP strategy, especially if we refer not only to the organization of courses but, more in the spirit of ESP, to the implementation of language teaching projects, and to the realization of ESP in the context of the classroom.

## Scenarios

The two most frequent scenarios for ESP are pre-service courses and in-service courses.

### Pre-service

- a) Students who have finished high school education and are majoring in one of the fields of specialization at the University, such as Medicine, Tourism, Aviation,
- b) Students who have finished high school education and are applying for a job

These students have studied English in high school, but in most of the cases they are not able to do much with the language in terms of real communication. Therefore, they must face a period of general English with some level of awareness of the language used in the field. They usually study with the help of a textbook of General English which the teacher must S.O.A.R, (verb invented by Jack Richards



with regard to the use of his textbook New Interchange. S.O.A.R stands for: Supplement, Omit, Adapt, Reorganize.

Usually this period consists of two levels of around 120 hours each. The relation between general English and ESP starts from a priority of GE at the beginning, moving gradually to a priority of ESP by the end of the second period.

### In-Service

- a) Executives, technicians, and professionals in one of the fields, who are learning English to complement their qualification for the requirements of their job, such as Physicians and technicians in medicine, tourist guides, managers, or waiters in tourism, and pilots, air controllers or stewards in aviation.

Those who have not acquired an intermediate level of English in their job, must follow the General English period.. Those who have acquired an intermediate level of English using the language in their jobs facing communicative situations, such as pilots and air-traffic controllers in aviation, tourist guides in tourism, and physicians in medicine, may go directly to a Special program of about 80 hours. The emphasis in this program has a priority of ESP, with the necessary attention to General English according to the problems made evident in the procedures applied in the classroom.

### **An ESP Strategy**

Among the many elements involved in an ESP strategy for language teaching, we would like to mention some which are present in our experience in ESP classrooms in Cuba, that can play a decisive role in the final learning outcome expected of "high surrender value courses", Corder (1975), as ESP courses are supposed to be. In this sense we would like to mention: *The Process of Immersion*, *The Special Organization of the teaching-learning process*, *The Teacher's Attitude*, and *The Monitoring of the process to maximize learning*.

### Process of immersion

This goes far beyond the mere inclusion of technical words or the specialized language of the field, as it is sometimes understood. It means, instead, penetration of the environment where the teaching learning process is going to take place. The situation in which the foreign language is going to be used may be completely unknown to the ESP teacher or specialist. If he/she wants to incorporate those situations into classroom practices, language behavior and learning materials,

he/she has to understand from an ESP perspective the purposes, the contents and the rationale for meaningful interactions and situations, that is, he has to somehow experience them, at least through observation, but much better through direct participation, and become familiar with their discourse (s) before approaching curriculum design or teaching.

The difference between an Immersion Process, in the way we use the term here, and a Needs Analysis or a Target Situation Analysis (Chambers, 1980), for ESP is the difference between an observer of linguistic elements to be incorporated into a syllabus and an observer of pedagogic elements to be taken into consideration in the teaching learning process. This difference holds true even when taking into account the detailed profile of learners' needs designed by Munby (1978). Both procedures, the Target-Situation Analysis and the Immersion Process, are useful and necessary tools, not contradictory but rather complementary as important features in an ESP strategy.

#### Organization of the teaching learning process

Regular English Language Learning courses most often take place in an educational setting, while ESP courses take place mostly in a work setting, where the teaching learning process is inserted as an extraneous and sometimes conflicting professional duty. The schedule, the class hours, the change of shifts by some workers, etc., may interfere with the normal work process taking place in the centre. The day-to-day operation of the profession, ironically, may require, yet not be able to support, the development and implementation of the necessary ESP Program

It is not easy to adapt the characteristics of the work of pilots and air traffic controllers in aviation, desk clerks in Tourism, or physicians and technicians in medicine, to sequences of regular classes with a fixed schedule.

According to the experience so far, there cannot be a fixed schedule for all the language classes, and this asks for different solutions. These might include:

- classes every other week, according to the shifts. These classes, however, can be, as intensive as 4 to 6 hours, five days a week. As a complement, homework and individual tasks are assigned to be done in the free time they have.
- intensive periods of classes, for two or more consecutive weeks according to the shifts of the workers..
- classes twice a week, which are repeated on consecutive days, so as to provide opportunities for those who could not attend one day, to attend the following day.

As a whole, there must be a solution for each particular situation, so that the specific conditions of the work are taken into consideration while the systematic nature of the learning process is preserved as well.

### Teacher's attitude

The creation of an ESP learning community can only be achieved if we consider it as an interaction taking place between equals, that is, between professionals. The teacher of English is a pedagogical professional. However, the students in the groups are not simply students in an English class, but they are also professionals with many years of experience in different fields such as aviation, medicine, tourism, and others. The teacher can help in the area of teaching and improving their use of English; the students can contribute their knowledge of the specific environment and the particular forms of language that are required in the circumstances where the language is used. We could say that they are two professionals who both learn and complement each other in a very important and indispensable way striving for the common goal of learning.

### Monitoring of the process to maximize learning

Initial processes of classification of students are precisely that: initial. There will always be differences among students, which may or may not be captured. Therefore, you cannot simply wait for courses to finish without an interim monitoring component.

In the best interest of the students and organizations, it is necessary to detect those students who are the most advanced in each group who could advance at a faster pace. If these students are placed in special groups with special programs that lead them more quickly towards their outcome of successful completion of the language level required for their jobs, and if these groups are organized with the objective of testing those students as soon as they are ready, a number of the scheduling and pedagogical issues mentioned earlier would be resolved.

This monitoring strategy would allow for a number of students to obtain their certificate in a shorter period of time. . It would a) reduce the number of students in regular groups, b) provide the possibility of re-arranging the rest of the groups, based on more complete linguistic information, c) maximize the expertise of prepared teachers and d) by accelerating the whole process of learning, make better use of the limited English language teaching time generally available to students and teachers in ESP programs.

## **In the Classroom**

When it comes to the realization of ESP in the context of the classroom, there are also some important methodological elements that must be taken into consideration if the classroom is going to be a real ESP classroom, and not merely a traditional class with the addition of some specialized vocabulary.

### An ESP class is different

- The objective of the class is not to teach one of the fundamental structures of the language, or a language function. It is to provide opportunities for the students to use the language in a natural way, and to express his/her ideas, opinions or comments about a topic related to his field of work.
- Each one of the units of the program will deal with a typical communicative situation from the field, for example, a ward round, or a case discussion in medicine, an interaction between a hotel manager and a customer about a complaint, in tourism, or an interaction between a pilot and a traffic controller in aviation. They can also be general themes about the field, for example: the development of tourism in your country, the state of medical care in under developed countries, or the functioning of an airport.

## **Procedures**

- a) The teacher will introduce the topic in oral, written or video form, and will open a discussion about the topic, assigning tasks to work in groups.
- b) The students, working in groups, will discuss the topic, will do the tasks assigned by the teacher, and will select a member of the group to make an oral presentation.
- c) The selected student will make an oral presentation to the whole class.
- d) The teacher will listen carefully to the different presentations and will take notes of the problems made evident during the presentations (grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, etc.), and will check the student is not merely reciting something that he /she learned by heart.
- e) After the presentation of the different groups, the teacher will conduct a session of analysis of all the problems observed in the presentation, and will offer guidelines on how to solve them.
- f) The students, in groups, will discuss the problems outlined by the teacher and will work on the guidelines to solve them.
- g) The students, individually, will prepare their own presentation of the topic.
- h) The teacher will make individual evaluation of the presentations made by all the students.

## Final remarks

According to our experience over the years applying an ESP strategy as the one described above, we have been able to obtain the following main results:

- A better preparation of teachers to function in an ESP context
- A better relationship between teachers and students who, as equals, can create a learning community where both contribute to the learning process.
- A better design of programs that take into account the real interests and needs of students.
- A better use of the time available for courses

Following an ESP strategy that takes into account the elements and procedures outlined above, we can have real ESP classes, with positive results. We also believe it may even contribute to building new theory and future directions for research in the field of ESP.

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# **"Presentation, Practice and Consciousness Raising of Grammar Structures in Elementary EFL Coursebooks"**

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this paper is to analyze how grammar structures are presented and practiced in elementary EFL coursebooks, as well as the activities that lead students to reflect on the form of the linguistic items. We focus on the prevailing approach (inductive or deductive) in the textbooks studied, taking into account the function served by the activities: exposure, rule exploration and verification, rule incorporation and use.

## **1. Introduction**

The acquisition of a foreign language in the classroom setting whether at a school or a language school entails a process of exposure to input from the teacher, the fellow learners, the materials and the media, as well as a process of gaining awareness regarding the properties of the target language and the production of output in the context of different kinds of activities. In this paper we aim at analyzing how elementary EFL coursebooks contribute to the process of acquisition and we seek to find answers to the following questions: How are grammar structures presented? What kinds of instructional practices do the coursebooks deploy for the learners to build insights into the working of the target language? What are the most recurrent types of output practice activities offered? Answers to these questions will be sought in six elementary EFL coursebooks published in the present decade: *New English File Elementary* (Oxenden, Latham-Koenig and Seligson, 2004, henceforth NEFE), *Log in Starter* (Llanas and Williams, 2007, LIS), *Pacesetter Starter* (Strange and Hall, 2000, PS), *Way to Go 1* (Lawley, 2009, WTG), *We can do it! Intro* (Downie, Gray and James, 2007, WCDI), *What's Up? 1* (Myers, Jackson and Tiberio, 2007, WU)<sup>9</sup>. Our analysis is based on a pedagogic procedure

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<sup>9</sup> In every case we have analyzed the activities contained in the student's book, workbook, teacher's book and other extra resources in printed form.

that recognizes different stages in the process of acquisition of the new language structures including the initial exposure of learners to the new language (presentation), consciousness-raising (rule exploration and verification), practice (incorporation of the rules in the learners' interlanguage system) and production (rule use or application). The main tenets of the pedagogic procedure are rooted in contemporary SLA research on Form-Focused Instruction (FFI) and the pedagogic proposal offered by Andorno, Bosc and Ribotta (2003). These tenets have been described in López Barrios and Villanueva de Debat (2006) and Villanueva de Debat, López Barrios, and Leiguarda (2007). After a characterization of the procedures for the presentation of new language, the concepts of Consciousness-raising (CR) and practice will be defined. On the basis of these operational definitions, the analysis section will deal with the findings made in the corpus and we will conclude with a summary of the main trends observed.

## 2. Exposure, Reflection and Output

Overall, two main ways of presenting new language are described in the ELT methodology literature: the situational presentation and the presentation using a restricted listening or reading text (Scrivener, 2005; Gower, Philips and Walters, 1995). In the first case a situational context is created by the teacher and visuals and realia are used to convey the meaning of the new language. In the second, a brief listening or reading comprehension activity acts as the carrier of the new language items. Conditions are also often created for the target language item to be salient in the input (through *input enhancement* techniques such as bold type) as well as frequent in its appearance (*input flood*). These activities constitute a first formal approach to the new language and serve to clarify the form, meaning and use of the new language. Since acquisition is dependent on exposure to the target language, learners need receptive skills activities whereby they extract meaning and focus their attention on the new forms thus allowing them to form and test their own hypotheses.

Research conducted over the last decades has witnessed a preoccupation with the way in which learners incorporate the new language in their interlanguage system. Notably the study carried out by Norris and Ortega (2000) is recurrently referred to in order to reaffirm the positive effect of reflective practices that make learners pay attention to the features of the new language and to discover the way it works. Form-focused instruction of this kind will be called "consciousness-raising" in the context of this paper. In a previous contribution we characterized this instructional practice as "an inductive process of guided discovery in which learners formulate hypotheses about the working of language features and subsequently test them on the basis of data, thus making their own generalizations and implicitly or explicitly formulating a rule." (López Barrios and Villanueva de Debat, 2006).

A concept that needs definition is that of practice. A review of definitions of this concept in the ELT literature reveals the following terms as characteristics of practice: consolidation of learning and improvement of performance, memorization of form, assimilation of meaning, transfer from short-term to long-term memory, manipulation of language items with some degree of subconscious automaticity (Ur, 1996; 1988; Davies & Pearse, 2000; Spratt, 1991). Taking into account these characteristics of practice, we agree with Ellis' (2002) distinction between Practice and Consciousness-Raising in that the latter "does not involve the learner in *repeated production*<sup>10</sup>." (169) and helps the learner to know about the language structure. In brief, practice is primarily behavioural while consciousness-raising is essentially concept-forming in orientation (ibid). Because of these two distinct functions, both types of instructional practices are necessary for the development of

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<sup>10</sup> Italics in the original.

the learner's interlanguage and as research suggests, they need to coexist in order for the learner to develop both explicit and implicit knowledge of the underlying rules. One interesting didactic proposal that distinguishes different phases in the acquisition of both types of knowledge is that by Andorno, Bosc and Ribotta (2003). Rooted in Corder's seminal distinction between "inductive practice" and "hypothesis-testing" activities, the authors have devised a scheme consisting of four stages: *rule discovery*, *rule verification*, *rule incorporation* and *rule use*. Because the two first stages consist of activities that do not demand the production of output, we will subsume them into "consciousness-raising activities" whereas the two last stages consist of the kinds of activities that we call "practice activities", i.e. those that aim at the student's production of the target language items with different degrees of control. The following diagram shows the proposed scheme:

Stage	Grammar activity type
Rule discovery and exploration	CR
Rule verification	CR
Rule incorporation	Controlled and guided practice
Rule use	Guided and free production

### 3. Analysis

The six coursebooks analysed, in most of the cases, present the new language item, *there is – there are*, using a restricted reading text. There are few instances of presentation using a restricted listening text since most of the times learners read and listen to the text at the same time. This initial exposure through a receptive skills activity allows students to become familiar with the new language items and to take note of their meaning. Some comprehension activities, such as ticking the right option, marking sentences true or false or answering questions, accompany the text. Before the reading text, there are usually pre-reading activities to activate students' schemata on the topic of the text or on vocabulary items for example, the parts of the house or its furniture. This knowledge activation is carried out, for instance, by asking learners to look at a photo or read some notes, ads or sentences from the reading text and then, answer questions. The only exception to this form of presentation is found in the coursebook *Log in* which makes use of a situational presentation to introduce the new structure whose procedure is described in the Teacher's book. This situational presentation serves as an instance to pre-teach the new language before students encounter it in the texts that follow. It is important to mention that as the reading texts are restricted input the conditions are created for the new language item to be naturally recurrent in the text. The structures *there is / are* to express existence and non-existence that we chose to analyze in the six coursebooks are conveyed through reading texts dealing with topics such as description of a house, of a person's hometown or renting a flat, offering a suitable context for the presence of these language items.

As regards the way the new language item is presented in the reading texts, it is observed that the singular and plural form of the structures is presented simultaneously and that not all the forms are presented together. Some forms such as the negative, are not presented formally, but learners are, in some cases, asked to derive them from the familiar forms. The exception to this tendency is *Log in* since it deploys diverse situational presentations to introduce the different forms separately. The interrogative form of yes/no questions with the corresponding short answers is not presented right away but dealt with at a later point in the textbook. It is worth pointing out that the different reading or listening texts included all along the units of the coursebooks also serve as valuable input for learners to aid



their acquisition and also as a support and models for different kinds of production activities.

The discovery and exploration of the new forms take place after more or less abundant input is offered. This tendency confirms the contemporary notion that more unobtrusive approaches to grammar instruction such as input flooding of largely comprehensible language is preferable to offering ready-made rules as a way of presenting new language. In most of the cases analyzed this is done inductively, with an alternation of inductive and deductive approaches at different points during the sequence of activities. In one case a predominantly deductive approach is proposed, but at least in one activity students are asked to reflect on the basis of the input and analyze the form. In some cases, consulting the grammar reference section is regarded as a voluntary activity (LIS) whereas in others (WTG, WCDI, NEFE) students first study the rules provided and then solve activities. In one case (PS) grammar tables and explanations are offered in the review section at the end of the unit.

From a cognitive point of view, the practice described above means that learners are first exposed to input containing the new language features and that subsequently their attention is drawn to their form and meaning (*noticing*). Moreover, making provision for both inductive and deductive approaches is in line with the recognition of different learning styles and the need to provide for different access routes to the new information.

Discovery fosters autonomy since instead of exclusively relying on the teacher to explain the rules or to lead the learners into the discovery through a teacher-lead interaction with the whole class, most of the coursebooks offer activities for the learners to discover the regularities by asking them to determine a rule (PS, WCDI), identify the new form in a text (LIS), systematize it in a chart or according to a given principle (NEFE, LIS), derive the new forms from other forms provided in a chart (WU) or through analysis of the new form (PS, WTG). After the discovery of the rules students are often made to verify the rules, mostly through discrimination and provision of the missing form in sentences.

The aim of *rule incorporation* activities is to foster automatization in the use of the linguistic items whose rules learners are processing. The activities, which involve diverse mental and linguistic operations, consist of controlled or guided exercises that require the production of repeated output. Learners are expected to reproduce or manipulate the items without resorting to reflection. Because they involve some form of repetition they encourage memorization, and are thus a preparation for the next stage of *rule use* which will require the learners to use their attentional resources on the message. In the textbooks analysed, the target structures are practised through varied types of exercises (*reproduction, transformation, substitution, formation*). Most textbooks strike a balance between controlled and guided ones (the average for the books analysed is 50% for each category). Although there is variety among textbooks as regards the types of activities included, within books there is a trend to offer the same type of practice: 4 *formation* exercises out of 7 (NEFE); 4 *substitution* out of 5 (WTG) and there is one extreme case (LI) where all the exercises are of one type: *formation* (for instance to unscramble sentences or to ask and answer questions following a model). All in all, the prevailing trend is to include mostly exercises of the *formation* type (64%).

It was also found that most coursebooks prepare the students for the next stage of *rule use*, when students apply the rules they have automatized and consequently can focus on the message they want to transmit. The activities used for this purpose vary according to the degree of guidance provided. Some examples

of guided production activities are the following: "Write three sentences about your classmate's map" (LI) or "Quickly draw a plan of your living room. "Show" the room to your partner" (NEFE) (in both cases sample sentences are provided). An example of a *rule use* activity that does not provide guidance is the following: "Write sentences about your hometown for a new student" (WCDI p. 20). Guided production activities greatly outnumber free production ones in the books analyzed (29/38).

#### 4. Conclusion

Coursebooks are normally designed by authors with wide teaching experience in the level for which the materials are intended. They reflect in them their beliefs about good practice and their theoretical background about the SLA process. If teachers applied the materials as suggested by the authors in the teacher's books, a preference for inductive grammar teaching, a smooth sequence of controlled output practice followed by guided and free practice, all of these interspersed with instances of consciousness-raising activities – these are, in brief, the main trends observed in the six coursebooks analyzed – would be the norm rather than the exception. From our interaction with teachers in different educational settings we have the impression that teachers translate the materials according to their own beliefs and background, which may not in all cases be consistent with those reflected in the materials. Empirical classroom research, however, would be necessary to confirm this observation, and we hope to do this in the future.

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# **“Reading for Meaning vs. Reading plus Vocabulary Learning Activities: Which leads to more effective Vocabulary Acquisition?”**

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## **Abstract**

The main purpose of this study was to examine whether supplementing reading comprehension with vocabulary learning activities results in more effective vocabulary acquisition of selected items than does the same amount of time devoted to reading additional texts that include the same items, and to determine the extent to which each of these methods is effective. The participants in this study were 36 students taking Process of Writing I at the Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata (UNMDP).

## **Introduction**

The role of vocabulary in second language learning has traditionally been undervalued by researchers and teachers in the field of second language acquisition (Prince, 1996). This tendency, however, has changed over the past two decades and vocabulary learning and instruction have now become the focus of much research. Increasingly, it is considered that the lexicon may be the most important language component for language learners, and that effective communication depends more on the possession of a large vocabulary than on the mastery of grammar rules (Vermeer, 1992). Lexical knowledge is now believed to be central to communicative competence and to the acquisition of a second language (Schmitt,

2000). What is still unclear is how L2 learners acquire vocabulary and how it can best be taught. Several studies have shown that reading for meaning can lead to significant vocabulary acquisition (Elley and Mangubhai, 1983; Pitts, White and Krashen, 1989).

In the mid 1980s, a number of researchers conducted a series of studies in order to find empirical evidence of the acquisition of L1 vocabulary through reading (Jenkins, Stein and Wysocki, 1984; Nagy and Herman, 1987; Nagy, Herman and Anderson, 1985), and they succeeded in producing convincing evidence of a connection between reading and the learning of new lexical items. Substantial evidence from these first language studies has indicated that extensive reading for meaning results in vocabulary acquisition over time, and that most L1 vocabulary expansion beyond the first few thousand words in common oral usage results from reading (Paribakht and Wesche, 1997).

On the basis of the results obtained from their studies, Nagy *et al.* (1985) put forward the incidental acquisition hypothesis, which states that children learn the vast majority of the vocabulary words they eventually come to know in their mother tongue as a result of reading or listening to normal language use while their attention is on the message of the text. Proponents of this view claim that this learning is incremental and that it depends on repeated exposure (Nagy, Heman and Anderson, 1985).

Empirical studies of L2 learners' vocabulary learning from reading began to appear in the late 1980s. These studies about the connection between L2 reading and gains in vocabulary knowledge (Saragi, Nation and Meister, 1978; Pitts, White and Krashen, 1989; Day, Omura and Hiramatsu, 1991; Hulstijn, 1992) showed that L2 learners can and do acquire vocabulary knowledge through comprehension-focused reading in a L2. Krashen (1989) claims that L2 learners with an advanced reading proficiency in a L2 will gain most of their vocabulary knowledge through extensive reading rather than through formal vocabulary instruction. Krashen also states that the most efficient way in which L2 learners acquire knowledge of vocabulary and spelling is by receiving comprehensible input while reading.

Nevertheless, some other studies have reported that the process of incidental vocabulary acquisition through reading is slow and haphazard (Paribakht and Wesche, 1993) and that the vocabulary uptake from reading is really rather small (Schmitt, 2000). Hulstijn (1992), after conducting several studies of adult L2 learners, came to the conclusion that "the retention of word meanings in a true incidental learning task is very low indeed" (p. 122). Therefore, some SLA theorists and practitioners claim that L2 learners cannot be expected to acquire substantial vocabulary knowledge without receiving guidance from instructors (Paribakht and Wesche, 1997; Zimmerman, 1994; Nation, 2001). They firmly believe that reading should be supplemented by activities with a deliberate intentional focus on vocabulary. On the basis of the aforementioned claims, the main question addressed in this study is whether reading comprehension plus vocabulary learning activities results in more effective acquisition of selected vocabulary items than does the same amount of time devoted to reading additional texts that include the same items, and to determine the extent to which each of these methods is effective. The participants in this study were divided into two treatment groups, a "reading only" (RO) and a "reading plus vocabulary learning activities" (RVA) group. The following hypotheses were put forward:

Hypothesis 1: Students in both the "reading only" group and "reading plus vocabulary learning activities" group will gain knowledge of the target vocabulary items included in the reading texts.

Hypothesis 2: Quantitative gains in knowledge of the target vocabulary items (reflected in “breadth” of knowledge of given words, that is, the number of words known to some degree versus not known) will be greater for the students in the “reading plus vocabulary learning activities” group.

## **Participants**

The participants in this study were 36 students taking Process of Writing I at Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata (UNMDP). Process of Writing I is a course taken by students during the second semester of their first year at the English Teacher Training Program.

## **Materials and Methods**

In order to test whether there was a quantitative gain in the participants’ knowledge of the target vocabulary items included in the reading texts, a pre-test/post-test design was used (Kerlinger, 1975). This method consists in measuring students’ knowledge both before and after treatment.

To collect the data, the following materials were used: a 25-item pre-test, 4 readings, and a 25-item post-test. To begin with, students completed a pre-test of 25 multiple-choice questions. Each question tested one word. Students had to indicate their level of word knowledge for each word on a five-point scale according to how well they knew the word: 1) I don’t remember having seen this word before; 2) I have seen this word before, but I don’t know what it means; 3) I have seen this word before and I think it means \_\_\_\_; 4) I know this word, it means \_\_\_\_; 5) I can use this word in a sentence \_\_\_\_\_. This scale, known as the Vocabulary Knowledge Scale (VKS), was developed by Paribakht and Wesche in 1993.

*“This instrument uses a five-point scale combining self-report and performance items to elicit self-perceived and demonstrated knowledge of specific words in written form. The scale ratings range from total unfamiliarity, through recognition of the word and some idea of its meaning, to the ability to use the word with grammatical and semantic accuracy in a sentence” (Paribakht & Wesche, 1997).*

The pre-test was taken by the students one week before the instructional phase of the study began.

The following week, the teaching phase began. This phase lasted four weeks. Students were divided into two treatment groups, a “reading only” (RO) group and a “reading plus vocabulary learning activities” (RVA) group. Each group was randomly assigned to either the RO or the RVA group. Students in the RVA group read a text called “Fast Food is Here to Stay” that included 8 target items, answered comprehension questions and then completed a vocabulary exercise based on the target vocabulary items included in the reading. First, students were given a list with the 8 target words and they were asked to underline them in the text. Secondly, students were provided with the definition of each of the target items and they had to match each of those words with its corresponding meaning. All the activities were checked orally with the teacher. Students in the RO group read the same text and they also answered comprehension questions. However, instead of completing vocabulary exercises, students in the RO group read an additional text called “Food, Delicious Food” that included the same target words. The purpose was to increase students’ exposure to the target vocabulary items through reading and subsequent completion of comprehension exercises.

The following week, students in the RVA read the same text they had read the previous week and they also answered comprehension questions. This was

followed by the in-class completion of a vocabulary exercise which focused on the same target items that students had worked with the week before. Again, students were provided with the list of the 8 target words and they were asked to underline them in the text. Then, they were given 8 sentences, each of them with a blank space. Students had to fill in those blanks with one of the words they had just underlined in the text. Students in the RO group read the same texts they had read the previous week and they answered comprehension questions.

This procedure was repeated for two more weeks. However, the texts students read during the third and fourth weeks were different to the ones they read during the first two weeks. During the third and fourth weeks, students in the RVA group read a text called "6,000 Languages: An Embattled Heritage." Students in the RO group read this same text plus another text called "Winners and Losers."

Each class lasted approximately one hour. A week after the teaching phase ended, students took a post-test which was identical to the pre-test.

To analyse the effectiveness of each vocabulary teaching method, a learning index for each student was calculated. The index was calculated as follows: number of learned lexical items divided by the number of lexical items that were taught. We considered that a lexical item had been learned if, during the post-test, it had been classified by the student in the categories 3, 4 or 5 of the Vocabulary Knowledge Scale. It is also important to mention that the learning index was calculated on the basis of those lexical items that had been identified by students in the pre-test as "not known," that is, in categories 1 or 2. A *t*-test (Zar, 1999) was used to compare the average learning index for each vocabulary teaching method. In order to measure quantitative gains in students' word knowledge, an analysis of pre- and postresponses for each target item was made using a chi square test (Zar, 1999). Quantitative gains involved movements from the "not known" (1-2) to the "known" (3-5) scoring categories.

## Results

**Hypothesis 1:** Students in both the "reading only" (RO) group and "reading plus vocabulary learning activities" (RVA) group will gain knowledge of the target vocabulary items included in the reading texts.

Gains in knowledge of target vocabulary items were achieved by students in both the "reading only" group (RO) and "reading plus vocabulary learning activities" (RVA) group. These findings provide support for hypothesis 1. However, it is worth mentioning that the learning index was lower for learners in the "reading only" (RO) treatment ( $0.31 \pm 0.14$ ) than for those in the "reading plus vocabulary learning activities" (RVA) treatment ( $0.48 \pm 0.19$ ) ( $t_{34} = -3.05$ ;  $P < 0.05$ ) (**Fig. 1**).

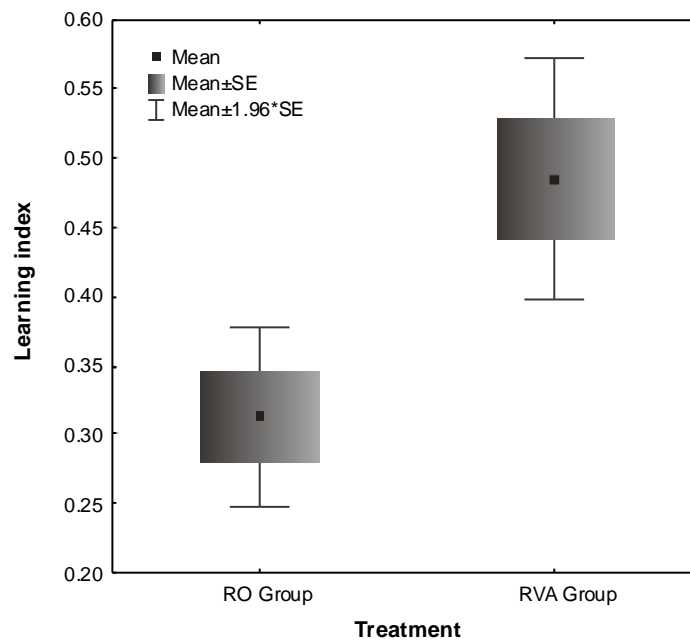


Figure 1

**Hypothesis 2:** Quantitative gains in knowledge of the target vocabulary items (reflected in “breadth” of knowledge of given words, that is, the number of words known to some degree versus not known) will be greater for the students in the “reading plus vocabulary learning activities” group.

The percentage of words that showed movements from categories 1-2 (“not known”) to categories 3-5 (“known”) was greater for students in the in the “reading plus vocabulary learning activities” group than for those in the “reading only” (RO) group (RO group= 31.20 %, RVA group= 48.06 %,  $\chi^2_1 = 14.54$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ) (**Fig. 2**). These data provide support for hypothesis 2.

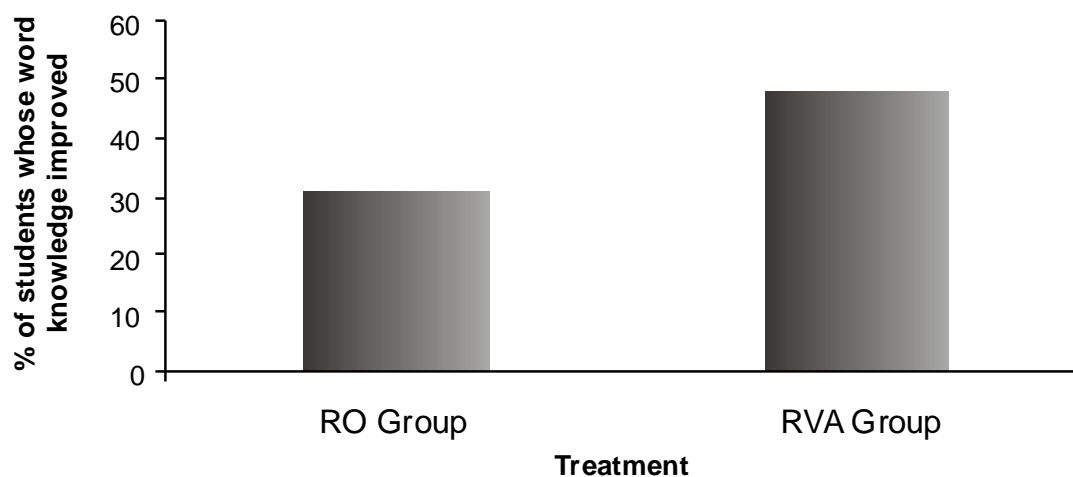


Figure 2

## Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to examine whether supplementing reading comprehension with vocabulary learning activities results in more effective vocabulary acquisition of selected items than does the same amount of time devoted to reading additional texts that include the same items, and to determine the extent to which each of these methods is effective. In order to achieve this aim, 36 students taking Process of Writing I at Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata



(UNMDP) were divided into two treatment groups, a "reading only" (RO) group and a "reading plus vocabulary learning activities" (RVA) group.

It was hypothesized that students in both the "reading only" (RO) and "reading plus vocabulary learning activities" (RVA) group would gain knowledge of the target vocabulary items included in the reading texts, and that quantitative gains in knowledge of the target vocabulary items (reflected in "breadth" of knowledge of given words) would be greater for the students in the "reading plus vocabulary learning activities" group. The analysis of the data indicates that students in both groups achieved gains in vocabulary knowledge; however, gains in word knowledge were greater for students who received the "reading plus vocabulary learning activities" treatment. The results of this study also show that quantitative gains in knowledge of the target vocabulary were greater for the students in the "reading plus vocabulary learning activities" group. On the basis of previous research findings and the results of this research study, it seems plausible to suggest that, although reading for meaning does lead to gains in vocabulary acquisition, focused vocabulary instruction leads to greater learning of selected vocabulary than reading alone.

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## **“Researching EFL Learners’ Proficiency through the Yes/No Vocabulary Test<sup>11</sup>”**

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### **Abstract**

The Swansea Levels Test was administered to 33 university EFL students and 12 primary school learners of English. We also analysed their performance in a comprehension task and an elicited production task involving passive constructions and unaccusative verbs. Some subjects scored high in the vocabulary test and in the tasks, while others revealed an inverse relation between vocabulary knowledge and task performance. This paper presents the pros and cons of this vocabulary test to predict second language proficiency.

### **Introduction**

In the last decades the study of vocabulary acquisition of foreign language learners has gained considerable significance. Researchers are only now beginning to acknowledge that knowing a word implies much more than just its meaning and that various types of vocabulary knowledge come into play in language production and comprehension. Vocabulary acquisition has been researched widely in connection to most of the macro-skills (Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking) and has been found to correlate significantly especially with the receptive skills. The hypothesis has been put forward that through measuring learners’ vocabulary

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<sup>11</sup> This paper presents results obtained within the Research Project (J014) *Estructuras tempranas y tardías en el desarrollo del lenguaje*, directed by Adriana Alvarez and subsidised by Universidad Nacional del Comahue.

knowledge one could quite safely predict their overall competence in the foreign language. This paper will examine this interaction.

## **1. Objectives**

The overall aim of the research design was to ascertain EFL subjects' acquisition stage of passive constructions and unaccusative verbs<sup>12</sup> in English through their performance in a) a sentence- transformation activity and translation exercise in the case of passives and b) an elicited imitation task. To determine participants' overall proficiency level independently from task performance, Meara and Milton's Swansea Levels Test (2002) was administered on the same day they completed the other tasks.

## **2. Participants**

### **2.1. University students**

Thirty-three university teacher- and translator- trainees taking Syntax 1 (Second Year) participated in this research project after having successfully completed their first year English Language subject. Subjects' ages ranged between 18 and 25 (mean age: 20; 4). This group completed the written elicited production task.

### **2.2. Primary school students**

Twelve 5<sup>th</sup> graders at a bilingual primary school in General Roca, Río Negro, participated in both the written and the oral elicited production tasks. Subjects' mean age was 9; 7, ranging between 9 and 12. Learners in this context are exposed to English during three 40-minute periods five times a week.

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1. The Swansea Levels Test (SLT)**

This computerised version of a vocabulary recognition test (Meara and Milton, 2002) measures knowledge of vocabulary by keeping score of how many words are visually recognised by test-takers and requires learners to click on either a Yes or a No key depending on whether they know the meaning of the word shown on the screen or not. A hundred and twenty random items in isolation belonging to a) five bands of lexical items of different degrees of frequency in the foreign language (20 items each) and to b) pseudo-words collected in Meara (1992) are presented one at a time.

Results are obtained by calculating the number of hits ('Yes' responses to real words) and correct responses ('No' responses to pseudo-words), which are then

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<sup>12</sup> Unaccusative verbs denote non-agentive events, like *exist*, or a change of state, like *fall* and *bloom*. They take only one argument, the role of which is that of "theme" or "patient". Like in passive constructions, this argument behaves as the syntactic subject of the sentence (although semantically it is not).

adjusted according to false alarms ('Yes' responses to pseudo-words) and misses ('No' responses to real words).

Each test-taker's performance is shown through a) an unadjusted raw score; b) an adjusted score and c) a profile of their answers for each of the 5 frequency bands and for the number of errors they score.

### 3.2. Experimental design

The experimental design included a written and an oral task that complemented each other in the type of data gathered: while the written task provided researchers with information of learners' use of passive truncated and/or full constructions and unaccusative verbs in a controlled setting, the oral task showed more spontaneous language use, even when some prompts were given.

#### 3.2.1. Written elicited production task (WT)

Participants were required to complete 18 test items organised into three types of activities depending on the structure studied:

- 1) Transform 12 sentences in the active voice (describing an accompanying picture) into its passive counterpart starting each sentence with a given subject and using the appropriate form of the verb in brackets.
- 2) Answer the question "What's going on?" describing the situation in the adjoining picture making use of the unaccusative verb provided.
- 3) Write a possible L1 version for each of their answers (passives and unaccusatives) to ensure participants' understanding of the situation and to show their L1 knowledge of the structures.

The following verbs were selected:

Passive constructions		Unaccusative verbs		
follow	bite	arrive	appear	melt
find	push	leave	float	fall

The verbs studied in the passive constructions were presented in two conditions each: a) plural subject + singular object (*The boy and the girl pushed Tom*) and b) singular subject + plural object (*The boy found Tom and his sister*). Two of the verbs were irregular and two were regular. Subjects in the cases of the verbs *follow* and *find* varied according to the feature [+/- human] (*The cat found the parrot and the bird*).

#### 3.2.2. The oral deferred imitation task

Participants listened to two sets of 5 and 6 situations respectively described by one researcher while looking at some pictures illustrating the actions. After each stretch, learners retold the events as they were shown the corresponding picture. Before the test proper, participants were taught how the elicited imitation task

worked with three additional verbs that were not unaccusative (*sleep, eat and kick*).

Learners were interviewed one at a time and their responses were recorded. Each interview took approximately 10 minutes. Because they need to finish looking at one whole set of pictures before turning to their own production, the time elapsed between the stimulus and their response is long enough for them not to be able to “imitate” the stimulus unless equipped with the linguistic resources to do so. Learners’ production was elicited through the question “What’s going on here/in this picture?” Below is a table with the verbs selected for this task (those in bold-face type were also used in the written task).

Unaccusative verbs					
<b>melt</b>	<b>float</b>	<b>arrive</b>	Stand	break (2)	slip
<b>Fall</b>		<b>appear</b>	<b>leave/go</b> home	fly	live

## 4. Results

Results are presented in terms of groups of participants.

### 4.1. University group’s performance

Taking into account the results in the written task for both structures analysed and the scores obtained in SLT, we have divided participants into four groups ranging from higher to lower achievers. For reasons of space, only four out of the 33 will be analysed to illustrate the characteristic performance of these subgroups in Table 1. For each of them the number of participants within the group has been included together with the mean adjusted score performance and the mean number of errors. The final exam column indicates the number of participants in the group who have passed the final exam for their English I course. Within SLT, a) represents the raw score; b) the adjusted score and the following figures (B1 to Error) characterise each learner’s profile. In the last two columns appear the rates obtained for both structures under study, 36 and 18 being their maximum scores. Each answer for these structures was rated according to the following scale: correct answers got 3 points and 1 point was deducted for each incorrect aspect in the structures analysed (word order, agreement, auxiliary verb used and/or form of the main verb)<sup>13</sup>.

Part per group	Mean adj score	Mean error	Part. Nº	Final exam	Swansea Levels Test	Passives (n=12)	Unacc. verbs (n=6)
					a) Error      b) B1 B2 B3 B4 B5		
n= 6	4457,698	0	32	5/6	4800: 4550: 20 20 20 19 17: 1	36	18

<sup>13</sup> Only correct instances of the structures studied were considered, while typical mistakes and other aspects of their production were excluded.

n= 20	3848,06 3	1	31	7/20	4750: 4250: 20 20 20 18 17: 2	35	16
n= 6	3092,07 9	3	20	2/6	3050: 3050: 20 14 11 12 4: 0	33	18
n= 1			18	0	4900: 1900: 20 20 19 19 20: 12	35	18

Table 1: Subcategories according to scores in SLT

Table 1 shows that more than two-thirds fall into the Intermediate and Advanced levels in terms of their SLT scores and seven and five participants in these levels have passed the English I final exam<sup>14</sup>. Accordingly, the number of errors increases as the mean adjusted score decreases. Participants' profiles in SLT present what Meara and Milton (2002:5) characterise as "a normal cline" from higher to lower scores as the frequency levels for each band fall. In the first three sub-groups the number of pseudo-words which has been accepted as real words is considerably small (3 or less), which is directly related to the expected scores for the last 2 bands. For participants like 18 who claim to know 19 and 20 words out of the 20 items presented for B4 and B5 and register a high number of errors, the results may not be reliable because s/he may be "guessing far too much to allow his or her level to be confidently assessed" (Meara and Milton, 2002:6). In such cases, it is advisable to administer the test again.

Results means for passives and unaccusative verbs are 34, 44 and 17, 50 respectively, which clearly show that, overall, participants' performance in the tasks is almost error-free. These university students' awareness of syntactic forms and constructions might account for these scores in such a controlled-production activity. Yet, the WT results correlate significantly with the SLT scores for all the subgroups, proving its usefulness in placing these EFL learners in corresponding proficiency levels.

Test-taker 20 shows an expected normal cline which renders his SLT performance reliable though at a lower level as that of the rest of his/her subgroup.

#### 4.2. 5<sup>th</sup> Form participants' performance

Responses were rated according to accurate forms of the analysed structures, included in Table 2<sup>15</sup>. There is a clear correspondence between years of exposure, correct answers in tasks and scores for the yes/no vocabulary test, especially in tandem with their profiles.

Table 2 shows students arranged in three different sub-groups from higher to lower SLT scores. As in the case of university students, the number of errors suddenly soars with decreasing levels of proficiency. The abrupt increase occurs between participants B and J, who scored 1 and 7 errors respectively.

<sup>14</sup> This factor was considered an independent indicator of learners' recognised proficiency level at the institution. Lack of a passed final exam does not necessarily mean that the student has not reached the desired standard, but rather that s/he has chosen to postpone sitting for it.

<sup>15</sup> The data were rich and enlightening in terms of the different types of errors organised mainly around a) correct or incorrect use of the auxiliary verb 'to be'; and b) different forms of the main verb (\*The ice-cream is melt; \*The moon appear; \*The parrot and the bird are foundid from a cat) but for reasons of space, they are not presented here.

For participants K, L, F and C, the low scores obtained for SLT and those for correct instances of the structures (see footnote 4) studied do not seem to correlate. We can interpret this mismatch in two ways. Participants may not have been aware of the existence of pseudo-words (in spite of the fact that this was part of the instructions given before the test was administered) and the test-taking procedure failed to capture relevant data as regards vocabulary size. In these cases, the test responses provide no basis for making a meaningful estimate of her/his vocabulary size and general proficiency level.

Part	Years of exposure	Swansea Levels Test						Passives	Unacc. verbs	
		a) Error	b)	B1	B2	B3	B4		B5	WT OT (n=12) (n=11)
H	6	3650: 3400: 18 18 12 12 13: 1						2	1	8*
E	9	3100: 2850: 17 10 14 12 9: 1						4	1	--
B	4	2700: 2450: 15 13 9 12 5: 1						0	6	7
J	7	3600: 1850: 20 13 12 14 13: 7						12	6	9
A	8	4150: 1650: 19 16 17 15 16: 10						3	0	3
G	6	3250: 1500: 18 15 13 10 9: 7						4	1	6*
I	6	2950: 1450: 16 11 12 12 8: 6						7	0	7*
C	8	3700: 950: 17 15 15 14 13: 11						3	2	9
D	2	3250: 750: 16 13 16 10 10: 10						0	0	5
K	7	3250: 550: 16 15 10 13 11: 11						4	1	5*
L	9	3950: 500: 19 19 14 14 13: 14						9	3	7*
F	7	4700: 200: 19 19 18 19 19: 18						12	4	4

Table 2: 5th form participants' performance per task/\* Subjects who used external negation

Conversely, SLT adjusted scores can be seen as reflecting these participants' level of foreign language performance in spite of the high proportion of correct answers for the structures analysed. An analysis of the less controlled production in the oral task reveals a quite early stage in their language development, which is



reflected in their inaccurate use of negation (*\*Franco no have one*) and bare forms (*\*The balloon go to sky*). However, in the light of the variable “years of exposure”, this interpretation seems to lack credibility and the first explanation seems to fully account for these participants’ performance.

D’s results for passive and unaccusative constructions and his SLT scores indicate that this participant “lacks a good basis for distinguishing words from non-words and tends to respond in inconsistent and unpredictable ways” (Read, 2000:131), proved by the fact that he has only been learning English for two years. The SLT score truly depicts his beginner level of performance, also reflected in the lack of accurate responses in the written task.

## **5. Discussion and conclusion**

Criticism has been raised against this test as to its capacity to measure vocabulary knowledge (Eyckmans, 2004) since there is more to knowing a word than what can be assessed by recognising it (Nation, 2001). The whole issue of word recognition as an indicator of knowledge is also questioned on the grounds that there might be different degrees to which a word can be said to be known. Moreover, its design rests upon test-takers’ awareness of their knowledge, which should not be taken as a given (Eyckmans, 2004).

Although the data in our study against which the SLT results are compared are compartmentalised and cannot lend support or disclaim the validity of the test, the results obtained in this study seem to indicate it is a trustworthy tool for our purposes. There are few “awkward” profiles but these fall within the expected response patterns according to Meara (1996: 43-44) as cited in Read (2000: 131). Our purpose was not to research vocabulary acquisition and knowledge in depth, but rather to broadly characterise participants’ overall performance independently of the data obtained. Had this been our main aim, different instruments would have been necessary.

In sum, as a widely recognized predictor of general language knowledge (Meara and Milton, 2002), the test offers a simple, time-saving computerised means to determine vocabulary size and learners’ knowledge of samples of words corresponding to frequency bands, thus indicating level of proficiency. The short time that its completion requires leaves no time for participants to ponder long on each test item so there is little chance of external or individual factors affecting word recognition. For research purposes, the software also provides immediate, easily accessible feedback on test-takers’ scores which are compatible with standardised proficiency EFL levels.

While in some cases subjects’ performance in the tasks obtained similar results to those predicted by SLT, there were other cases in which there was a significant mismatch between learners’ scores in SLT and those in the activities related to the structures under study. ‘High error’ cases might point to the need of a) administering the test more than once as in the case of some 5<sup>th</sup> Form participants, or b) combining independent data on the learners’ overall linguistic performance, in the case of our university learners, where their meta-knowledge of syntax might have biased the responses for the written task.

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# **"Taking Action Towards the Social Construction of Knowledge in the EFL Classroom"**

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## **Abstract**

This work highlights an educational innovation underpinned by social constructivism, and presents an approach in which cooperative learning is used to create a socially constructed learning environment. The project was implemented in a private school with the participation of a large heterogeneous class. The method selected agrees with the experiential constructivist model unlike the traditional behaviourist model currently used in the school. A quantitative analysis of students' performance in their reading, writing and oral tasks showed an increase in overall language achievement. In essence, learners learned how to learn, became more autonomous, self-directed and intrinsically motivated.

## **Introduction**

Most EFL teachers consider that large heterogeneous classes create serious problems that need careful guidance and study. The most critical teaching problems connected with such classes include effective learning for all, materials, participation, interest, discipline, individual awareness and the correction of written assignments (Ur, 1996). Teachers complain that students cannot learn effectively because they often find that tasks are either too easy or too difficult for them. To make matters worse, materials are not aimed to all kinds of learners, and the topics

these materials deal with contribute to students' boredom. It is observed that only proficient confident learners take part actively in classroom activities while the rest of the inactive students get easily out of control. Moreover, teachers are unable to follow students' progress of all individuals who are so different in language learning ability, cultural background, learning styles, motivation, world knowledge and learning experience. Lastly, teachers are overworked with marking loads of written assignments although most students scarcely pay attention to teachers' feedback.

However, the apparent disadvantages of a large heterogeneous class can be turned into a positive teaching experience through the implementation of group work. Since teachers of large classes find it difficult to attend to every individual, the students themselves can take a more active role in their learning by teaching and correcting each other and by working together, thus fostering an atmosphere of cooperation (Ur, 1996). An additional advantage of group work is that individuals have more opportunities to share knowledge, varied opinions and ideas, which they can exchange during social interaction with their peers.

Language educators are challenged to provide more effective ways of learning in order to meet the needs of increasing numbers of EFL learners in classrooms today. The challenge has led to an expansion of teaching approaches in search for effective learning. This work explores concepts related to constructivism, social constructivism, social interaction and learning, and behaviourist and constructivist educational models. It also highlights an educational innovation underpinned by social constructivism, and presents an approach in which cooperative learning is used to create a socially constructed learning environment.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Constructivism is a philosophical approach which argues that knowledge is socially constructed rather than having its own independent existence (Nunan, 1999). Social constructivism, a variation of cognitive constructivism, emphasizes the collaborative nature of learning. Vygotsky, an advocate of the latter view, strongly disagreed with Piaget for overlooking the social nature of language, and for failing to understand learning as a collaborative process. Vygotsky (1997) is often credited for developing ideas of social constructivism with his zone of proximal development (ZPD) where he gave importance to developing functions rather than to developed functions or skills that children could already perform. Vygotsky (1997, p.188) said, "what the child can do in cooperation today he can do alone tomorrow."

He believed that the constructive principle of higher mental functions lies outside the individual, in psychological tools and interpersonal relations. The latter take place through collaboration and dialogic action with others in solving problems, or discussing a subject. Psychological tools are the media through which mind and culture communicate. They involve language, different forms of numeration, mnemonic techniques, signs and symbols and/or decision making systems (Vygotsky, 1997). Active learning incorporating interpersonal relations and psychological tools may encourage the development of higher order thinking skills.

### *Social Interaction and Learning*

Most Social Constructivist models emphasize the need for collaboration among learners in contrast to traditional competitive approaches. Inherent in scaffolding instruction and peer collaboration is Vygotsky's ZPD or potential level of development that the learner is capable of reaching under teachers' guidance or in collaboration with peers. The level of actual development is reached when learners

can solve problems independently. Through a process of '*scaffolding*' a learner can go beyond the limitations of physical maturation until the learning process is ahead of the development process (Vygotsky, 1997).

Laurillard (1993) considers learning as an iterative process involving discursive, adaptive, interactive, and reflexive qualities; the main focus being on teacher-student relationship since academic knowledge becomes known through social interaction between teacher and student. Laurillard's reflections on academic knowledge provide an interesting view about how students can construct knowledge not only through discussion with their peers or through self-directed study. In fact, the role of the teacher is to help students to understand the concepts of a discipline in addition to the rules and conventions for acquiring and validating knowledge within that subject discipline.

### *Behaviourist and Constructivist Models*

Kohonen (1992) indicated significant differences between a traditional behaviourist model and an experiential constructivist model of education. A behaviourist model views learning as transmission of knowledge while experiential constructivists view learning as transformation of knowledge. Whereas the behaviourist model emphasizes teacher's authority, in the constructivist view the teacher is a '*learner among learners*'. The teacher's role in the behaviourist model provides class-fronted instruction with learners as passive recipients of information working individually. In contrast, the constructivist model promotes active participation and learning in small groups. Knowledge is presented as '*certain*' in behaviourist models while experiential education asserts the construction of personal knowledge. As regards learning experiences, behaviourists stress the knowledge of facts, concepts and skills with greater focus on content and product while constructivists emphasize process, self-inquiry, as well as social and communicative skills. In the behaviourist model teachers structure learning; however, a constructivist approach focuses on learners and self-directed learning. In behaviourist models, motivation is extrinsic and evaluation product-oriented whereas in constructivist models, motivation is intrinsic and evaluation process oriented.

The approach used in this work agrees with social constructivism and with the experiential constructivist model, rooted in humanistic psychology. According to social constructivism, individuals can construct knowledge through social interaction. Humanistic psychology argues that "in order for learning to take place, learners must reconstruct the skills and knowledge for themselves; they cannot simply 'receive' these from external sources" (Nunan, 1999, p.5). Humanistic psychology stresses both, the social and interactive nature of learning, as did Vygotsky, and learning how to learn rather than teaching.

### **Methodological Framework**

The present project was implemented in a confessional private school in Córdoba from March to November 2008 with the participation of 5<sup>th</sup> Year B, 36 students of the Social Sciences Orientation. This large group of learners had three weekly forty-minute classes of English during which they learned the specific language involved in their orientation. The size of the class as well as the differences observed regarding language proficiency, learning styles as well as personal interests led the researcher to experiment with a non-traditional method based on cooperative learning. The method selected for this project was in agreement with the experiential constructivist model unlike the traditional

behaviourist model currently used in the school. To put the new approach into practice, students engaged in class activities working cooperatively in groups.

The key stages of group work developed in the following order: **group formation, planning, implementation of plans, completion of tasks, evaluation of performance and assessment**. Except for **group formation**, the rest of the stages were followed every class. During the first stage, students were asked to form small groups of 4/5 students by themselves in order to ensure they worked with people they felt comfortable with. Once they knew who the committed and supportive members of their team were, they had to choose a name and a logo for the group, which contributed to create a shared identity and a sense of belonging. Effective **planning** meant that the teacher gave clear instructions and objectives about the tasks so that the group understood what they needed to achieve. Delegation of work was also required during the **planning stage**; therefore, each activity could be broken up in smaller sub-tasks and shared with the rest of the group. Each member stated what role he/she was going to have when a task was performed. Finally, the teacher set a realistic time deadline to finish the activity. The **implementation of plans** meant that the teacher ensured the quality of group work by monitoring the groups, scaffolding and supporting their work and giving feedback. Communication between teacher and students and between group members was essential at this stage. During the **completion of tasks** stronger groups could carry out activities more easily than others. Nevertheless, at this stage weaker groups, who could not conceive their tasks or projects from scratch, needed to revise their work to produce their final version for assessment. After the **completion of tasks**, the teacher collected all the work that had to be corrected and assessed, and the students **evaluated group and individual performance** through the writing of journal entries. Sometimes learners preferred to write their journal entries collectively, although on some occasions they did it individually. **Assessment** was designed taking into account equity of contribution, cooperative behaviour, language development, appropriate time and task management, and responsiveness to feedback. **Assessment** depended on a careful balance of group work process/product, and marks were either shared with the group or individually obtained. A more efficient system lessened the marking load making the students more responsible for improving each other's assignments.

No sooner were learners organized in groups than they began to collaborate in their reading, writing, and speaking activities connected with the topics related to their orientation. The teacher encouraged them to read and co-author texts together, summarize, give opinions, prepare oral reports, dramatize dialogues, and carry out hands-on projects like comic strips, posters and board games, which were exhibited in the School Fair organized at the end of the academic year.

The course material, dealing with visual arts and communication, included the following topics: visual images, functions of images, plastic arts, photography, graphic arts and design, cinema and comics. The textbook was complemented with extra material that the students found on the web and in the school library. The relevance and level of the sources were supervised by the teacher, and students learned that they had to acknowledge them at the end of their written productions in order to avoid plagiarism.

## **Results and Discussion**

The results of this study focus primarily on how the application of the experiential constructivist paradigm could improve language learning in a large heterogeneous class using cooperative groups that were instructed to work as

teams. A quantitative analysis of students' performance in their reading, writing and oral tasks showed an increase in overall language achievement by comparing the grades obtained at the beginning and at the end of the project. A qualitative analysis of their work rendered positive results regarding deeper understanding of texts, increase of vocabulary, awareness of form and content as well as greater fluency and intelligibility to make oral speeches. A significant advancement was noticed with respect to students' development of critical or higher-level thinking. In fact, when questions were raised in their groups, students were encouraged to give their opinions overtly, to differ from other responses, and to reply to others.

As a result of the creation of this socially constructed environment, cooperative learning was successfully achieved for the following reasons. First, the cooperative groups were guided by clearly defined objectives, second, the groups were small enough for everyone to contribute, and third, the purpose of language tasks was understood. In addition, cooperative small groups became a safe place where learners participated actively, where they sometimes became not only their own teachers, but also their peers' teachers, a place where every member was respected and all contributions were valued, and also a place where they learned skills to overcome conflicts when they arose.

This socially constructed classroom was conducive to the growth of interpersonal development. Since students learned to relate to their peers to work together in their projects, students who had difficulty with social skills could benefit from social interaction. Another advantage derived from this powerful learning environment was the increase of opportunities for personal feedback. As there were more exchanges between teacher and students in their small groups, the students received increased personal feedback, which does not often take place in large heterogeneous classes in which teachers apply traditional behaviourist models.

Despite criticisms by traditional behaviourist practitioners, neither the active role of the social constructivist teacher nor the value of expert knowledge was undermined. The teacher's role changed to help learners to construct knowledge rather than to reproduce or memorize facts. The teacher encouraged students' creativity by means of activities in which they formulated ideas, made inferences, came to conclusions and pooled their knowledge in a cooperative learning environment. The experiential constructivist model transformed learners from passive recipients into active participants in the learning process. Under the teacher's guidance, learners constructed their knowledge actively rather than just mechanically receiving information from the teacher or the textbook and always building on what they already knew.

Cooperative group learning was noisy, and required the teacher to surrender some control in the classroom in order to create a learner-centred environment. The teacher did no longer see herself as the sole authority in the classroom, so she learned to consider the value of her students' opinions and insights. Contrary to traditional behaviourist educators, the teacher perceived that instead of losing control with the application of this '*apparently threatening paradigm*', she showed confidence in her students.

An important aspect of the students' learning process was their reflection on the activities they performed through the writing of journal entries. They recorded how they felt about their projects, what difficulties they faced, and what activities they preferred. A qualitative analysis of their journal entries also revealed how highly students thought of the new approach and how motivated they felt, which gave evidence of their metacognitive awareness.

## Conclusion

The experiential constructivist model promoted effective learning and improvement of reading, writing and language skills in a large heterogeneous class by creating a learning environment that emphasized cooperation and exchange of ideas. Learners learned how to learn, became more autonomous, self-directed and intrinsically motivated while the teacher was provided with greater opportunity for innovation and professional development.

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**“University students reflecting on university problems.  
A Workshop on critical reading and writing with Appraisal  
Theory as a linguistic tool”**

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**Abstract**

Education, conceived as an integral part of individuals' mental and moral growth, entails the pursuit of critical reflection on the intellectual and philosophical foundations which the educational system rests on. This interpretive hermeneutical perspective lies in the "integrity of acknowledging the commitment involved in all understanding" (Gadamer, 2004: XXV). Hence, university students should assume the duty towards a culture of education to contemplate the pedagogical project they partake in. From this standpoint, Appraisal Theory sheds light on the critical examination of social practices, which are discursively constructed, such as those referring to the current situation of Higher Education.

## Introduction

As stated by John Dewey (1996), any theory and practice that are not based on a critical analysis of their basic tenets become dogmatic. As a social practice, education should be regarded as a continuous process whose true meaning is achieved in the purposeful and thoughtful construction of experiences leading to strengthen our judgement and understanding of the needs of our culture as well as to suit the culture to the individuals' needs.

Hence, a present experience is to be constructive if, while understood in the light of a past experience, it enables us to expand our worldviews and influences future experiences. This implies it is not mere action but firmly grounded action that is essential to apply the principles underlying a worthwhile educational scheme. Reflection should be conceived as the driving force behind a solidly ingrained philosophy, thereby nourishing teaching and learning.

The aforementioned view of education is not explained in terms of preferences or present social trends and demands, but in terms of an assumed commitment based on the conviction that the ultimate aim of education is growth: "The cause for our preference is not the same thing as the reason why we *should* prefer it" (Dewey, 1996: 34). It is, thus, the joint responsibility of those involved in the field of education to be aware of the educational system they are supporting or are exposed to.

Since any discourse recontextualises a social practice, and knowledge is ultimately based on that practice (van Leeuwen, 2008), it is enlightening to critically reflect on the way education is discursively constructed. The principles of recontextualization are related to key elements of the social practices, namely, the actors, their roles and identities, the actions and performing styles, along with the place and time in which they occur.

It is widely acknowledged that Higher Education is undergoing a crisis due to internal and external factors, which cannot be disregarded. Hence, participants in university education should contemplate the critical situation thereof and its discursive construction. As a linguistic resource, Appraisal Theory, located within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics, provides the analytical categories to ponder over the intersubjective relations among participants as well as their viewpoints and stances.

In this context, reading and writing are fundamental, not so much from a cognitive perspective but from an interpretive hermeneutical position. They are both perceived as reflective processes, which are dialogic in nature, thereby gaining strength in the construction and negotiation of meaning. This dialogicity implies thinking not only with the other but also with oneself:

*To think is to think something with oneself; and to think something with oneself is to say something to oneself...This dialogue, in doubt and objection, is a constant going beyond oneself and a return to oneself, one's own opinions and one's own points of view. If anything does characterize human thought, it is this infinite dialogue with ourselves which never leads anywhere definitively and which differentiates us from that ideal of an infinite spirit for which all that exists and all truth lies open in a single moment's vision. It is in this experience of language—in our growing up in the midst of this interior conversation with ourselves, which is always simultaneously the anticipation of conversation with others and the introduction of others into the conversation with ourselves—that*

*the world begins to open up and achieve order in all the domains of experience.*  
(Gadamer, 2004:547)

In this sense, the individual's commitment to reflection and understanding embodies the true essence of reading and writing, through which language reveals the innately constructive aspect of its power: to shape thought in dialogue with one another and with oneself. Discourse, then, makes it feasible to experience the world from a myriad of views, each gaining its significance in the sociocultural context in which they are held. The coexistence of different viewpoints favours pluralism, which becomes enriching when rooted in critical judgement and in appreciation of the meaningfulness of others' standpoints.

### **Appraisal Theory and its pedagogical value**

Appraisal Theory or the Language of Evaluation Theory – developed by Martin & White (2005) has evolved from the fundamentals of Systemic Functional Linguistics. Appraisal is expressed mainly through lexical choices and through certain grammatical structures that have acquired a primarily evaluative function. Evaluation is a central aspect of textual meaning and it can be defined as the sign that an individual regards a person, object, action, event, situation or idea in a positive or negative way.

The evaluative resources comprise three interacting axes, namely attitudes, engagement and graduation. Attitude deals with feelings, assessments of behaviours and of things. Engagement pertains to the stances towards a subject matter adopted by the different voices involved in a text, whereas graduation is concerned with the intensity or degree of the attitudinal meanings and of the involvement or commitment manifested in the speaker's/writers utterances.

As regards the attitudinal domain, three principal categories are distinguished in the value system of a culture: affect, judgement and appreciation, each being positive or negative in nature. Affect is the most natural means to express our emotional responses towards entities, events and subject matters present in a text, and has the rhetorical function to obtain mutual consent and establish rapport between the speaker/writer and its actual or potential audience.

Concerning judgement, it attends to our attitudes towards people and to the evaluation of behaviour according to certain standards, which may result in admiration, criticism, praise or strong disapproval. Judgements are divided into two classes: those referring to "social esteem", which involve positive or negative evaluations in relation to "normality" (how unusual a person is), "capacity" (how capable we are) and "tenacity" (how determined we are), and those connected to "social sanction", which include positive or negative assessment concerning "veracity" (how credible an individual is) and "propriety" (how ethical a person is).

With respect to appreciation, focus is placed on the positive or negative evaluation of objects, and it includes three categories: our "reaction" towards objects; "composition", which refers to the consistency and complexity of objects, and "valuation", that is, the value attached to objects.

From a dialogic perspective, the speaker/writer adopts a stance in respect of the others' value positions, and language provides the means to express this standpoint. The linguistic resources enable us to explore the rhetorical effects related to the varied viewpoints alongside the commitment to the views advanced in the text.

According to this approach, every proposition expresses, to a certain extent, an attitude or point of view. Each utterance, whether written or spoken, is also inherently dialogic since it shows the influence of, adopts the position on, or refers

to previously uttered locutions, while concurrently anticipating the response of the actual or prospective interlocutor. Hence, a text can consist of monoglossic utterances, or bare assertions, which do not allude to other voices or alternative visions, along with heteroglossic propositions, which are based on the dialogic construction of meaning through the recognition of divergent positions and the existence of other voices.

The resources of heteroglossia are classified into "dialogic expansion" and "dialogic contraction", according to their intersubjective function. The former actively acknowledges dialogically alternative standpoints, whereas the latter challenges them, adopts a defensive attitude towards them or limits their scope. From this dialogic perspective, then, the "engagement" domain places emphasis on the nature of the relationship that the authorial voice establishes with other voices that have expressed their opinion around a certain topic, in particular when there exists a socially meaningful community of shared beliefs and values. In this way, it is deemed relevant to analyse the degree to which interlocutors recognise the other participants as well as the way in which they commit themselves to their own opinions and to others'.

Alternatively, this perspective requires that we should be concerned with the anticipatory aspect of a text, that is, with the linguistic resources the authorial voice deploys to signal how it expects the addressed recipient to respond to the stated proposition and to its value position. In addition, the locutions grouped under the "graduation" heading, play a dialogic role in the construction of meanings, through which the speaker/writer manifests different degrees of alignment or dissidence with the alternative value positions present in the text along with the socially established attitudes and beliefs which these perspectives conform to.

Graduation functions on the basis of two axes of gradability, namely, force and focus. The former involves scaling in relation to intensity (of qualities and processes along the positivity/negativity continuum), to amount (strength, size, number, and so on) as well as to extent pertaining to scope (how widely spread and how enduring something is) and to proximity in time and space. The latter attends to prototypicality and to the exactness by which boundaries between categories are set. That is, locutions of this type, such as *real*, *genuine*, *true* makes membership of a given phenomena to a semantic category more definite, whereas lexical items, such as, *sort of*, *kind of* have the function to represent the phenomena as less precisely determined. Sharpening and softening thereof can also be applied to attitudinal terms through which the authorial voice indicates its degree of commitment and alignment to the value positions of the text.

From this dialogic viewpoint, meaning construction is not rooted in the quest for truth but is grounded on social relations, which enable participants to align or oppose to others' judgements, beliefs and value positions about the nature of the world, its past history, present and future. In this sense, when individuals adopt a standpoint, not only do they pursue to voice their opinion but also to persuade their actual or potential addressee to be responsive towards the feelings, points of view and judgements they are expressing. However, it is important to pinpoint that, in the framework of Appraisal Theory, solidarity between subjects is not confined to the negotiation of agreement/disagreement, but rather refers to tolerance towards alternative visions; thus, it is openness to diversity, regarded as natural and legitimate that establishes common ground between individuals. Learners should become intellectuals – as defined by Todorov (1990: 2)- who aspire to "a truth of consent", to which they are led by their willingness to engage in reflexive examination and dialogue.

For what has been stated so far, we conceive Appraisal Theory as a valuable pedagogical resource at the students' disposal to widen their intellectual horizons

and develop their thoughts, on the basis of sound judgement and critical reflection that reinforce their construction of meaning and enhance the quality of further experiences. Owing to this, each individual's involvement in reading and writing is understood not as a private but as a social action. It is, hence, assumed that, in the processes of reading and writing, language and understanding become purposeful for people from different backgrounds and times, as Gadamer states:

*... all reading involves application, so that a person reading a text is himself part of the meaning he apprehends. He belongs to the text that he is reading... He can, indeed he must, accept the fact that future generations will understand differently what he has read in the text...*

What is fixed in writing has raised itself into a public sphere of meaning in which everyone who can read has an equal share. (2004: 335, 393)

Since knowledge, beliefs and values are culturally grounded, the significance of meaning construction, either in reading or writing, lies in its relation to the past and its potential social impact on present and future experiences.

## **Conclusions**

If language teaching and learning are to have a fundamental role in a worthwhile educational project, they should aim at encouraging intellectual and moral growth since, as Dewey (1996) claims, a subject is not in itself and by itself educationally valuable, unless it leads to growth. Along this line of thought, reflection is the core of a philosophy of education. We, thus, concur with Gadamer (2004) that the value of language does not rest on prescriptive rules, sets of words or phrases, concepts and points of view, but on its power to engage individuals in dialogue with one another and with oneself, in pursuit of understanding. For this purpose, the tenets of Appraisal Theory underpin critical examination of intersubjective relations and of alternative visions, as they unfold in the text. Hence, the processes of reading and writing gain significance in the construction and negotiation of meaning.

As teachers, it is our conviction that university students should commit themselves to gaining insights into the educational system they are involved in and to assume an active part in its improvement. Conviction is not intended to lend validity to our standpoint but to attach a deeper significance to our experiences: "That who is not certain about any fact cannot be it about the sense of their words either" [our translation] (Wittgenstein, 2006: 17). Nevertheless, our conviction may not necessarily be the students'. We, then, deem it cardinal that students' attribute their own value to education, its essence and purpose through critical reflection and interaction, which a well-founded philosophy of education lies in. As teachers-to-be they should be aware of the intrinsic responsibility of the educator to assess their work in terms of its contribution or lack of it towards growth and of its influence on future educational experiences.

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## **Workshops**

## **"Caring for the kinaesthetic ones through music and song"**

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### **Abstract**

Educational professionals have been arguing about multiple intelligences and learning styles for quite a while now. The question lies, though, if *all* intelligences and learning styles have been addressed in the foreign language lessons lately. It seems to me that some types (in the academic category) have been more predominant than the others (in the expressive one). The purpose of this workshop is to provide the teacher with some tools to cater for the kinaesthetic students through music and song.

### **Music is all around**

Music, today more than ever, occupies a great part of the world around us: the 'on' and 'off' sounds of electronic gadgets, background music in malls, ringtones for cell phones - the list of 'sounding things' is endless. Everybody, young and old, is very much 'music aware' these days, when music seems to have come to the foreground of people's daily lives. Then, why not take advantage of this craze in the FL lessons? Many teachers have already included the exploitation of lyrics in the classroom. Some coursebooks devote part of a unit to it too. Still, most of the activities used aim at developing only the listening skill. Learning style –an individual's natural, habitual, and preferred way of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills– should be taken into account in order to



maximize the possibilities songs offer. Visual, aural and kinaesthetic learners alike can benefit from multi-sensory tasks.

### Multiple intelligences – an overview

Gardner (1993) defined intelligence as “*a biopsychological potential to process information in certain ways. Each intelligence can be activated in an appropriate cultural setting*”. His theory suggests eight intelligences with a ninth one, still being explored. Shrum & Glisan (2005) compiled research on this topic and came up with the following division:

#### A -Personal

- 1- Intrapersonal / Introspective
- 2- Interpersonal / Social

#### B -Academic

- 3- Logical / Mathematical
- 4- Verbal / Linguistic

#### C -Expressive

- 5- Bodily / Kinesthetic
- 6- Visual / Spatial
- 7- Musical / Rhythmic

#### D -Emerging

- 8- Naturalist
- 9- Existential (unconfirmed intelligence)

Educational professionals have been arguing about these multiple intelligences as well as learning styles for nearly two decades. It seems, though, that the first and the second groups have been the most predominant in language lessons. Whether you adhere to behaviourism, innatism or interactionism, you are most likely to favour those intelligences in detriment to the third and the fourth groups.

When we think of kinaesthesia, we think mainly of TPR. When we think of TPR we think mainly of little kids doing the Hokey Pokey or of someone giving instructions to someone else. But responding with the body to some external stimulus in the language classroom can be much more than that. Expressive intelligence involves controlling body motions, plus showing a keen sense of direction and timing in movement, and also accurately comprehending the visual word.

The range of possibilities included in this category of intelligence, can be clearly seen in the chart below:

Category of Intelligence	Characteristics	FL Classroom Activities
Bodily /	Body Smart: skillfully	TPR; creative dramatics and

Kinesthetic	controlling body motions; showing a keen sense of direction and timing in movement.	mime; creating things; role playing and interviews; videotaping; projects, field trips, active learning.
Visual / Spatial	<u>Picture Smart</u> : accurately comprehending the visual word; transforming mental images; seeing things in terms of pictures.	Learning experiences using drawings; charts, props, posters, photographs, illustrations; demonstrations; making presentations; use of (overhead) projector or projection devices, chalk/white board, video, interactive gadgets.
Musical / Rhythmic	<u>Music Smart</u> : using pitch, rhythm, and so on, in enjoying and creating musical experiences; being attuned to rhythms, responding with actions.	Songs, music, dance (of the target culture); singing along; doing karaoke; music mnemonics; jingles, raps, cheers; choreographing; using music movement or dance to illustrate ideas or concepts.

Shrum & Glisan, 2005, p. 317 – adapted

Therefore, there are many ways to react to linguistic input in order to comprehend, analyse or systematize language.

### **Ready, unsteady ... go!**

The purpose of this workshop is to provide the teacher with some tools to cater for the kinaesthetic students through music. The presenter will demonstrate how to deal with one sample of each group, after which, she will encourage attendees to analyse the remaining lyrics in order to contribute with their own ideas. Participants will be encouraged to 'act out' their findings or do whatever else comes to their brains *and* bodies on that day, bearing the following motto in mind: "*Only you can do it!*"

### **Songs and activities**

For practical purposes, the songs have been divided into four groups according to the exploitation suggested. However, they could perfectly be adapted to suit particular teaching purposes or needs.

#### ✓ **Group 1: RHYTHM; pronunciation practice**

1) *We will rock you* – Queen

1) *I like to move it* – Sacha Baron Cohen "Madagascar"

2) *El Choclo* – Nat King Cole

Aim:

To make students aware of the idea of rhythm and chunking; foreign accent – comparison between English and Spanish phonemes. To warm up the articulators.

✓ **Group 2:** T.P.R.

- 3) *Sway* – Pussycat Dolls “Shall we dance” (appendix 1)
- 4) *Mambo number 5.* – Lou Vega
- 5) *Y.M.C.A.* – Village People
- 6) *Conga* - Gloria Estefan
- 7) *Vogue* - Madonna
- 8) *You can leave your hat on* – Tom Jones
- 9) *Move your body* – Eiffel 65

Aim:

To follow instructions. To practice motion verbs.

✓ **Group 3:** Act it out / Do your choreo / Karaoke

- 10) *Mama mia* – ABBA
- 11) *I will survive* – Gloria Gaynor / Cake / Bear “Dr Doolittle 2”
- 12) *Holding out for a hero* – Bonnie Tyler / Fairy Godmother “Shrek”
- 13) *Enough is enough* – Barbara Streisand & Donna Summers
- 14) *I finally found someone* – Barbara Streisand & Bryan Adams
- 15) *I’ve had the time of my life* - Bill Medley & Jennifer Warnes “Dirty Dancing”
- 16) *Living la vida loca* – Ricky Martin / Donkey “Shrek”
- 17) *Fame* – Irene Cara “Fame”
- 18) *Money, money, money* – Lisa Minelly & Joel Grey “Cabaret”
- 19) *Money, money* - ABBA
- 20) *You should be dancing* – Bee Gees “Saturday Night Fever”
- 21) *Total Eclipse of the Heart* - Bonnie Tyler
- 22) *Dancing Queen!* – ABBA

Aim:

To dramatize the lyrics. To copy a set choreography or to create a new. Either to sing along or do karaoke so as to memorize the words.

✓ **Group 4:** Draw it

- 23) *Over The Rainbow* /What a wonderful world- new version - Israel Kamakawiwo'ole
- 24) *Heal the World* – Michael Jackson
- 25) *Come Fly with me* – Sinatra & Luis Miguel
- 26) *Under the sea* – Sebastian, the crab “The Little Mermaid”
- 27) *Can you feel the love tonight* – Elton John “The Lion King”
- 28) *La Isla Bonita* – Madonna
- 29) *Drawing song* – Soku Sayonara
- 30) *Mr Sun* – Barney

Aim:

To represent in a visual for what the lyrics mean, either literally or figuratively.

### **Pause for thought – keep the ball rolling**

As a final reflection, I would like to quote Yehudi Menuhin, the famous violinist and conductor, who said "*singing and dancing should be integrated into the daily routine in every school every day. It creates the basis for intellectual development. Music draws upon feeling and thinking, joining the emotional with the rational. It brings out the best in a child or young adult.*" (Shrum & Glisan, 2005:117)

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## Appendix

# Sway – by Pussycat Dolls – from the movie: "Shall we dance?"

🎨 Before you listen:

Find info about musical instruments. Report to the class. Draw a mind map with them.

Complete the lyrics by answering the questions.

When **marimba rhythms** start to play

→ What does he / she do?

Like a lazy ocean hugs the shore

→ What does he / she do?

Like a flower bending in the breeze

→ What does he / she do?

When we dance you have a way with me

→ What does he / she do?

*Chorus:*

*Other dancers may be on the floor*

*Dear, but my eyes will see only you*

*Only you have that magic technique*

*When we sway I go weak. (I go so weak)*

Match the columns

I can hear

Long before

Make me thrill

Sway me smooth,

sway me now

as only you know how  
the sounds of violins

it begins

Focus on the verbs. Show the action

Sway me, make me  
Thrill me, hold me  
Bend me, ease me  
You have a way with me.

Sway with me, Sway (sway) (Sway)  
Other dancers may be on the floor ...

I can hear the sounds of violins ...  
Sway me smooth, sway me now  
Sway me, Sway me, Sway me now

🌈 After you listen:

Find info about music and dancing styles. Report to the class. Draw a mind map with them.

Answer:

- 1) Have you seen the American version of the movie?  
If so, what is it about? If not, ask a partner who has.
- 2) What period of his life is the main character going through?

## **“Challenge and change: Drama activities in the English classroom”**

LISTORTI, IRMA RAQUEL

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### **Abstract**

A drama project is a valuable supplement for language learning. It helps the learner to acquire new vocabulary and structures in a contextualized and integrated manner, builds confidence in his/her ability to learn the language, makes him/her appreciate and understand the culture and codes of the target language and reduces resistance towards it. Most basic, drama is enjoyable. It helps break down barriers and inhibitions through tension-relieving laughter, and shapes a happy and cooperative group.

### **Introduction**

What is Drama? Drama is doing. Drama is being. Drama is life in action.

There are two main types of drama activities: informal and formal ones. Informal drama activities – such as mime, role-play, simulation and games – are concerned with participants’ experience and the audience is

involved. Formal drama activities – like sketches, scenes and plays on stage – are concerned with interpretation and the participants (actors and actresses) are the protagonists. Through different types of activities, both use elements of the theatre craft. Mostly, the value of drama consists in fostering the social, intellectual and linguistic development of the learner. (Dougill:1991)

Some particularly significant characteristics of drama are that: it demands the cooperation of the participants, it draws on previous experience and it creates situations in which there is a need for precise communication. Since it is experimental, it affects students in other than a pure intellectual way and challenges them to discover new truths or insights by confronting them with previously unknown predicaments.

Drama activities are not a magic ingredient for fun, and like any other aspect of language teaching, can go disastrously wrong if not prepared adequately. Well used, however, they are both, enjoyable and rewarding and have considerable benefits to offer: They provide a framework for communication, work with unpredictability in language use, build a bridge between the classroom and the real world, allow for creativity, involve the whole person, provide physical release, develop confidence, are motivating and cater for large mixed-ability classes (Dougill and Doherty: 2000).

### **Categorization of Drama activities**

**Warm-up Activities:** Their aim is to foster a climate of trust, awareness and group cohesion in which creative collaboration can take place, to focus participants' minds on the matter in hand (the topic to be taught) and to achieve an atmosphere in which genuine communication can take place.

#### **There are three different types of Warm-Up Activities:**

1) Introductory warm-up exercises: They act as ice-breakers in situations where group members may either be strangers or not know each other well. They help to break down barriers and to bond participants to share the same experience, like "Handshakes" or "Find someone who".

2) Verbal and Vocal warm-up exercises: They are particularly useful for steering student's mind away from their native language towards the target one, mainly for rhythm and pronunciation practice, as "Sentence Building" or "Find who's got the same sound".

3) Trust and Sensitivity Exercises: They help actors and actresses to get awareness of themselves, each other and the world around them; they foster close and physical collaboration; they build up a sincere and trusting relationship; they make students work together, share ideas and accept criticism; they foster group togetherness and they also help to establish the necessary mood for creativity and self improvement. Many of these exercises have a calming effect and are particularly useful to quiet excited groups, for example "Guiding the Blind", "Mirroring" or "Relaxation". (Asher: 1982)

**b) Mime (Br. Engl.) or Pantomime (Am. Engl.):** It is the non-verbal representation of an idea or story through gesture, body movement and expression. It does not involve language but it creates the need for language.



Mime exercises help learners to become comfortable with the idea of performing in front of their peers without the concern of language. Examples of Mime are "Guess the Situation", "The Mime Box" and "Mimed Scenes". The potential of Mime stems from the fact that memory and learning are greatly reinforced when there is a visual association or image.

**c) Role-Play:** It is the act of behaving in the way typical of someone else or of an imaginary person or character. Among possible exercises, we can name "Inviting", "Setting your point of view" and "Telephoning". The main benefit of role-play is that it enables a flow of language that might be otherwise difficult or impossible to provoke. The difference between coursebooks and drama role-plays is that in the second ones there is presence of tension, caused by unpredictability, which plants the seeds of conflict to be worked out. (Prodromou:1984)

**d) Improvisation:** It is a spontaneous response to the unfolding of an unexpected situation. In fact, improvising is something we all do in our daily lives. It is considered a necessary ingredient of language use. Some exercises, like "Progressive Improvisation" or "Answer the unexpected question" are very useful for Fluency Practice.

**e) Simulations:** They are generally held to be a structured set of circumstances that mirror real life and in which participants act as instructed.

**Note:** The differences between role-plays, improvisation and simulation are far from clear because, for example, there may be improvisation within role-play and role-play or simulation during improvisation, but for the language teacher there is only one concern: the opportunities they create for production of the spoken language.

**f) Scripts:** They are the written expression of a dialogue, scene, play or similar. Scripts are most commonly used by drama groups for the purposes of staging performance.

- Reasons for using Scripts: they have language value (they provide a rich source of comprehensible input in language that is natural and spoken) and they offer psychological security to the students (working with scripts is less threatening and less demanding than many other drama activities because the content is provided rather than created). Scripts provide a goal towards which the group can work and are, thus, a collaborative enterprise that involves language as the means as well as the end. But remember that the printed word must be internalized and understood to be interpreted correctly. (Widdowson: 1985).

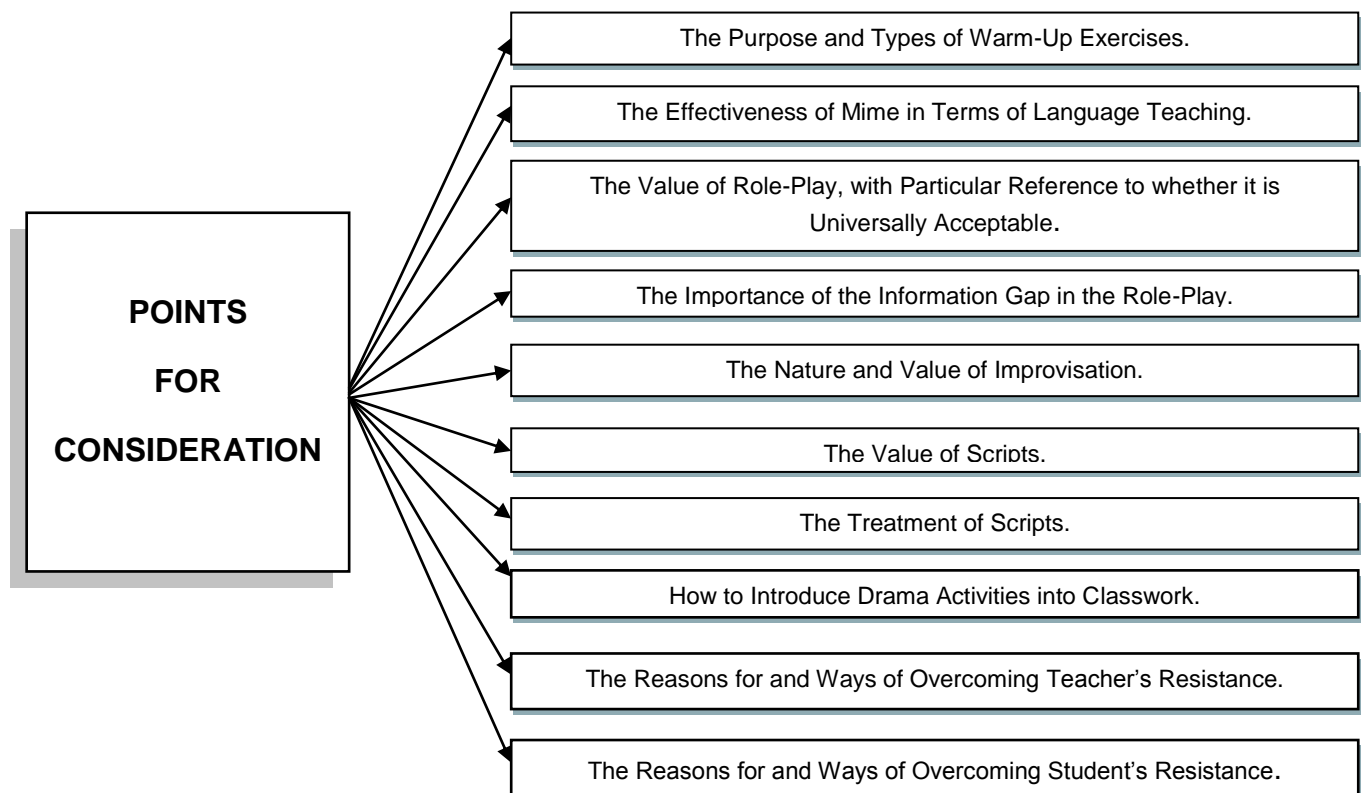
## **Taking the first steps**

It is not easy to take the challenge of change. Though the communicative approach has led to a decentralized classroom with the accent more on pair and group work and students themselves taking a more

active part in the proceedings, there is a resistance from teachers to make use of drama activities.

### Overcoming some problems which make teachers reluctant to use drama activities

- 1) **Fear of losing control:** To avoid this, the teacher can plan the drama class carefully, make sure the instructions are understood and not be over-ambitious – preparing drama activities according to the students' level and natural abilities or talents.
- 2) **Lack of confidence:** To overcome this, the teacher can outline the class in detail, practise beforehand, read and study about the use of drama activities for teaching and learning and trust on the students' abilities. Remember: There is no substitute for experience and that experience should be gained step by step.
- 3) **Lack of room:** The lack of room to perform drama activities can be solved choosing activities which do not require too much movement, or taking the students to the playground, music room or another bigger space. Another possibility is to rearrange the classroom furniture so as to create more space and possibilities of movement.
- 4) **Students' Resistance:** To overcome this, the teacher should lead by example, avoid putting students on the spot, make positive comments and not demand too much of the students' abilities. (Maley and Duff:1982)



### Integrating Drama Activities Into The Language Syllabus:

The use of drama activities for their own sake or to fill up a Friday afternoon only serves to undermine their effectiveness. If drama activities are

to be used for teaching purposes, they must be integrated into the language syllabus.

**Vocabulary:** Let's consider the following points:

- The learning of vocabulary is considerably enhanced by the use of aids to memorization such as images, memories, associations, etc.
- Unless there is an effective element to the process, there a tendency for the vocabulary not to stick. (Morgan and Rinvoluceri, 1986)
- Drama activities can help to provide visual and physical reinforcement that increases involvement and helps to fix the vocabulary items in the mind.
- Enacting, performing or acting out becomes all the more effective when there is a framework or context for the lexical items.
- The effectiveness of mime stems from the fact that students are unaware of how often they are hearing the words or phrases that their mates say to guess what they are miming or of the fact that they are memorizing vocabulary, for their attention is, inevitably, on the mime.
- Sketches and plays are fertile source for active and passive vocabulary. They lead themselves to presentation, activation and / or reinforcement of lexical items and structures because of the repetition and possible memorization involved.

**Structures:** All drama exercises can be used for the exploitation of structures in language teaching. After the initial presentation and reading through, the lesson will have the following stages: familiarization with the language, reading aloud, performance in groups and the students own creations. This method of practising the structures has several advantages, such as providing constant repetition and practice of the structure/s in process, making the language meaningful and memorable; leading students to memorizing key patterns not as an end in itself but as a part of a process of performing, and enabling students to make use of their own creativity, both in terms of the physical interpretation of their part and of their invention of a new sketch. (Way: 1967)

**Free Stage:** Students need to be given the opportunity to try out the newly learnt language in situations that approximate to real life and in which they are free to choose how to formulate what they want to say. By borrowing from the world of drama, teachers can breathe life into what may otherwise be arid academic speech. A careful planning and timing is important. If timing fails the entire lesson fails.

**How to Evaluate a Lesson (Teacher's meta-evaluation):** We can measure the success of a drama lesson by asking a number of questions related to the two major objectives of using drama activities in language teaching:

- *Overcoming resistance to the foreign target language:* Was the experience enjoyable? Was it a creative experience? Could the lesson be linked to the students' own experience? Were the students in a state of "readiness to learn"?
- *Creating a need for speaking:* Were the situations or problems such that demanded a solution? Was responsibility placed on the learner?

Did the lesson involve all the students, including the shy or weaker ones? (Morgan and Rinvulcri - 1986)

## **Conclusion**

The main reason for the use of drama activities in the English classroom is the need to bridge the gap between carefully controlled classroom work and the complexity of language in the outside world. Drama Activities can inject life into what might otherwise be sterile language trapped within the confines of a printed page. Because communication lies at the core of drama activities, they are a natural vehicle for the language in use.

Drama activities do more than concern themselves with language, however. Their potency in both educational and language terms derives from the fact that they are creative acts articulated through concrete action, and, as such, appeal to the individual as a whole rather than to his/ her intellectual or rational aspects. This implication runs as a common thread throughout the activities described. All of us, without exception, are capable of some form of role-play because we all play roles in everyday life. From this starting point, students can be guided towards an ever-increasing range of drama activities with a corresponding growth in self-confidence and language ability.

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## **“Creative Writing at B2 Level: Fire Your Learners’ Imagination!”**

KANDEL, ANALÍA

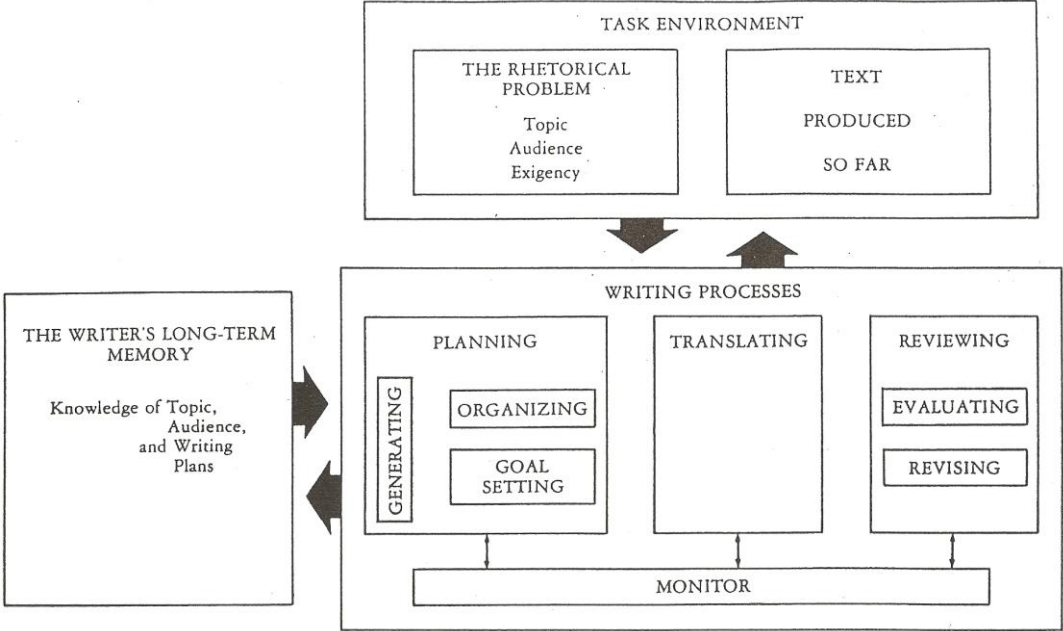
Cambridge ESOL

### **Abstract**

One of the most challenging parts of the process of writing is idea-generating, which is crucial mainly at an initial stage, but necessary also at later stages. How can we help learners overcome writer’s block and come up with imaginative and relevant ideas? This workshop explores techniques to help B2-level students to get started and keep drawing upon their creativity throughout the writing process.

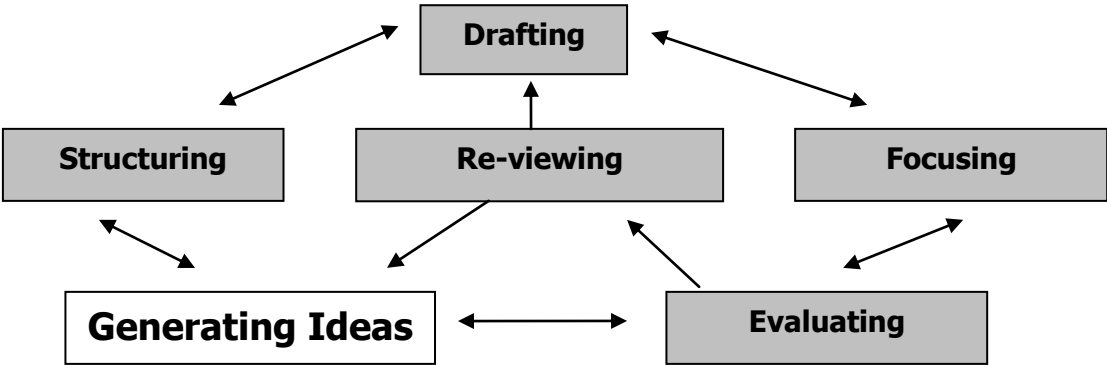
The theoretical background of the present workshop is a process approach to the teaching of writing (Grabe and Kaplan 1996; White and Arndt 1991). A major change which stems from research findings in the field of cognitive psychology and writing instruction has been a profound shift in the conception of what writing involves. Current approaches to the teaching of writing emphasise the cyclical, recursive and complex nature of writing processes and are rooted in Flower and Hayes's (1981: 367) model of writing

(**Figure 1**), which illustrates the various sub-processes that take place simultaneously in the writer’s brain during the process of writing a text.



**Figure 1:** Model of writing (Flower and Hayes's 1981: 367)

**Figure 2** illustrates White and Arndt’s (1991: 17) simplified diagram of Flower & Hayes’s model of writing. The “Generating Ideas” stage is highlighted as it is the focus of the present workshop.



**Figure 2:** Model of writing (White and Arndt 1991: 17)

Before teachers seek solutions to offer to students who have difficulties to get started, it is necessary to look into the causes of this apparently common plight among L2 writers at all levels. The comic strip in **Figure 3** portrays a possible reason why students tend to encounter writer's block.



**Figure 3:** A possible reason why students have trouble getting started

Indeed, teachers should go out of their way to encourage students' creativity by not setting limits to their imagination. Some teachers also mention students' insufficient knowledge of the world and lack of vocabulary as other factors that account for their difficulties to get started. However, the only real and long-lasting solution to help students generate ideas effectively seems to lie in **explicit strategy instruction and training**, as it equips them with tools they can later use autonomously.

The two pillars of Process Writing are intervention and awareness. As regards the latter, here is a tip to help teachers introduce the topic and **raise students' awareness regarding the need to learn and internalise effective strategies for getting started**. Teachers should ask their students:

*When you sit down to write... Does your mind turn blank? Do you get the feeling you have nothing to say? If so, you're not alone. Many writers experience this at some time or another, but some people have strategies or techniques to get them started. When you are planning to write something, try some of the following suggestions.*

From then on, every time teachers set a writing task, they can do some of the activities in the next section.

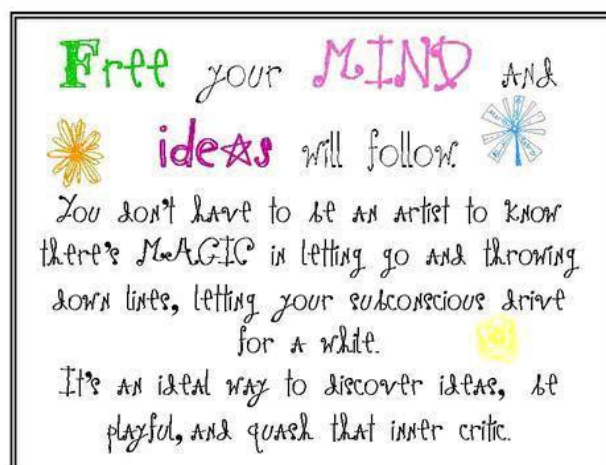
### **Strategies and Techniques for Getting Started**

B2-level students are expected to write (my emphasis):

[...] non-specialised text types such as **an article, an essay, a letter, an email, a report, a review, or a short story**, with a focus on **advising, apologising, comparing, describing, explaining, expressing opinions, justifying, persuading, recommending, suggesting**.

*First Certificate in English Handbook for Teachers (2008: 2)*

With a view to giving teachers the chance to try out some of the strategies their B2-level students need in order to produce the required text types, the present workshop offers first-hand experience of activities aimed at **helping students generate ideas, discover a topic and identify a purpose for writing**. **Figure 4** expresses the message teachers should get across when setting each of the activities that follow.



**Figure 4:** Message students should bear in mind for idea-generating activities (author unknown)

**1. Brainstorming** (at word level). This well-known idea-generating activity can be done using various stimuli, such as **music, sound effects, visuals** and even **ballet**. Teachers should create a relaxed atmosphere and get students to listen / look, imagine and take notes of absolutely any idea that comes to mind within a set time limit. Explain the basic rules for brainstorming:

- No criticism; no evaluation; no judgement at this stage.
- Let your ideas flow with no inhibitions; ALL ideas are welcome; no idea should be blocked.
- Quantity is the goal: the more the better.
- The ideas should not be detailed. Keep ideas brief, do not tell stories.
- If you can't find a specific word in English, write it in Spanish or use a drawing or a symbol.

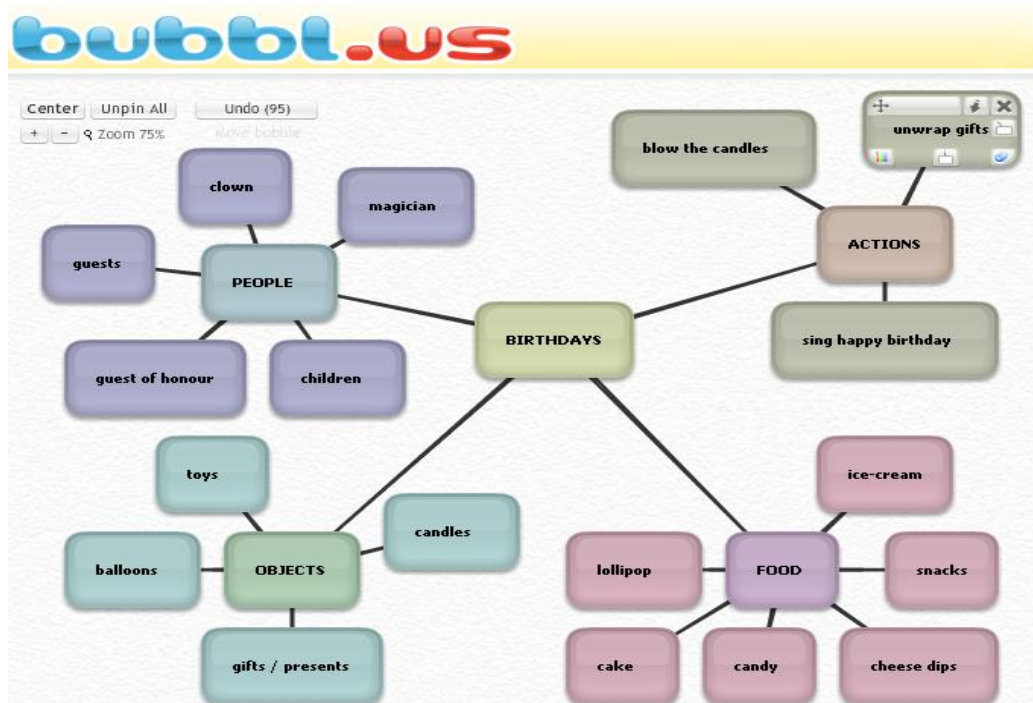
**2. Fastwriting** (ditto 1, at sentence level). Have students follow these instructions (White & Arndt 1991: 46):

- Concentrate on ideas, not on language, grammar or punctuation.



- Write as quickly as you can and *don't stop writing*.
- Don't stop to cross out or correct mistakes.
- If you can't find a specific word in English, write it in Spanish or leave a blank or write "something".
- Return to the blank spaces or words in Spanish when you have finished writing, and then, using a dictionary or thesaurus, add or translate the words or phrases concerned.

**3. Mindmaps:** Students make up a diagram to structure ideas while / after they brainstorm / fastwrite. Then they can then choose some items (characters, objects, actions) to write a story. Teachers can suggest students use [www.bubbl.us](http://www.bubbl.us), a simple and free web 2.0 application that lets students brainstorm online (**Figure 5**).

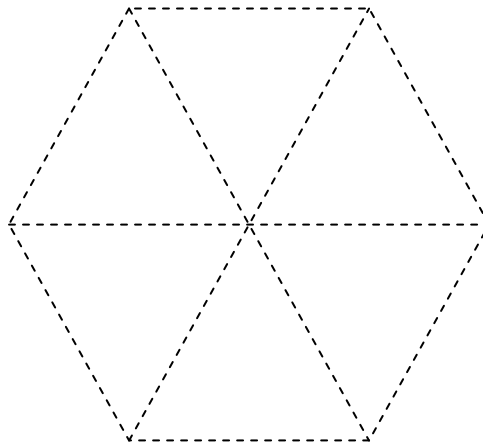


**Figure 5:** Mindmap on "Birthdays" using Web 2.0 bubble.us

**4. Come to Your Senses** (*Instant Activities for Creative Writing*, hereafter IACW, 1997: 39): Provide students with an action/character-filled picture (e.g. Handford's *Where's Wally?* series) and give the following instructions:

*Step into this picture. Look around you. What do you see? Sniff. What do you smell? Listen. What do you hear? Get something to eat. What does it taste like? Pet one of the animals. What do you feel? Now that you've used all your senses, add them to a description of the scene. What is it really like to spend a (hot summer / cold winter / etc.) day at a (country fair / railway station / ski resort / beach / etc)? Which person / object / animal strikes your attention the most? Why? What happened to him / her / it? Write your story.*

5. **Idea Spinners** – Adapted from IACW (1997: 52, 60): The teacher provides small groups with 3 hexagon-shaped figures like the one in **Figure 6** and gives the following instructions:



**Figure 6:** Hexagon-shaped idea spinner.

- Brainstorm 6 characters, 6 settings and 6 story problems and write them on each part of the 3 figures.
- Make a hole in the centre of each figure and poke a pencil through it to make 3 idea spinners.
- Take turns rolling each spinner on the desktop until it stops. The part of the spinner that touches the desk is the one to use.
- Weave a story around the character, setting and problem that appear.
- If you don't like the combination that comes up, spin one or more of the idea spinners again until a more desirable combination comes up.
- Try rolling the spinners twice or three times instead of once. Create a story with multiple characters, settings and problems.

**6. Story Toss game** – Variation on "Idea Spinners", with cardboard cubes. Students take turns rolling three cubes, one with 6 characters, one with 6 settings and one with 6 problems. Tell students to:

- Weave a story around the character, setting and problem that appear.
- Try rolling the cubes twice or three times instead of once. Create a story with multiple characters, settings and problems.

For activities 5 and 6, teachers can draw ideas from the *Story Starters Write Abouts* series.

**7. Reader-Writer Telepathy** – This is a useful idea-generating technique based on questions, which helps students develop a sense of audience. They must predict the target reader's questions and answer them. Example (*First Certificate in English Handbook for Teachers* 2008: 26):

You have seen this announcement in an international magazine.

**MY FAVOURITE TEACHER**

Tell us about a favourite teacher of yours and say what you remember about him or her.

We will publish the most interesting articles next month.

Write your article.

In groups, students suggest possible questions the magazine readers might be interested in getting answers to, e.g. What was his/her name? When was s/he your teacher? What is your best memory of him / her? Did your classmates like him/her too? Why? What was s/he like? What did s/he look like? and so on. Once these questions are shared, students have many ideas to set about writing their piece.

**8. Guided Fantasy**<sup>16</sup> – The teacher creates a relaxed and quiet atmosphere and takes students on their dream holiday by telling them a story of which each is the protagonist. He/She says to students. "Sit back and relax, close your eyes, let your imagination fly, let nice memories come back and follow my voice". He/She has students imagine they get a phone call announcing they have won a trip to their ideal holiday destination. He/She goes on (speaking slowly, with pauses, giving students time to conjure up images and answer questions in their minds): "Where will you go? The day has arrived. You are packing in your bedroom. What clothes do you choose to take? You are now in the means of transport that is taking you there. Where are you? What are you doing? What can you see / smell / feel / hear / taste?" The teacher keeps on setting different scenes (accommodation / most famous landmark / a picture of the best moment / buying souvenirs / etc) and asking questions related to actions, people and the senses. Finally, s/he has them return to the classroom and open their eyes. In small groups students share their experiences. Then the teacher can set a writing task, e.g. a postcard, a letter, an e-mail, an article, a short story.

**9. In Whose Shoes?** – Ask students to pretend they are sb / sth else writing the piece (OWL 2004)

- On **holidays**: a camera / a swimsuit / a parasol
- On **Halloween**: a trick-or-treat sweet / a disguise / Jack O'Lantern
- On a **birthday party**: the cake / a gift / a balloon
- On **animal rights**: a lion in a circus / a bird in a cage / a zoo-keeper / an animal lover
- On the **environment**: a Greenpeace spokesperson / a member of the Board of Directors of a paper mill

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<sup>16</sup> *Acknowledgement*: Thanks to my friend and colleague Martha Crespo who first taught me this activity.

**10. Play the Reporter** – To write a story, review or report, ask students to answer “the five Ws”:

- 1 Who
- 2 What
- 3 Where
- 4 When
- 5 How
- 6 Why

Example (*First Certificate in English Handbook for Teachers* 2008: 26):

Your teacher has asked you to write a story for an international magazine. The story must begin with the following words:

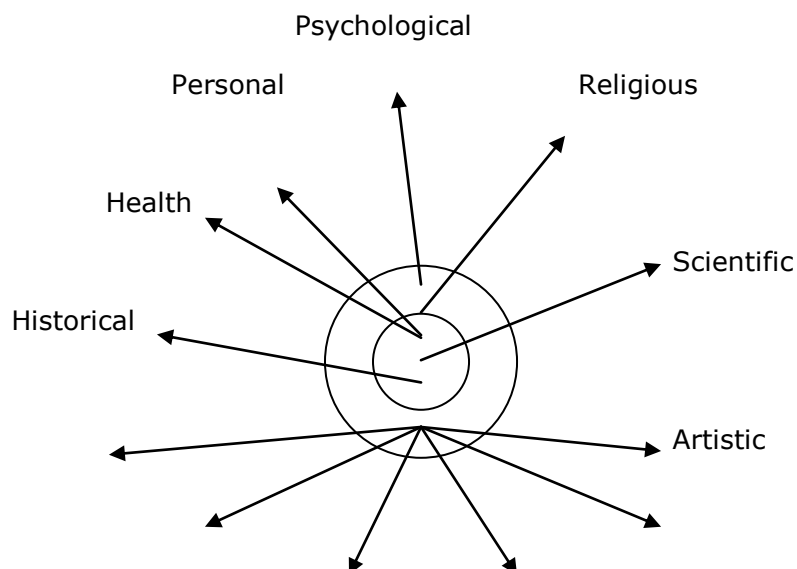
*Anna had a very special reason for getting up early the next day, so she set the alarm for 5 am.*

Write your story.

In groups, students create a story by answering “the five Ws”.

Activities 11 to 13 lend themselves to be used when setting **discursive essays** and **reports**.

**11. The Discussion Clock** – Given a topic, examine various viewpoints (Evans 1997: 59)



Moral

Political

Economic

Social

Educational

- A topic will not relate to all the aspects presented in the discussion clock.
- For each viewpoint there is usually an opposing argument – include it.

**12. Cubing** – Look at a topic from six angles, like the sides of a cube (White & Arndt 1991: 25)

**1 Describe**

What is the colour, size, shape, feel, smell, sound of (festivals)?

**2 Compare**

What are (festivals) like or unlike?

**3 Associate**

What do (festivals) bring to mind? What are (festivals) similar or dissimilar to?

**4 Analyse**

How are (festivals) composed? What are (festivals) part of? What is part of (festivals)?

**5 Apply**

How can (festivals) be used? What can be done with (festivals)?

**6 Argue**

What points can be put for and against (festivals)?

What reasons are there for taking a position for and against (festivals)?

**13. The SPRE/R Approach** – Answer, structure, then write (White & Arndt 1991: 28)

***Situation***

What is the present situation?

How did it come about?

What are its characteristics?

***Problem***

Is there a problem?

What is it?

<b>Response</b>	How can the problem be dealt with?
	What alternative solutions are there?
	What constraints are there on each possible solution?
<b>Evaluation / best?</b>	Which of the solutions is likely to be the best?
<b>Result</b> solutions?	What would be the result of applying any of the solutions?

## Endnote

It is essential that teachers present these activities as “a menu of strategies” students experience and get training for in class, but should progressively start using when they write on their own. This would be an important step towards fostering **learner autonomy**, developing **skilled-writer habits** (unlike unskilled writers, skilled ones usually have a wide repertoire of strategies to draw upon) and **honing skills they will need when writing independently in their social, academic and professional life**, as well as when sitting for **exams**.

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## **“Developing Thinking Skills through Reading”**

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### **Abstract**

Encouraging students to think in a foreign language is best accomplished in situations in which they must learn content. This workshop aims to provide teachers with practice in recognizing and planning reading comprehension assignments set for the interpretation of texts related to the content areas that middle and high students have to deal with in the course of their studies. These tasks will issue the participants with a variety of practice in thought demanding tasks that range from the more basic to the higher order levels of thinking within the cognitive domain based on Bloom's Taxonomy.

### **Developing Thinking Skills through Reading**

Within the cognitive-constructive view of learning, Difabio (1995) argues that students actively construct, or generate meaning by building relationships among the parts of the to-be-learned information and their own existing knowledge, beliefs and experiences. As part of this process, students need to develop reading strategies that help them integrate the new

information with their prior knowledge. As reading comprehension strategies are central components of the reading puzzle, students need to become good readers; that is, to make sense of their reading and be aware of their own thinking. They also need to organize the author's meaning to suit their own background knowledge, and set learning goals through reading strategies (Concannon, 2007: 131-146).

Previous studies have proved that the higher the cognitive demand of the reading activities, the lower the results of the students' production. A diagnosis test was designed by our team to examine how skilful our high school students were at completing tasks that included different levels of thought processes, as proposed in Bloom's taxonomy. The results confirmed such findings in our teaching-learning environment: our students were able to successfully solve the tasks related to the first levels of cognitive development, but many of them failed to cope with those that involved more complex thought processes. Thus, it is a priority to bring students to reading situations through which they will develop higher levels of thinking and help them construct and project meaning, so that they assimilate and accommodate the new information to their previous body of knowledge and experience. A useful tool to achieve this purpose is provided by Bloom's Taxonomy, a hierarchical scale of levels of thinking, upon which tasks can be designed for the readers to cope with activities that range from the mere acquisition of new information to evaluation and judgment. By solving these tasks, the readers are able to organize and interpret new written information.

Bloom's taxonomy, currently considered as one of the methodological tools of Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) (Torres Carmona, 2008), is regarded as a foundation for the design of reading tasks that enable students to acquire knowledge and to anchor new material in their general conceptual framework. According to Torres Carmona, (2008) CLIL is the result of different approaches to teach foreign languages, and in foreign languages. Marsh points out that CLIL "involves learning subjects such as history, geography or others, through an additional language. It can be very successful in enhancing the learning of languages and other subjects, and developing in youngsters a positive 'can do' attitude towards themselves as language learners" (Marsh, 2000: 2). This approach offers opportunities to learners to use another language naturally in such a way that allows them to forget about the language and centre on the topic to be learned.

When developing a classification of levels of intellectual behavior in learning, Bloom identified six levels within the cognitive domain known as Bloom's Taxonomy. This taxonomy divides cognitive objectives, in a scale that ranges from the simplest recognition of facts, throughout progressively mental behaviours, to the highest level of learning outcomes. These levels are knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Although it is necessary to consider that these divisions are not absolute, each of them implies going beyond the other. These levels can be briefly summarized as follows:

1. Knowledge is defined as recalling data or information from particular facts to complete theories. It requires remembering correct information. Key words that characterize the intellectual activities of this level are: *define, recognize, identify, label, list and state*.
2. Comprehension, which involves the understanding, interpolation and interpretation of the meaning of the material, represents the lowest level of understanding. Examples of verbs to set tasks for this level are *explain, comprehend, infer, interpret and rewrite*.



3. Application is characterized as the ability to use new concepts in new and concrete situations. It demands a higher level of understanding than the previous level. Verbs for activities at this level include: *apply, change, demonstrate, predict and illustrate*.

4. Analysis refers to the separation of concepts into its component parts with the intention of analysing the relationship between them and recognizing the organizational structure. It implies a higher intellectual level as it needs the understanding of both content and structure. Examples of verbs for learning objectives for this level are: *compare, contrast, discriminate, examine and distinguish*.

5. Synthesis implies building a new structure from different parts. It involves creative behaviours by formulating a new whole. Examples of verbs for this type of activities are: *categorize, organize, plan, construct and design*.

6. Evaluation is related to judging the value of the material to a specified purpose. This level is the highest one on the cognitive hierarchy since, besides containing the characteristics of the other levels, it has conscious value assessment based on internal (organization) or external (relevancy) criteria. Key verbs for these tasks are: *conclude, assess, evaluate, criticize and support*.

This taxonomy was later updated in the 1990's by Anderson, a former student of Bloom's, who led a group of cognitive psychologists that revisited the intellectual behaviour involved in each cognitive domain. One of the most visible changes was the introduction of new terminology. The table below illustrates this change.

	BLOOM'S TAXONOMY ORIGINAL TERMS	REVISED TAXONOMY NEW TERMS
level 1	Knowledge	Remembering
level 2	Comprehension	Understanding
level 3	Application	Applying
level 4	Analysis	Analysing
level 5	Synthesis	Evaluating / Creating
level 6	Evaluation	Creating / Evaluating

Remembering: at this level the learner is able to recall, and remember learned information. Activities for this level include: *recognizing, listing, identifying, naming, locating, retrieving and finding information*.

Understanding: at this level the learner fully understands the meaning of information by interpreting and explaining ideas or concepts. The tasks at this level include: *interpreting, exemplifying, summarizing, inferring, paraphrasing, classifying, comparing and explaining*.

Applying: at this level the learner makes use of information in a different context from the one in which it was acquired. Examples of tasks for this level are: *implementing, using and executing*.

Analysing: at this level learner breaks acquired information into its parts for a better understanding of that information. Examples of this type of tasks are: *comparing, contrasting and organizing*.

Evaluating: at this level the learner is able to make decisions based on deep reflection, criticism and evaluation. Some of the tasks for this level are: *checking, hypothesizing, testing, detecting and monitoring*.

Creating: at this level the learner creates new ideas and information by using the content previously acquired. Some of these activities include: *designing, constructing, planning, producing and devising*.

As a contribution to the development of reading skills which involve higher levels of thought processing, this workshop aims to provide teachers with practice in recognizing and planning reading comprehension assignments set for the interpretation of texts related to the content areas that middle and high students have to deal with in the course of their studies. The session consists of three stages. In the first one, there is a brief introduction to the theoretical background related to Bloom's Taxonomy and the six levels of thought processes. At this point, the participants will learn – or recall – the main features of the taxonomy and will develop a model consisting of a system of tasks that will help them design activities involving different levels of thinking. In the second stage, reading material designed for the session will be presented. Texts dealing with Natural and Social Sciences have been carefully selected to meet the needs of the teachers. These texts will be distributed to the participants. In this phase, a text with sample tasks that aim at the development of the different levels of thinking processes will be read and analyzed. This is a stage for modelling and explanation of the processes of active reading. The presenters will talk about, show, model, explain and clarify issues concerning the application of Bloom's Taxonomy to the design of reading tasks. The procedures for the design of such tasks will be discussed in groups. In the last part of the session, the participants will be expected to get actively involved in the workshop. To this purpose, they will be provided with another reading text for which they will have to design tasks that correspond to the progression of thinking from a literal to an evaluative level. They will formulate questions individually as they read and bring them to team discussion. They will classify the questions they have elaborated according to the model provided in the taxonomy. Finally, time will be devoted to evaluation of comprehension through discussion.

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## **"DISCOVERING LEARNING: Better Ways of Engaging Learners of Literature"**

LEDWITH, LORRAIN

IES Lenguas Vivas – ISP JV González

*"It takes imagination to learn a language"*

(McRae 1996)

### **Abstract**

One of the challenges of teachers in the world of today is to be able to engage students in the experience of learning. The area of literature should provide the opportunity not only of discovering new worlds but also of motivating students to play with texts in new and creative ways.

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate that – quoting myself -- "it is not the text but rather what you do with it that will determine the success of the learning experience." For that purpose different poems on the meaning of poetry have been selected. The notion of literature, literariness, ordinary language and literary language are explored and the rudiments of literary theory are presented to help students develop critical thinking.

The inclusion in 2005 of the subject **Introduction to Literary Studies** in the curriculum of the IES Lenguas Vivas was due to the need, among others, to cater for the increasing number of students who started teaching very early in their his subject intends to demystify the widespread notion of the complexity of poetry by exposing the students to a wide selection of poems from around the world and from different periods in history. It also intends to question the literary canon by confronting canonical and non canonical texts. The texts are examined from different points of entry

and the mechanisms of reading are laid bare in order to make students aware of this unconscious process and thus help them analyze the texts at different levels: graphological, phonological, lexical, syntactic, semantic, and functional, among others. Through textual intervention, students are encouraged to provide expansions, reductions, transfers of genre or point of view and evaluation, according to the age group and the level of language.

Starting from the question "What is literature" (Eagleton 1983), we debate a number of possibilities and the three main areas of literature are introduced: poetry, prose and drama. The next step is to attempt a definition of poetry. Students are encouraged to present their opinions and knowledge on the subject. The lack of consensus leads to the introduction of a number of poems on the meaning of poetry.

### **Texts to be used:**

1. **Poetry** by Eleanor Farjeon
2. **How to Eat a Poem** by Eve Merriam
3. **The Uncertainty of the Poet** by Wendy Cope

Reading the poem aloud. Before reading the poem the title is discussed. The assertiveness of the title leads us to believe that a definition will be provided.

#### **1. Poetry** by Eleanor Farjeon

"What is poetry? Who knows?

Not a rose, but the scent of a rose;

Not the sky, but the light in the sky;

Not the fly, but the gleam of the fly;

Not the sea, but the sound of the sea;

Not myself, but what makes me

See, hear, and feel something that prose

Cannot: and what it is, who knows?"

Reading aloud is stressed as being of utmost importance since the rhythm and musicality of the poem cannot be appreciated otherwise. By making the students aware of the typographical marks, the "directions" for reading aloud are foregrounded. Question marks, commas, semicolons and colons are all there for a reason and need to be rendered meaningful in the reading aloud. As our reading is affected by the visual presentation (Engler 1990), it is important at this point to highlight the graphological arrangement of the poem. The graphology of the poem is now discussed as being a short and compact poem. Eight lines of equal length framed within a number of questions in the first and last line.

A search for binaries leads to the identification of the dominant stylistic features that characterize this text. Right from the beginning a pattern of opposites is being set up. Syntactic and lexical parallelism through the number of lines starting with "not" creates what is known as "foregrounded regularity" (McRae 1991: 61) The sequence of negated objects followed by

caesura and a clause of concession introduces the essence of the negated object and creates a movement where starting from the vegetable world, moving onto the air, animals and water, the whole spectrum of creation is mentioned. The final three lines introduce the human being and change from end stopped to run on lines producing a change in rhythm. The introduction of the human dimension also serves to sum up the other areas while pointing to poetry's superiority to prose but still poetry remains undefined. The last questions "Who knows?" echoes the first line and makes the poem circular. Just like the argument being developed.

As sounds and sense go closely together, the phonological effect of the text is stressed. The use of alliteration and assonance is also worth marking together with the use of long vowels and diphthongs that create a regular rhythm and cadence reinforced by the internal rhyme.

In terms of function we soon realize that no definition or explanation is given in traditional terms but it is this quality of involving all the senses at once and of transcending the prosaic that constitutes the essence of poetry.

The following poem will continue the discussion from a different perspective. Before reading the poem the title is discussed.

## **2. How to Eat a Poem** by Eve Merriam

"Don't be polite.

Bite in.

Pick it up with your fingers and lick the juice that  
may run down your chin.

It is ready and ripe now, whenever you are.

You do not need a knife or fork or spoon

For there is no core  
or stem  
or rind  
or pit  
or seed  
or skin  
to throw away."

The title provides an interesting point of entry for this poem since it allows for the mechanisms of reading to be introduced. The first words of the title activate the readers' expectations: "How to" followed by a set of instructions. While the addition of the word *eat* anticipates a kind of edible substance or a specific way of eating, the noun phrase that follows (*a poem*) produces a defamiliarizing effect on the reader. The introduction of the Russian Formalist concept of *ostranenie* or defamiliarization becomes relevant at this point. This bringing together of the expected with the unexpected, creates an interactive participatory area between receiver and text – and it is in this area that interpretation begins (McRae 1991: 61)

If the object to be eaten is not an edible one, a different strategy of reading will be necessary to find meaning. It has become clear by now that a literal reading of the title is not applicable and we have to make use of a different strategy: metaphorical reading. As we read on, the process of

reading employs hypothesis formation and re-formation, and the title develops as a unit of meaning. (Simpson 1997: 29)

The process of reading in terms of anticipation-retrospection (Iser, 1974) will work as long as the reader is able to fill in the gap with the central metaphor of the poem: the comparison between the act of consuming an unidentified fruit and the act of interpreting a poem. This central metaphor allows for the introduction of the role of the reader as the one who consumes or eats the poem. Reader Response criticism and Reception Theory and their emphases on the reader, the reading process and response may be included at this point.

According to Smith, graphology exerts a psycholinguistic influence on the reading process. Much of the activity of reading relies on informed guesswork: efficient readers do not read words, they read meaning. (Smith 1973: 188 in Simpson). The layout of the text is "a crucial determinant of the interpretative paths it encourages" (Simpson 1997: 32). The layout in "How to Eat a Poem" strikes us as quite irregular. In the first stanza we notice the use of two short lines followed by longer ones. This contrasts with the long split line of the second stanza. The shortness of each individual line makes this stanza almost columnar in format with two syllables per line framed by a longer top and base. All of these graphological features intersect subtly with patterns at the level of morphology to create a specific effect. Particularly the use of the imperative becomes relevant when contrasted to the explanation of these commands provided in the second stanza "For there is no core..." This extended metaphor which addresses the reader directly involves the reader as a "co-creator" of the text. (Iser, 1978).

The next poem by Wendy Cope continues the questioning of the idea of poetry but focusing on the writer or poet. The title will not be provided at this time.

### **The Uncertainty of the Poet** by [Wendy Cope](#)

I am a poet.  
I am very fond of bananas.

I am bananas.  
I am very fond of a poet.

I am a poet of bananas.  
I am very fond.

A fond poet of 'I am, I am'-  
Very bananas.

Fond of 'Am I bananas?  
Am I?'-a very poet.

Bananas of a poet!  
Am I fond? Am I very?

Poet bananas! I am.  
I am fond of a 'very.'

I am of very fond bananas.  
Am I a poet?

A lexical approach foregrounds the limited number of lexical items (8) used in this poem and the movement from grammatically correct to grammatically and semantically deviant utterances. The first two sentences serve as the starting point for a series of syntactic swappings that foreground

the relevance of lexis, grammar, syntax and word order in the process of conveying meaning. Various strategies are outlined to help set the pattern of awareness. If we compare the first line and the last we can trace a movement from affirmative sentences to interrogative, imperative and the final question which makes the poem circular by interrogating the subject on the nature of poetry and of the poet. This can lead to the discussion of the identification of the lyrical "I" of the poem with the poet and the analysis of the function of the poem.

The importance of syntactic conventions in English can be demonstrated by how relatively small shifts in word order and combination can significantly alter the meaning of sentences. Poets have to "subscribe to syntactic constraints if they are to be understood; even if they deviate from them, they depend upon our knowledge of the conventions they break in order to achieve their effects". (Montgomery 1992:140)

The title can be elicited from the students at this point. The interconnection between form and content is pointed out. The text is presented now together with the Giorgio de Chirico painting of the same name that gave origin to it.

Consistent with the rationale of the course, this short paper has sought to integrate stylistic linguistic analysis with literary theory in the analysis of three short poems. These kind of texts may be studied both as a preliminary step towards and alongside more canonical literary study. In this paper, however, the argument has led to an attempt at defining the meaning of literature and specifically of poetry. Perhaps the characteristic most central to the definition of poetry is its unwillingness to be defined, labeled, or nailed down. But as teachers we all know that the teaching of literature is undergoing a change: the focus is more on the process than on facts, on students' interaction with texts, on opinions and interpretation rather than on received opinion. So, if we consider literature as a domain of linguistic experimentation we can engage in one of the challenges of teachers in the world of today: to be able to engage students in the experience of learning. The area of literature should provide the opportunity not only of discovering new worlds but also of motivating students to play with texts in new and creative ways.

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***"Don't Let Sleeping Dogs Lie.  
Using Controversial Issues to Teach Adolescents"***

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**Abstract**

When planning a new unit of work, we teachers often rely on the themes textbooks offer as an organizing principle for our lessons, only to find that teenagers seldom get hooked on topics such as "Homes," "The Sea," or "Adventures." These issues are usually believed to be ideologically neutral and, therefore, to lack potential for controversy, a word much dreaded by many language educators.

This presentation will attempt to show that our lessons can be all the more memorable if we choose controversial topics which question our students' preconceptions about them and make learners reflect on alternative views. Based on these polemical issues, we can design communicative tasks to work on grammar, vocabulary and the macroskills in an integrated way. If we teach learners *not* to "let sleeping dogs lie," we can help them become active citizens who may construct a truly democratic society in the future.

## 1. What is controversy and why do we usually “let sleeping dogs lie”?

*A civilization in which there is not a continuous controversy about important issues is on the way to totalitarianism and death.*

Robert Maynard Hutchins

The Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary defines controversy as “a discussion marked especially by the expression of opposing views.” Etymologically speaking, this word means “turned against” (*contro*: against, *versus*: “turned”). Both in its denotation and origin, the word is closely connected to **conflict** or **dispute**. It might be the negative connotation often associated with these words that makes most teachers shy away from an inclusion of so-called “controversial issues” in the language curriculum.

Nevertheless, conflict is a fact of life. Human beings are all different, have diverse life experiences, values and perceptions of reality and, therefore, dissimilar ideas. When confronting opposing views, conflict arises. This is not necessarily negative, even though several teachers may shudder at the very thought of this confrontation taking place inside their classrooms.

They are not to be blamed, though. Conflict avoidance is at the very core of the educational system. The creation of the school as an institution in modern times was strongly linked to the project of amalgamating the various cultures within the recently created nation-states (Narodowski, 1994). In essence, schools had the primary purpose of providing people with a sense of belonging based on a common history, ideology and lifestyle. Thus, the difference had to be uprooted.

As a result of this political scheme, the curriculum has been construed as a set of neutral contents and classroom procedures. However, a parallel curriculum can be said to exist, namely that which is left out, disregarded due to its level of controversy. As Cherrin (1993:1) explains, this “evaded curriculum” refers to “matters central to the lives of students, but touched on only briefly, if at all, in most schools. Evaded topics include sexism, race and ethnic discrimination, class stratification, homophobia, and reproductive rights.”

For many decades – and above all during the military dictatorship in our country – teachers have been trained to exclude issues with the potential for controversy. In other words, educators are expected to “let sleeping dogs lie” and to teach the allegedly neutral topics in the official curriculum. Unfortunately, if we choose to do so, we are missing the great chance of educating future citizens who can express their views and listen to conflicting ideas in search of a more democratic society.

## 2. The “evaded curriculum” in English language teaching

In selecting controversial issues to tackle with an adolescent class, teachers need to take into consideration not only students’ interests, but also their maturity level. Otherwise, the topic can be discussed, but the depth of the debate might prove insufficient as regards its impact on students’ personal, social and cognitive development.

The table below summarizes some of the topics which can be considered “controversial” and which are usually absent or tangentially mentioned in the school curriculum. As has been argued before (Auerbach, 1995, Pennycook, 2001, Paz & Quintero, 2009), every methodology, approach or classroom technique has to be adapted to the local context and the particular group of adolescents we are teaching. In this case, our selection of topic will depend on both learner interests and needs, and the possibilities and limitations the school and the community offer.

MEDICAL ISSUES	SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES
<p>Euthanasia.</p> <p>Abortion.</p> <p>Addictions. Smoking, drinking and drug consumption and addiction.</p> <p>Medical use of marihuana.</p> <p>Mental illnesses.</p> <p>Genetic manipulation. Designer babies.</p> <p>Contraception methods. Sex education.</p> <p>Young paternity or maternity. Unexpected pregnancies.</p> <p>Eating disorders. Anorexia and bulimia. Body image.</p> <p>Sale of human organs.</p>	<p>Poverty and richness. Distribution of Wealth.</p> <p>Illegal immigration.</p> <p>Media control and freedom. Media imperialism. Censorship.</p> <p>The military coup.</p> <p>Systems of government. Economic systems. Globalization.</p> <p>Unemployment.</p> <p>Equal access to education, health and housing.</p> <p>Revolutions, utopias and dystopias.</p> <p>Prisons.</p> <p>Crime and punishment. Death penalty.</p> <p>Integration of people with different capabilities.</p> <p>War.</p>
GENDER ISSUES	TRANSCENDENTAL ISSUES
<p>Homosexuality. Lesbianism.</p> <p>Transvestism. Transsexuals and sex-change operations. Transgender.</p>	<p>Religion. Faith and fanaticism.</p> <p>Atheism.</p> <p>God’s existence.</p>

Gender violence. Sexual abuse.	Self-help as a personal religion.
Heterosexuality. Expected roles of men and women.	Death.
Single-parent families.	Life after death.
Same-sex marriage. Gay adoption.	

### **3. Methodological orientations to use controversial issues with adolescent learners**

Dealing with controversial issues might turn out to be counterproductive if students and teacher do not abide by certain principles. Even though these guidelines can be a further source of controversy and, therefore, negotiable, it is important to compromise on certain ground rules to be followed with a view to developing both respect and responsibility when speaking to and about others. For the sake of clarity, these methodological guidelines have been divided into three categories: a) those regarding learners and their values; b) those regarding teacher roles; and c) those regarding classroom management.

#### **3.1. Regarding learners and their values**

Discussing controversial issues may imply questioning one's or other people's system of values. Contrary to what many people might believe, values are not universal, but socio-culturally and historically defined. As Bindé et al (2006) have explained, the conception of values is different depending on the historical period and the community we choose to study. Therefore, referring to "values" as an absolute term shows an ethnocentric perspective which both validates hegemonic views and beliefs and, at the same time, discredits those ideas and cultural products of non-mainstream groups, thus generating a process of "Othering" of the wrongly called minorities.

Bearing this in mind can help us teachers and learners feed on the various perspectives present in the class, without preconceived "correct" answers to transcendental questions. If, as facilitators, we are not ready to accept an alternative and often conflicting system of values (or hopefully, many of them all together in the same class), we had better deal with topics with which we can feel safe. Otherwise, by imposing moral and "generally accepted" values on our learners, we are pretending to be democratic and open-minded, thus making our students victims of the worst kind of pedagogical perversion.

#### **3.2 Regarding teacher roles**

The following chart shows the different roles you can adopt while discussing controversial issues. Even though it is not comprehensive – as is the case with any classification –, this table can help us reflect on some of the available options. Our choice might be influenced by the nature of the topic, the school where we work, the learners' background and previous knowledge on the theme, the level of conflict the topic usually entails, the divergence

which might exist between learners' views and our own, students' maturity level, or students' interlanguage, among other factors.

<b>Neutral Chair</b>  Facilitator adopts role of impartial chairperson of a discussion group	<b>Stated Commitment</b>  Facilitator always makes known his/her views during the discussion
<b>Balanced Approach</b>  Facilitator presents students with wide range of alternative views and materials	<b>Challenging Consensus</b>  Facilitator consciously and openly takes up an opposite position to that expressed by students or resource materials

Stradling et al, 1984 as cited in Wilkins, 2008

Another important point to consider when choosing a role is the stage students are at in the development of critical thinking skills and the handling of conflict. At the beginning, our participation might be deemed necessary even by learners themselves, who need both support and limits. Later on, we can move aside and let a student lead, for instance, a discussion. Little by little, we can develop both autonomy and interdependence, which are essential traits in any democratic society.

### 3.3. Regarding classroom management

In order for students and teacher to critically and seriously deal with a polemical issue, there needs to be an atmosphere of respect and a responsible attitude. Respect does not mean tolerance, since the latter implies that the one who "tolerates" is in a superior position to the one who is "tolerated." Respect, in this context, has to do with accepting the fact that a myriad of contrasting views coexist in this world. Both teacher and learners need to be open-minded enough to critically assess their ideas in the light of those which seem to be contradictory. Questioning our own ideas and deciding whether to maintain them or not would mean respecting both ourselves and others.

Responsibility, as applied here, would mean exactly what the elements in the word imply: response-ability. As participants in discussions – and later in society – we need to understand when and how we can respond to other people's ideas or actions. In the context of controversy, we need to develop the ability to use appropriate strategies to exchange views without hurting other people's feelings or discrediting their ideas *a priori*.

First, in order to conduct discussions with respect and responsibility, knowledge is fundamental. It is paramount for students to make informed comments on the issues and not just to express their gut feelings or stereotyped answers. It is the role of education, in fact, to challenge overgeneralizations, sweeping statements and stereotypes commonly present in everyday discourse. After all, one of the pillars of discrimination is ignorance, and as a consequence, fear of the unknown.

Second, the facilitator needs to keep the discussion on track. More often than not, students or teachers get carried away and wander off the main topic under discussion. As a class, one important rule to learn is that

contributions have to be relevant to the topic we are tackling. It is a good idea not to simply disregard off-subject interventions, but first to ask the speaker to explain the connection, and if he or she is unsuccessful, to show him or her why these are not strictly connected to the theme.

A third factor related to respect and responsibility is the amount and form of participation. It usually happens that some students, because of their language level or personality traits, participate more actively than others. It is important to let them participate freely, but it is also vital to have an even participation of the class. To limit those who dominate the discussion, you may signal the fact that they will have just two more interventions by using a yellow and red "participation cards," or any other concrete object. They need to learn to respect other people's ideas as well, and this can only be done by listening to them actively. Besides, the class must find an agreed-upon way to participate. Brainstorm other possibilities other than raising hands or saying "me." Learning how to snatch a turn respectfully is essential for a democratic exchange of any ideas.

In sum, it is a good idea to negotiate a set of ground rules you can follow during discussions. You may choose to be the facilitator yourself or let a learner play the role, but, whoever performs this task needs to make sure the rules are respected. Here is an example of guidelines you can use with your learners.

#### **DISCUSSION GUIDELINES**

- *Always listen carefully, with an open mind, to the contributions of others;*
- *Ask for clarification when you don't understand a point someone has made;*
- *If you challenge others' ideas, do so with evidence and appropriate logic;*
- *Always criticise ideas or positions, not people;*
- *If others challenge your ideas, be willing to change your mind if they demonstrate errors in your logic or use of the facts;*
- *Explain the relevance of issues that you mention when their relevance might not be obvious to others in the class;*
- *If others have made a point with which you agree, only repeat it when you have something new or important to add;*
- *Be respectful of turn taking. Let other people talk. Participation must be even;*
- *Above all, respect the beliefs of others, even if they differ from yours.*

Adapted from "The Guided Discussion" in *CTL*, Number 12, February 1992

It is also paramount to allow students to self-assess their performance not only in connection with their use of English, but also regarding their respect for the guidelines agreed upon. The guidelines above might be used as a checklist students can use after finishing a debate. They can write from 1 to 5 (1 being "always" and 5 being "never") the number that best represents how often they think they have respected the principles of classroom discussion.

#### **4. Material selection**

The following mindmap shows just an example of material you can use to deal with the theme of abortion. Note that the choice of texts and activities aims at discussing various aspects of the problem from different perspectives. When selecting the material for a unit of work, we need to bear in mind that all the different "voices" on the issue are given a chance to be "heard."

## **LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE**

## **AGE GROUP: 17-YEAR-OLDS**

### **SONGS:**

"Sally's Pigeons" by Cyndi Lauper  
Hemingway

"Papa Don't Preach" by Madonna

### **SHORT STORIES:**

"Hills Like White Elephants" by Ernest

"The Abortion" by Alice Walker

### **READING**

Abortion: Are you pro-life or pro-choice?  
Madonna's song

(from Taboos and Issues)

a 

<b>ABORTION</b>
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Discussions

### **SPEAKING**

Role play based on

Debate

Talk show with

Short Story

### **LISTENING**

"Sex Education"

<http://www.elllo.org/english/ToughStuff/TS001-SexEducation.htm>  
Someone's-Shoes"

Narrative

Short Stories

### **WRITING**

Opinion Piece

"In-

Responding to the



"Abortion in India"

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/news/words/general/991118.shtml>

## **VIDEO** **LEXIS**

"The Abortion War"

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E-aAEYqGPWM>)  
and Parts

## **GRAMMAR**      **AND**

Modal Verbs

Vocabulary on Health

of the Body

Vocabulary on Babies

Education /      Vocabulary on Sex  
Contraception

"Speak Out - Episode 11"

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EeY4r-mZXlw&feature=related>)

## **5. Conclusion**

As I expect to have shown, the absence of controversial issues in the school curriculum is not whimsical. Schools were politically conceived as homogeneity-promoting institutions. However, if we are to collectively construct a better and more democratic society, we need to come to terms with the fact that controversy is not a taboo word. It is on the basis of both respect for other people's ideas and on our responsibility (or *response ability*) as citizens that we will create a less hypocritical community which is not afraid of engaging in a frank exchange of ideas on issues that, when dormant, divide it and gradually destroy it. Not "letting sleeping dogs lie" is at the core of any critical liberating pedagogy (Freire, 1972).

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# **“Enriching the Narrative Text by Exploiting the Potential to Mean in the Nominal Group”**

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## **Abstract**

EFL learners in Teacher Training Colleges need to master, among others, the narrative genre. The mastery of the potential of the noun group to mean is what makes the difference between a simple narrative and a flavoury one. In this presentation some key theoretical concepts will be addressed, examples from our students' narratives will be illustrated, and awareness raising activities to fully exploit the nominal groups to describe participants in narratives will be proposed.

## **Introduction**

Writing effectively and meaningfully in a second language is beyond doubt a difficult task that entails a lengthy learning process. The production of written texts is the outcome of complicated cognitive operations, which involve, according to O'Malley and Chamot (1990), different phases: construction, transformation and execution. The goal of written language is the conveyance of accurate, effective and appropriate information, which demands a more marked explicitness than spoken language (Richards, 1990).

Ellis (1994) and Tarone (1988) state that the ability to use language appropriately in specific contexts demands that learners draw upon their knowledge of syntax, lexis and discourse. Learning to write requires the manipulation of complex structural, lexical and rhetorical dimensions through specific instruction, due to the intrinsic difficulties involved in composing in a foreign language. Composing is a complex activity that demands more content words (Martin and Rothery, 1986) to express meanings efficiently. According to Halliday (1985), the complexity of writing is lexical, and consequently, a good writer should be able to control his ability to adjust the lexical density of his text in view of the requirements of the task.

Celce-Murcia and Olshtein (2000:161) also support the view that writing is often perceived as the most difficult skill since "it requires a higher level of productive language control than the other skills". According to some L2 writing investigators, the cognitive demands of composing in a foreign language are diminished when the writers are aware of the fact that writing is, simply, the process of making meaning by means of the linguistic resources at their disposal.

Genre specialists have shown that different genres make different demands on learners. This entails the ability to structure the written texts and to choose the appropriate lexico-grammatical and discourse resources as determined by the genre of the texts (Hyland 2002).

Researchers found that the act of creating text responds to multiple and recursive facets, from generating ideas, focusing, structuring, drafting, evaluating, re-viewing, to editing (White & Arndt, 1991). By observing "what actually goes on when people write" (White & Arndt, op. cit.:3), specialists in L2 writing started investigating the cognitive skills involved in the highly intricate mechanism of writing. Nunan (1989:36) describes the process of writing as the evolution of the composing act "through several stages as writers discover, through the process, what it is that they are trying to say", and observes that there is a transformation and refinement of ideas "as the writer writes and rewrites". Also Cohen (1990:105) makes reference to the recursiveness of this approach, as "writers go back to go forth", and emphasizes its pedagogic value by stating that "the writer's awareness of writing processes is heightened".

According to White & Arndt (op. cit.), what differentiates a process-focused approach from a product-centred one is that the outcome of writing, i.e., the text, has not been pre-conceived by analyses of model texts; on the contrary, process writing enables students to exert control over the cognitive operations and strategies so that the generated text will be the result of a discovery process by the writers themselves.

In their critique of process writing, L2 writing researchers like Hyland (2003) sustain that process models fail to inform learners of the ways social context affects linguistic outcomes, and Martin (1993, in Hyland, op. cit.) states that process-centred techniques do not allow learners to participate in valued discourses. In a similar fashion, Grabe & Kaplan (1996:37) point out that apart from considering the process-oriented perspective on writing, it is also necessary to address issues of "audience and social context" in relation to the written product.

The knowledge of generic forms constitutes a requirement to be fully competent in writing. From a pedagogic point of view, research insights have proved that a genre-based approach to writing empowers L2 learners to produce, by means of a conscious manipulation of adequate linguistic choices, target text types that are distinct and recognizable in terms of their purpose, audience and message (Macken-Horarik, 2002). Furthermore, as Johns (2002) points out, the conventions of a genre and its context have a strong influence on the features of a text. Consequently, student writers need to

conform to those boundaries through specific genre instruction to be able to control specific text types.

Paltridge (2001:2) states that the systemic functional theory of language explains how language works "in terms of the choices a speaker or writer makes from the language system in particular contexts of use". The Hallidayan (1993) view that language serves the purpose of making meaning and that it varies in relation to content and context implies that student writers have to be able to select the linguistic patterns that suit the meanings they are aiming at. Paltridge (2001:3) points out that in order to empower learners for successful communication and allow them to access "socially powerful forms of language", writing instructors should make learners aware of the rhetorical organization and linguistic features of the different genres, as well as stress the socio-cultural purpose each of them serves.

We have chosen to focus on the narrative genre for cognitive, cultural and linguistic reasons. From a cognitive point of view, the narrative is one of the first genres to be acquired even in the mother tongue and it is the most frequent and powerful mode of discourse in everyday communication (Bruner, 1986). From a cultural point of view, and following Martin and Rose (2008:49), we acknowledge that "stories are central genres in all cultures, in some form in almost every imaginable situation and stage of life". Linguistically, we are mainly interested in the potential of the nominal group to describe people, places, things and events which are at the core of a narrative text.

Martin and Rose (2008:49) refer to story genres as the 'story family', of which narrative is one member. These specialists reserve the term 'narrative' specifically for the generic pattern –orientation, complication and resolution (Labov & Waletzky, 1967). Typically, the narrative genres involve a disrupting event that is evaluated, and it is the protagonists of the story who resolve that disruption, returning the story to equilibrium.

For different reasons, the focus of our proposal is particularly concerned with how our L2 learners handle the nominal group scaffolded by the narrative image. Firstly, of all the groups (nominal, verbal, adjectival and adverbial), it is the one that has a greater potential for expanding meanings in one grammatical unit; and secondly, because it has been shown that its structure is one of the most interesting in written discourse (Gerot and Wignell, 1994) particularly because it can package a lot of information, thus being a major source of difference between different types of texts (Williams, 1993).

The structure of the nominal groups is described in terms of a number of components, summarised in the chart (Halliday, 1994:180) below:

<b>Deictic</b>	<b>Numerative</b>	<b>Epithet 1 (attitude)</b>	<b>Epithet 2 (quality)</b>	<b>Classifier</b>	<b>Thing</b>	<b>Qualifier</b>
the, a, an, my, that, this, his, her	One, three	splendid	old	electric	train	Which... That...

We have noticed that the nominal groups the students produced in a corpus of 20 narratives elicited by a sequenced cartoon strip were very simple in relation to their expected level of linguistic competence; that is to say, they do not fully reflect what the triggering image depicts. The cartoon consisted of a drawing of a dog tied to a tree, about to eat its food, and a crow trying to get its chance to steal the dog's food.

The following chart shows examples of the noun groups recovered from the analysis of the texts ranging from the simplest to the most elaborate ones.

Deictic	Numerative	Epithet (attitude)	1 Epithet (quality)	2 Classifier	Thing	Qualifier
					Tom, Sam, Flopy, It	
The/ a/ my/ our					Dog/ animal/ puppy	
His					competitor	
my					Neighbour's dog	
the /a		poor /small/ little			dog	
a		Very hungry			Dog	
the		angry /furious			dog	
A					Dog	that is tied to a tree with a bowl full of food near him
a					puppy	whose owners decided, one day, to tie...
a					dog	that is trying to eat his food
a					dog	which is tied with a dog collar to a post
A		little			dog	which was tied to/from a tree
a		little			dog	tied to a tree,

The			white		Dog	which being tied to a 'poste'
A		Selfish			Dog	Who* was about to eat his favourite food
A/the					Crow/ bird / eagle / sparrow/	
the		bothering			Bird/ visitor /	
his					enemy	
the		Smart evil			bird	
the		Intelligent / clever			Bird / crow	
the			Black / small		bird	
the			Big black		bird	
The		naughty			eagle	
The		Annoyed			bird	

		clever				
the					crow	which has just stand* next to the dog
The					Bird	flying and looking* the scene
A			Black		bird	who* had smelled the food
A		little	Black		bird	who* was really hungry
The					bird	who* had quietly witnessed the impotent* dog running around
A / the					Poste / tree / column / stick	
The					stick	the dog was tied to.
The					tree	in which the dog is tied
Its/ his					Food / goal/ bone/ plate	
A /the					Bone/ meal / midday meal	
his				favourite	meal	
its		Appetizing delicious	/		food	
His/ the				food	dish	
the					treasure chest	for which he have been fighting
the					food	he had in a plate near it
his					lunch	
The		poor	Little		Dog's plate	Full of food
some					food	that is in a plate near him
The/A/His					Rope/ tie/ belt	

Possible classroom activities aimed at improving their linguistic performance at this level would be:

- Raising their awareness on the potentials of expansion of the nominal group at a more receptive level by offering them good models of rich



narratives from which they could be asked to extract and analyze the nominal groups that describe the main participants.

- Getting them to notice the use of very general words (such as "angry") in their own examples and asking them to search for more specific words that reflect different shades of the core meanings (e.g. identifying the lexical items choleric, annoyed, exasperated, huffy, indignant, furious, irritated, outraged, infuriated, resentful, convulsed, fierce, fuming, maddened, hot, sullen, grumpy, irritated etc)
- Offering them different human and non-human participants to be used as heads of nominal groups they should expand.

Even though these pedagogical suggestions are not exhaustive, we believe that the implementation of these language-awareness activities can enhance their linguistic output so that they can become more confident and independent at the time of verbalising their intended meanings.

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## **“From understanding CLIL to benefiting from it in our classrooms”**

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### **Abstract**

All-encompassing terms such as CLIL may often, by definition, be hard to define, and we may run the risk of misconstruing the issue and –even worse- not benefiting from it in our daily practice.

Thus, the aims of this presentation are:

- to attempt a pragmatic definition of (at least first sight) a blurred term,
- to uproot the seeds of CLIL for close examination in the light of a fresh teaching-learning gust of wind,
- to look abroad (or go global) and look back again into the Argentinean context and go “glocal”,
- to explain what CLIL actually embraces,
- to suggest ideas to enhance teaching-learning processes involving both content teachers teaching in a foreign language and foreign language teachers teaching content.

## **Defining CLIL: Content and Language Integrated Learning**

*'CLIL refers to situations where subjects, or parts of subjects, are taught through a foreign language with dual-focused aims, namely the learning of content, and the simultaneous learning of a foreign language'* (Marsh, 1994). It can also be defined as a way of understanding Education that looks at languages as instruments to acquire knowledge.

### **What knowledge?**

In the *CLIL Compendium* there are five dimensions based on issues relating to culture, environment, language, content and learning. Each of these includes a number of focus points realized differently according to three major factors: age-range of learners, socio-linguistic environment, and degree of exposure to CLIL.

### **CLIL dimensions**

#### **1. The Culture Dimension - CULTIX**

- A. Build intercultural knowledge & understanding
- B. Develop intercultural communication skills
- C. Learn about specific neighbouring countries/regions and/or minority groups
- D. Introduce wider cultural context

#### **2. The Environment Dimension - ENTIX**

- A. Prepare for internationalisation, specifically EU integration
- B. Access International Certification
- C. Enhance school profile

#### **3. The Language Dimension - LANTIX**

- A. Improve overall target language competence
- B. Develop oral communication skills
- C. Deepen awareness of both mother tongue and target language
- D. Develop plurilingual interests and attitudes
- E. Introduce a target language

#### **4. The Content Dimension -CONTIX**

- A. Provide opportunities to study content through different perspectives

- B. Access subject-specific target language terminology
- C. Prepare for future studies and/or working life

#### 5. The Learning Dimension - LEARNTIX

- A. Complement individual learning strategies
- B. Diversify methods & forms of classroom practice
- C. Increase learner motivation

### **The seeds of CLIL**

LAC: Language Across the Curriculum (Widdowson's *Teaching Language as Communication*, 1978 – Usage & Use distinction – Areas of use most suitable to the learner: areas of other subjects on the school curriculum)

ESP (Widdowson's *Reading and Thinking in English* series – 1980 - Notion of disciplinary discourse)

CBI (Krashen's *Input Hypothesis*, 1982 – I + 1 hypothesis – comprehensible input)

CALP (Cummins's *Bilingualism and Special Education*, 1984 – Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency students should acquire to be able to succeed in L2 learning contexts)

They are different –and the differences are basically ontological and therefore, epistemological- but they share some assumptions relevant to the present discussion:

- Teaching and learning a foreign language is an educational practice,
- Content is inseparable from linguistic expression
- Language is the major medium of instruction and learning
- Subject-matter content contextualizes language learning

### **Looking abroad and back into our context**

In the European context, The Council of Europe within the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Strasbourg, 1998) posits that one of their duties is to "ensure, as far as possible, that all sections of their populations have access to effective means of acquiring knowledge of the languages of other member states as well as the skills in the use of those languages that will enable them to satisfy their communicative needs". David Marsh summarises the situation: "CLIL has emerged as a pragmatic European solution to a European need."

How do we benefit from this European experience?

Analyzing the situation thoroughly, selecting what can be useful to our context of situation and adapting it to our own reality, taking into account that:

Languages are used in four domains:

1. Personal (family relations, individual social practices)
2. Public (public services, business, administrative bodies, activities of public nature)
3. Occupational (the working world)
4. Educational (acquisition of knowledge and skills within an institution)

And that Language activities needed for the development of an additional language will be based on four aspects:

1. Production (addressing audiences, doing creative writing, filling in forms)
2. Reception (listening and reading for gist, listening and reading for specific information, detailed understanding)
3. Interaction (formal discussion, debate, interviews, correspondence)
4. Mediation (translation, interpretation, to facilitate communication between others)

In the last decades European schools have begun to adopt new ways of integrating additional languages into every day lessons and in this light, The Council of Europe claims that CLIL is thought to be a beneficial way to put together content and language to promote tolerance, teach languages more naturally and widen students' horizons.

### **Bilingualism and CLIL**

There are some European countries, Spain more precisely, where bilingual Education and CLIL are taken as synonymous. However, we'll see why this is not so –at least in our context.

To avoid confusion let us have a look at some traditional definitions of bilingual education:

- Native-like control of two languages (Bloomfield, 1935)
- The individual's capacity to speak a second language while following the concepts and the structures of that language rather than paraphrasing his or her mother tongue. (Titone, 1972)
- Form of education that aims to develop proficiency in two languages (L1 and L2) in all domains, that is, "dual-language maintenance: at least 50% of instruction during a given academic year is provided through the L2 for the programme to be regarded as immersion". (Genesee, 1988)

At present, most English-Spanish bilingual schools are grouped under ESSARP, about 80% in the city of Buenos Aires and Gran Buenos Aires area. We can say that they represent a totally additive model of bilingual education which shows *"a form of bilingualism that results when students add a second language to their intellectual tool-kit while continuing to develop conceptually and academically in their first language"*. (Cummins, 2000). Students are taught towards international certificates of education. Depending on each school project and student stage, these certificates

range from ESOL Cambridge Exams like PET or FCE to the Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE)

### **What does CLIL actually embrace?**

CLIL-like phenomena among us:

- Combined aims of language and curricular/subject/disciplinary content (English at University)
- Teacher Training College Programmes and Translator Courses (History, Literature, Linguistics, etc.)
- Bilingual schools (Curricular content taught in a language different from Spanish)
- Disciplinary content in EFL classes ( Literature, Environment, etc.)

Some trends among us and beyond

- Intensification of teaching, i.e., increasing number of years/ teaching periods, etc.
- Expansion of contexts where English is present (TV, travel, The Internet). More, easier, cheaper access.
- Different student profile (digital natives)
- Language as a means to access knowledge (not an end in itself; not just to communicate)

### **What is “content”?**

*“Any topic, theme, or non-language issue of interest or importance to the learners besides linguistic content such as grammatical structures, functions, vocabulary.”* (Genesee, cited in Met 1999)

Concrete examples:

- Another academic subject (All or part of it)
- Literature in the EFL Classroom (Readers)
- Culture issues (Famous Artists)
- Moral, educational, political, social issues (Values / Good Eating Habits/ Elections / Swine Flu)
- Student-contributed issues

A word on course books:

We have all seen textbooks with sections related to the issues referred to above and right now the market is being flooded with textbooks with a “CLIL component”.

When evaluating potential materials for our courses, we should bear in mind that this component should meet our students’ needs and interests and should aim at sparking reflection, critical thinking, debate and even controversy to favour the development of communicative competence in the broadest sense of the term.

Cook (1984) draws a further distinction between “imaginary” and “real” content, the former created by textbook writers such as story lines that make them attractive and the latter consisting of info about the real world outside the classroom, its problems and places...

## Shades of CLIL in the terms of exposure and the individual's life continuum

As regards exposure, most local bilingual schools promote almost fifty percent tuition programmes in each language. In CLIL terms, we can speak of low-intensity exposure (5 to 15% teaching time), medium-intensity exposure (15 to 50%) and high-intensity exposure (over 50%)

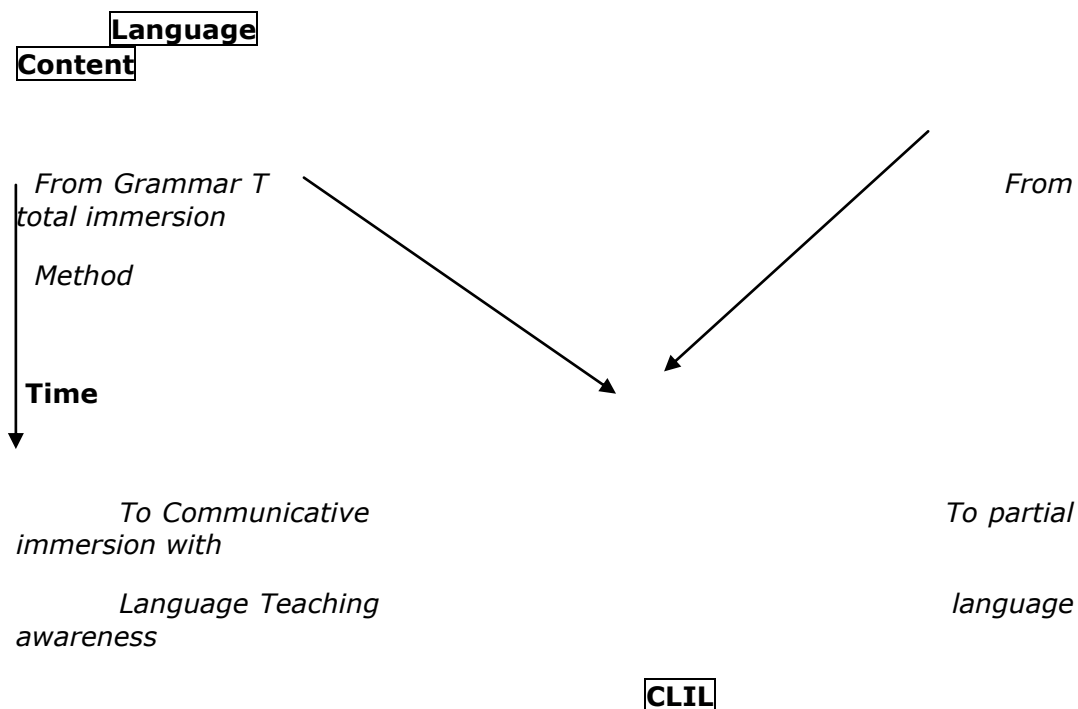
Let us now reflect upon a new student profile in terms of exposure beyond the classroom:

Globalization – The Internet phenomenon – cable TV – TE industry progress – digital natives

Let us look at the individual's life continuum and exposure to CLIL:

- Kinder (Almost exclusively content-oriented exposure)
- Primary (There is a swing of the pendulum towards language-oriented lessons for the sake of literacy, mainly in the first three years; balance between language and content is evident in EGB 2)
- Secondary (Balance is possible)
- Further (University, for example, content/subject-matter lessons gain dominance)

## The Convergence of Language-Content





*(Adapted, with the author's permission, from Dr. Banfi's Closing Plenary, FAAPI 2008, Sgo del Estero)*

## **The Risks of the Extremes**

Focus on Language:

*Losing sight of meaning*

*Lack of motivation*

*Inhibiting real communication*

Focus on Content

*Risking fossilization of erroneous language*

*Monolingual pretence*

*Excessive specialization*

## **Comparative Benefits**

Focus on Language: precision, accuracy and efficiency

Focus on Content: fluency, confidence and motivation

CLIL may help us work out a balance
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## **Conclusions**

CLIL aims at balance and variety; both are good things.

It is always positive to learn from other (apparently dissimilar or disconnected) teaching practices.

CLIL provides opportunities for cooperation and collaboration. (Banfi and Rettaroli, 2008)

Some ideas to enhance teaching-learning processes involving both *content teachers teaching in a foreign language* and *foreign language teachers teaching content*:

The teaching of content has often presented certain tension at the moment of recruiting staff: we may get the expert on subject matter with certain level of English on the one hand and the proficient, graduate English teacher with limited knowledge of the subject on the other. This seems to pose a problem in both CLIL and local bilingual education. Why is that?

Neither CLIL nor purely bilingual education methodologies have yet been *officially* incorporated in the local TTC curricula.

Possible solutions:

For both, the expert teaching in English and the EFL teacher teaching content:

- Exercise truly collaborative work- share ideas, projects with your colleagues and take joint decisions : the student is ONE
- Seek for already existing teacher support (ESSARP courses, for example)
- Ask for bibliography dealing with strategies to approach subject-matter in the classroom

For the ELF teacher teaching content:

- If you have received formal training in your Methodology Course on how to deal with content texts, just read on the subject and meet with the subject-in-L1 expert periodically.
- Anyway, through Teacher Associations, Departments in Training Colleges, Education Boards, we should go on making our voice heard to local/national educational authorities as to the gap between what traditional curricula offer and what the current reality calls for. Quite an issue well beyond English!

*"Teacher training institutions in many countries do not yet specifically prepare teachers for CLIL" (Mehisto, Marsh and Frigols, 2008, p.21)*

For the subject-matter expert:

- Get some form of training both in Language and in Language Teaching strategies (For instance, Cambridge TKT, which apart from the three original modules has just incorporated two new modules: CLIL and KAL)
- If teaching is your true vocation, get teaching certification for Professionals offered at many Universities or take up College Teacher Training.

*"Education is the first approximation a learner has to the activities in society, and discourse (the use of L for effect) is the instrument that helps the learner to understand and carry out these activities". John Dewey*

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## **"How to teach Intercultural Competence in the ELF Classroom"**

### **Subtheme: Awareness on our own cultural world through the approach to Texan culture**

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2008 Teacher Ambassador Program

(USA Embassy)

#### **Abstract**

Two of the 2008 Teacher Ambassadors in Texas discuss how to teach intercultural competence in the ELF classroom through pictures, videos and realia collected during their fifteen-day trip to Austin. As a way to foster intercultural understanding, they explore their unique experience within a program sponsored by the US Embassy. At the time, they present innovative techniques and give some tips to promote interculturality through English language. The authors base their presentation on some key concepts such as *lingua franca*, *big "C" culture*, *small "c" culture*, *"iceberg theory of culture"*, *interculturality*, *sphere of interculturality* and *intercultural competence*.

#### **Brief theoretical background**

Crystal (1997) argues that English is rapidly assuming the role of a world language - no other language has spread around the globe so

extensively. He also mentions that "there has never been a language so widely spread or spoken by so many people as English" (Crystal, 1997:139). This means that English has become a *lingua franca*, "a medium of communication between people or groups of people, each speaking different native languages" (Byram, 2001: 297). As Graddol (2006) states "English has become a world lingua franca. Projections are showing that in the next few years there could be around 2 billion people learning English in many different contexts around the world" (Graddol, 2006: 100).

Spradley (1980) defines the concept of **culture** as "the knowledge that people have learned as members of a group" (Spradley, 1980: 10, cited by MacKay, 2000:82), while Kramsch (1993) emphasises the notion that culture is "a social construct, the product of self and others perceptions" (Kramsch, 1993: 205). Horwitz (2008: 212-213) distinguishes between **big "C" culture** and **small "c" culture**. The former "refers to the great accomplishments of a culture and typically includes topics like literature, philosophy, architecture, important historical events and figures, and the arts", while the latter "corresponds more to an anthropological definition of culture and refers to the life ways and worldview of a people, or all the things that people do and know because they are members of a particular group" (Horwitz, 2008: 121-213)<sup>17</sup>. The **"Iceberg Theory of Culture"** (AFS, 1984) pictures that nine-tenth of culture is out of conscious awareness. The out-of-awareness part of culture has been termed deep-culture. To that respect, Edward T. Hall states: "Culture hides much more than it reveals, and strangely enough what it hides, it hides most effectively from its own participants". (Datesman, 2005: 1).

Among the many cultural items of a social group, language is one of the most distinctive and peculiar. However, in a globalized world, the use of English has gone beyond the boundaries of the English speaking countries to become a global language, or, as it has already been stated, a *lingua franca*. Hence, both native and non-native speakers of English convey culture as they build a **"sphere of interculturality"** (Kramsch, 2004: 2005). We mean **interculturality** as conceived by Canadell (2001): "an attitude, a way of perceiving ourselves and our own culture"<sup>18</sup>. It implies to get down to other cultural experiences in order to understand them, and to enrich our own perception of the cultural world we live in. Edward T. Hall states: "Years of study have convinced me that the real job is not to understand foreign culture but to understand our own" (Datesman, 2005: 1). At the time, we build and improve our **cultural competence**, that is to say, our "ability to interact effectively with people from cultures that we recognize as being different from our own" (Byram, 2001: 297). For Byram, interculturalism "assumes a knowledge of rather than acceptance of another culture" (McKay, 2002: 84). It is important to highlight that learning about another culture does not mean that one must accept or adopt that culture; on the contrary, critical thinking on both cultures is a must. Another important aspect to highlight is that, when dealing with the notion of culture we should avoid monolithic views of cultural items, among them, language. On the contrary, as social constructions, cultural items tend to be rather heterogeneous.

These notions have broadened the frontiers of the English class beyond the ones settled by the traditional linguistic items we were used to deal with in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This emphasis on cultural content provides students with the opportunity to learn more about their own culture - to improve their

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<sup>17</sup> We would like to thank Dr John Smichdt for having introduced this distinction to us during the course taken at TIEC in Austin, and Elain K Horwitz Phd for the interview she gave us at the University of Texas in Austin.

<sup>18</sup> Translated from Spanish for academic purposes by Rosana Greco

cultural competence- and to acquire English to explain their own culture to others (McKay, 2002). English is seen, from an intercultural perspective, as a means to produce intercultural encounters, that is to say, the medium to "enable speakers to share their ideas and culture with others" (McKay, 2002: 83). However, the mere superficial knowledge of another culture does not establish a sphere of interculturality. It will come up as a result from reflection on our "own culture in relation to others" (McKay, 2002: 83). The possibility to establish a sphere of interculturality depends pretty much on the teacher's intercultural experience, the ELF classroom being an appropriate environment for the learners to reflect on their own culture in comparison and/or contrast with other cultures. Hence, the ELF classroom becomes the most suitable environment to develop intercultural competence.

## **Approaches and methods**

According to Paulo Freire, "education is meaningful to the extent that engages learners in reflecting on their relationship to the world they live in and provides them with a means to shape their world" (Larsen-Freeman, 2004:150). Active pedagogies state that there is no learning without the active participation of the learners. From a sociohistorical point of view, the learners build up their own knowledge in social interaction with others, being the teachers "experts" –in terms of Vygotsky- in the pedagogical situation. A workshop is a session in which there is active audience participation via the experiencing and discussing of tasks provided by the presenters. It is the most appropriate didactic format to put into practice the principles of the participatory approach, which resort to dialogue as the basis "for reflexion and action to improve student's lives" (Larsen-Freeman, 2004:150). Hence, it is the most suitable format to foster intercultural competence. It is also the appropriate environment for task-based learning (TBL), which "aims to provide learners with a natural context for language use" (Larsen-Freeman, 2004:144). Freeman also states that interaction facilitates learning "as learners have to work to understand each other and to express their own meaning" (Larsen-Freeman, 2004:144).

## **The theory in practice**

Following the theoretical background outlined above, we have designed a workshop to promote the use of intercultural items in the ELF classroom to foster interculturality. The workshop itself is intended to be a sample of the new trends in methodology, which focus on intercultural competence as a key element in ELF teaching to foster intercultural understanding. The participant experience some tips to teach intercultural competence in the ELF classroom. They get involved in different activities based on cultural items through pictures, songs and realia collected in Texas during our fifteen-day trip to Austin.

## **Steps, brief description of the activities and didactic background**

- 1. Brief presentation of the presenters and the theoretical background of the workshop.** This section aims to make explicit the presenters' common background as "Teacher Ambassadors" in Texas,

set the main concepts or notions on which the workshop is based on such as *ELF* (English as a *lingua franca*), *big "C" culture*, *small "c" culture*, *"iceberg theory of culture" interculturality*, *sphere of interculturality* and *intercultural competence*, and make explicit the main aims of the workshop, that is to say, to foster intercultural competence and provide the participants with some tips and activities to promote intercultural competence in the ELF classroom.

2. **Ice-breaking.** This section of the workshop aims to break the ice among the participants, recall previous knowledge and focus their attention on the target culture we deal with during the workshop. The participants gather in pairs to share their previous ideas on Texan culture. The pair discussion is prompted by some key questions such as *"Where do Texans come from?"*, *"What do Texans do?"*, *"How do Texans have fun?"* Some volunteers share their ideas.
3. **Interactive talk: "Keep Austin Weird".** This section aims to make the participants face different cultural aspects of Texan culture seen through the peculiar and curious eyes of the Argentinean teacher ambassadors. The presenters deliver an interactive talk on the most relevant aspects of the daily life of the teacher ambassadors in Austin, funny anecdotes, curiosities, historical details and famous sayings. Bats, belts, boots, hats, lone stars, pubs, bands, beers and "ritas" fill the air as the participants solve listening comprehension exercises.
4. **"The Yellow Rose of Texas".** This section aims to deal with a typical cultural item to find out its relationships with the historical background of the Texan culture, enlarge the participant's range of lexical items, and pave the way to the comparison of the Texan historical background to the Argentinean case (The Conquest of the desert, the Jesuit Missions, the impact of immigration, among others). Participants learn some techniques as they deal with the typical Texan song "The Yellow Rose of Texas" both from language and cultural aspects, and reflect on the values held by the people involved in the historical events above.
5. **"Sports in Texas".** The aim of this section is to provide the participants with a technique to revise lexical items such as vocabulary, grammar, etc. in a funny way and to let them think about the possibility to transfer this technique to other popular sports in their own communities (soccer, rugby, basketball, etc). This section also aims to contrast cultures. The participants play a language game based on the rules of football (American Football) and will discuss the potentials of this innovative technique at the time they reflect on competition/co-operation as social values.
6. **"The Eyes of Texas".** The aim of this section is to provide the participants with a technique to approach a typical fight song, reflect on the role of fight songs in popular games, contrast this fight song with those in their own culture, think of possible ways to make their students write and sing fight songs for their favorites teams, and compare the impact of railroad in the development of communities. To root for the "Longhorns" (the UT team) the participants learn a technique to approach the typical fight song "The eyes of Texas" and

explore the origins of this song, which leads to the cultural comparison of the impact of the railroad in the development of a region and/or a country.

- 7. Didactic Transference.** The previous sections trigger some possible classroom activities. This section aims to enable the participants to transfer some activities and techniques to approach other target cultures.
- 8. Self-evaluation.** This section aims to establish a sphere of interculturality due to self-reflection. The participants they fill in a brief intercultural self- evaluation sheet.
- 9. Follow-up.** This section aims to provide the participants with websites, bibliography, and tips to make their own way to build up intercultural classroom environments.

### **Tips to start an intercultural project in the ELF classroom**

Before starting any intercultural project it is necessary to make sure that the culture/s selected will make contributions to intercultural awareness, and that the teacher will be able to effectively lead learning processes towards the "deep culture". To that aim we suggest a possible way to start organizing a project:

1. Think of a culture that appeals to you and/or your students.
2. Give reasons to approach the selected culture.
3. Make a web with those items of the top part of the "Iceberg Theory of Culture" that you/your students know.
4. Make a web with those cultural items you/ your students would like to know about the target culture.
5. Relate those items to some notions/conceptions of the "below the water line" items.
6. Research on the target cultures on the web. Look for information on how people live, what they do, think, expect, their conceptions of life and death, how they have fun, the role of women/children in daily life.
7. Look for some pieces of literature, advertisements, commercials, documentaries, cartoons, famous sayings, etc.
8. Read "between lines": what are the notions/conceptions conveyed beyond the "surface"?
9. Spot some parallelism (similarities, differences) to your own culture.
10. Give new reasons to approach the selected culture: In what ways will the approach to this culture bring about intercultural awareness?
11. Think about some possible outcome (brochures, posters, songs, role-play, chat sessions, etc.).
12. Make a list of some possible linguistic items that would be taught through the intercultural project.
13. Give new reasons to make a project. In what ways would your project foster intercultural competence?



14. Make a list of possible tasks that could be carried out during the development of the project.
15. Design your project taking into account **at least** these sections:
  - Title
  - Rationale
  - Main theme
  - Outcome
  - Aims
  - Tasks
  - Content
  - Resources

## Conclusion

All in all, we expect to foster intercultural competence as a key issue to open up our minds in a globalized world, where English plays a fundamental role as a means of communication of customs, behaviors, ideas and values.

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# **"Is there any solution to discipline problems in our secondary schools? A practical approach to conflict resolution in action"**

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## **Abstract**

A conflict in a classroom does not start all of a sudden and without any reason. During this presentation, we will analyze the elements that bring about secondary school conflicts in order to avoid our students' explosions. We will also reflect on the kinds of behaviour problems teachers usually have to face and how to deal with them effectively. Even though we all know that, many times, problems will crop up, effective conflict resolution skills are necessary to make the difference between their positive and negative outcomes.

## **1. What do we mean by "discipline"? Keep quiet and listen!**

Even though there are several terms connected to this field that are often taken as interchangeable, we need to clarify their real meanings in a classroom situation so as to be fair teachers dealing with discipline problems.

Firstly, we should make a difference between **discipline** and **control** since the former implies acceptance of certain rules on the part of all the participants in a given situation whereas the latter is imposed on the group from above by the authority in charge.

Secondly, the teacher should be **authoritative** and not **authoritarian**. An authoritarian teacher feels empowered by the role ascribed to him by society but the authoritative one is trusted by students on account of knowledge and personal characteristics.

Finally, a teacher should be in **authority** and not in **power** of a group. Authority implies the group accepts the teacher's leading role while power is the ability on the part of the teacher to impose his will on students.

Discipline, in this presentation, will therefore be considered as the state in which all participants of a given classroom situation agree on certain rules of behaviour that facilitate the teaching and learning processes. The authoritative teacher, as the accepted natural leader, will be in charge of keeping that state running smoothly due to both knowledge and personal characteristics.

## **2. What can be done before the conflict starts? Prevention is better than cure!**

No matter how much we may try to improve our discipline skills, conflicts are an inevitable part of our everyday lessons. As teachers, we are all acquainted with certain issues that are part of our daily classes and tend to reduce the risks of misbehaviour on the part of our students.

A well-prepared, flexible lesson plan, which allows for necessary changes when we notice the class is getting out of control, is a useful tool for teachers to avoid discipline problems. Knowing where the class is going and having the activities ready and well-prepared reduces the possibilities of misbehaviour. However, the teacher should always be on the outlook for signs of dissatisfaction and change when necessary in order to keep students' motivation high.

Group dynamics is another element to be considered if we want to avoid conflicts. There is a fallacy that disciplined classes are those where students keep silent and paying attention to the teacher in front. On the one hand, quietness does not guarantee that learning is taking place and on the other, adolescent students cannot be attentive for a long period of time. Changing group dynamics and asking them to work in pairs or teams provides them with the opportunity to take short breaks that are cognitively necessary to go on learning.

Motivation is also extremely important if we are to avoid our students' misbehaviour. Dealing with topics and material our students are interested in and preparing activities they like doing decrease the number of conflicts during a class. In our experience as teachers, we all know that extrinsic motivation works for only a short period of time and, sooner or later, our students react against it.

The environment is another element that influences our students' behaviour. Even though we usually cannot choose the classrooms we are

assigned, we can always make some changes to reduce the possibility of future conflicts starting. We may, for instance, add things such as posters displaying students' productions, remove furniture that we are not using to provide more space and reorganize desks to work in pairs or groups. All these changes help adolescent students feel that they can create a place of their own.

Planning our classes, changing group dynamics, keeping our students motivated and creating a place they belong to are some of the very many elements that we can mention to keep our classes **disciplined**, bearing in mind that conflicts do not start all of a sudden. If none of the abovementioned issues seem to work, we need to remember that emotional explosion is always the result of a process preceded by feelings such as annoyance, anger and fury, which announce that something will happen. Good interpersonal relationships with our students will help us, teachers, to be on the outlook to detect those feelings in our students so as to deal with the issue before it is too late.

### **3. What should be done when the conflict is starting? Keep cool but do something!**

When we notice that a conflict is starting, we should deal with it quietly to prevent an escalation. We should at all costs avoid taking it personally since getting involved does not help us control the situation and using threats usually results in conflict explosion.

It is at this stage that we need to put our conflict resolution skills into practice. To do so, we need to make a difference between *closed communication loops*, *conflicts of needs* and *conflicts of values* as the realization of three different kinds of conflicts to solve.

#### **3.1. Closed communication loops**

**Closed communication loops** are usually "misunderstandings" that can be solved by "reflective listening" and using "I" messages when we talk to our students. Many disagreements during a lesson are the result of some of the participants not expressing themselves using assertive messages or not listening carefully to others and checking their understanding with reflective listening.

Reflective listening may also be called "parallel talk, parroting or paraphrasing" and it is used to check understanding of the content of what a person says, to avoid the effect of emotional words by making inferences on somebody's feelings, to create empathy with others and to build rapport confirming a stated or unstated implication about what a person wants.

Examples:

- I. Content about what a person says or thinks:

T. You should read this story for next class

St. Not again!

T. *Do you think I'm assigning too many tasks for next class?*

II. Inferences on a person's feelings.

St. You are always asking me to answer your questions.

T. *Do you think I do that on purpose?*

III. A stated or unstated implication about what a person wants.

St. Why do you always pick on me? Others do stuff and you don't shout at them.

T. *Do you think I pick on you and not on the other students?*

"I" messages, on the other hand, are used to express your feelings about somebody else's actions. When we use an "I" message with our students, they should know that you are not criticizing **them** but their **actions** or just expressing your feelings about the effects those actions have on you and the class. "I" statements have three parts: a description of the condition that the teacher dislikes, an expression of the feeling the teacher has and a statement of the reason for that feeling.

Example:

St. You are always angry with us and you prefer the students in the other course.

T. *I get angry* (expression of the feeling the teacher has) *when this course is not working* (description of the condition) *because you are not learning* (statement for the reason behind that feeling).

### 3.2. Conflicts of needs

Conflicts of needs happen when two people "understand" what they both want but believe that one getting his or her way will result in the other losing out. There is no misunderstanding as in the case of a closed communication loop and they should be solved using a "win-win" alternative, where both parts are satisfied with the outcome suggested.

Win-win solutions can be, therefore, reached when each side of the dispute feels they have won because they have been benefited by the resolution to the conflict and accept it voluntarily. The key to moving from conflicts resulting in "win-lose" solutions to conflicts resulting in "win-win" solutions is reframing the conflict and changing the assumptions underlying the resolution of the conflict.

A possible process to get to a win-win solution to a conflict consists of the following steps:

- I. Definition of the conflict in terms of goals or needs, not solutions
- II. Brainstorming possible solutions to meet both sets of needs
- III. Checking how well these meet both sets of needs
- IV. Choosing the best solution/s
- V. Acting
- VI. Evaluating how well it worked.

Example:

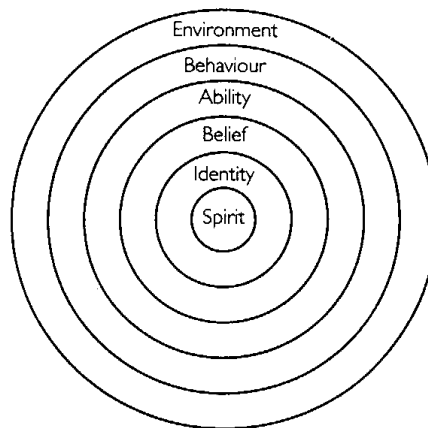
- I. The teacher wants to present a new topic and enters the 5<sup>th</sup> year class where students are organizing their graduation trip to Bariloche.  
**Conflict:** The teacher **needs** to teach and the students **need** to organize the trip.
- II. **Possible solutions:** The teacher stops the discussion and starts explaining. The teacher postpones the explanation until the following class and the students use that time to organize the trip. The teacher allows for 15 minutes out of the eighty-minute period for the discussion to go on and then starts explaining.
- III. **Checking options:** The first possibility will satisfy the students but not the teacher. The second option will frustrate the students and only the third solution will, at least partly, satisfy all of the participants in the conflict.
- IV. **Choosing the best solution:** They all agree on going on with the discussion for 15 minutes and devote the rest of the class to working harder.
- V. **Acting:** The teacher is in charge of making students respect the stated rules.
- VI. **Evaluating result:** Five minutes before the class comes to an end, teacher and students talk about the result.

### 3.3. Conflicts of values or metaprogrammes

Conflicts of values or metaprogrammes are usually the most difficult to solve since one of the people in the conflict cannot see the reason why the other feels affected and requires elaboration on the “value” that is being discussed.

In order to clarify this, we need to analyse the neurolinguistic programming model created by Robert Dilts. In this model, there are six neurological levels organized on top of one another. Varying an aspect of one level usually affects the upper levels. However, altering an aspect at the upper levels will **always** affect the lower ones. These neurological levels should be carefully understood if we want to avoid or solve a conflict in class.

## Neurolinguistic Programming Model by Robert Dilts



The following chart shows the explanation of each level and the pedagogical implications the teacher should bear in mind to avoid conflicts

Level	Implications <sup>19</sup>
<b>Environment: (Where? and when?)</b> This is the lowest level of the model and helps us consider the surrounding world, in terms of location, people, objects etc.	It should be as favorable as possible to learning and sufficient time should be allocated for activities.
<b>Behavior: (What?)</b> This level comes above the environment one and it is useful to identify specific behaviors that we are good at.	Classroom behaviour and activities should be relevant, interesting and useful
<b>Ability or capability: (How?)</b> This level comes above the behavior one to identify what the overall capability is that our behavior translates to.	Teaching should aim at developing abilities, skills and helping learning strategies.
<b>Belief or value: (Why?)</b> This level comes above the ability or capability one to indicate who you are and what you believe about yourself.	Learners should believe that they can learn and develop self-confidence.
<b>Identity: (Who am I?)</b> This level comes above the belief or value one and it sums up you as a person by stating your identity.	Learners should have a sense of themselves as proficient learners and users of language
<b>Spirit or mission: (What else?)</b> This level comes above the identity one and it indicates what metaphor or symbol can be used to identify our spiritual connection or any higher ideal.	Learners should have a sense of their learning being worthwhile in a wider sense

<sup>19</sup> Adapted from Revel, J. & S. Norman (1997): *In Your Hands: NLP in ELT*. London: Saffire Press.



For the purpose of this paper, the model can be used to address conflicts. The teacher can begin by identifying the level in the neurolinguistic model where the problem exists. Then identify the cause of the problem in terms of its level, by tracing the issue at each level. You can then find out how a personal change in a level can be made to tackle the problem.

An example of a conflict attributed to different levels:

If a student misspells a word, he may think that ...

Level	Student's thought
<b>Environment:</b>	"The <b>noise</b> distracted me"
<b>Behaviour:</b>	"I got <b>this</b> one word wrong"
<b>Ability or capability:</b>	"I'm <b>bad at</b> spelling words"
<b>Belief or value:</b>	"I <b>need</b> to work hard to improve my spelling"
<b>Identity:</b>	" <b>I'm not</b> intelligent"
<b>Spirit or mission:</b>	"I <b>should devote</b> to manual work"

#### 4. What can be done when the conflict has exploded? Act quickly – don't argue!

In the previous sections we have analysed different tools to avoid conflicts and to detect when they are starting in order to solve them before it is too late. Still, we know that no matter how hard we try, conflicts will occur. Once the problem has started, we need to do something to solve it as soon as possible since; otherwise, we lose control of the situation.

There are certain circumstances where conflicts are unavoidable such as when:

- There is a situation outside our control (e.g. a sudden violent outbreak outside the classroom starts).
- Our own need is overriding (e.g. we feel frustrated because our students have been misbehaving for a long period of time).
- A student or some students are clearly in danger (e.g. some students are bullying someone who is going to react soon)
- There is no time for discussion (e.g. we see that two students start a fight)
- Talking with our student/s is impossible (e.g. an emotionally ridden student challenges us)

At this stage, we need to explode ourselves and take the following steps:

- Use our **power** (not authority) as teachers uttering a loud and assertive command to make students react and pay attention to what we want to say. Our sudden reaction will take students by surprise and they will stop, at least, for a minute to see what happens.

- **Give in** and do not try to argue and solve the conflict at that moment and in front of others. To attempt to do so is counterproductive for two reasons: The student or students involved will not be emotionally ready to talk about the conflict and it is impossible to prevent other students from taking part in the conflict.
- **Make them an offer they cannot refuse** using strategies such as postponement (e.g. "we can talk about that later"), compromise (e.g. "you will have the test but I can give you some more time") or arbitration (e.g. "We can vote to choose the group leaders").

## 5. Conclusion.

The attempt of this paper has been to show that as teachers we need to be prepared to deal with conflicts as part of our profession. We cannot impose our authority as natural leaders of the classroom society but we may gain our students' respect due to our knowledge and interpersonal skills. If we are permanently on the outlook and get to know our students as human beings, we can detect when a conflict is about to start and avoid it altogether. There are, however, certain circumstances under which this is not possible and we need to react and find alternative solutions. In all cases, we need to remember that the fact that conflicts in our classes exist is not necessarily a bad thing and as long as we solve them effectively this experience can lead to professional and personal growth.

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**"Increasing Educational Opportunity:  
The role of ELT in our local system of education, Partido  
de General Pueyrredon"**

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**Abstract**

This paper reports part of the results of a research project carried out in 2008 aimed at evaluating the current state of ELT in primary schools of the local system of education in Mar del Plata. The study addresses issues related to FLL and Teaching in low socio-economic status communities. Here we will refer to the value given to English language learning in these communities as viewed by parents and children. We will analyze the information gathered about the learners' conformity with the English lessons, their perceived purposes for learning the language and the topics they would like to learn about against those proposed by teachers in their syllabuses.

**Introduction**

In the local system of education of General Pueyrredon there are 33 kindergartens, 17 primary, 14 secondary (*ESB*) schools and 1 *Polimodal*, 10 technical schools for adolescents and adults, and 4 institutes of higher education (2 *Escuelas de Educación Artística Superior -Danzas y Arte Dramático-*, 1 *Instituto Superior de Estudios Técnicos* and 1 *Instituto Superior de Formación Docente* specialized in issues related to disadvantaged environments). All the levels of education of the system count on professionals who attend specific learners' needs (*Equipos de Orientación Escolar*).

The whole system is characterized by its origins. Mainly kindergartens and primary and secondary schools were created to attend to the needs of low socio-economic status communities of the area; for that reason, most of the schools are located in the outskirts of the city.

Very briefly, this is the wide context where our study takes place.

There were several reasons that encouraged this study. First, we need to consider the implementation of the *Ley Federal de Educación*. In 1996 English became a compulsory subject starting in 4<sup>th</sup> grade in all the schools of Buenos Aires province. This brought about an unexpected increase in the demand of teachers in all state and private schools and, as a consequence, many teachers who took the courses did not have a degree in FLT. Added to this was the fact that the teachers were not prepared to work in under-resourced contexts. The municipal system of education could not escape this reality and this situation continues so far.

The second reason that guided the study refers to the lack of bibliography related to FLT in underprivileged contexts in Argentina that could help teachers design informed interventions. The available material that could be said is similar in relation to its topic is mainly concerned with teaching English as a second language to immigrants, which is not our case, definitely.

Third are the doubts about the value given by the members of these communities to the English language. And together with this reason, comes the need to know about the mental representations that teachers of English have of their students of these communities since educator expectations can have a powerful influence on students' academic outcomes (also referred to as the *self-fulfilling prophecy* (Brophy, 1985) or the *Pygmalion effect* (Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968)).

Finally, the main pillar on which this study is based has to do with the belief that the school is an instrument to help children become successful human beings. English lesson should be designed in such a way that they contribute to develop student-teacher interactions that emphasize strengths and positive aspects present in all human beings. The development of resilience in children, conceived as the ability to counteract the harmful effects of external stressors (e.g.: poverty, violence, lack of a supportive family) has a great potential: it can improve the individual's life and it can also help to improve the context in which this individual functions.

## **The study**

During the second term 2008, the Secretaría de Educación Municipal set out to evaluate the situation of ELT in its primary school communities with three main objectives:

- Assess the value assigned to the English language by learners, parents and teachers (English teachers and heads of schools)
- Develop a new curriculum for FLT in schools belonging to the system considering the English lessons as tools to foster the development of resilience in children.
- Learn about teachers' areas of interest for the design and implementation of courses for professional development based on FLL and teaching and the construction of resilience.

The study followed a qualitative approach to research. We implemented surveys in the form of open questionnaires to all the English teachers (37) and heads (17) of the 17 schools and, as regards learners and parents, the surveys were administered to the learners of 27 courses belonging to 2º cycle. Nine of the 17 schools were selected at random and then one of each of the courses belonging to the second cycle, i.e., one 4<sup>th</sup>, one 5<sup>th</sup> and one 6<sup>th</sup> from in each school. In all we got answers from 31 teachers, 17 headmistresses, 402 parents and 627 students.

### **The first question: The value of English in underprivileged contexts**

In spite of all the issues analyzed through the study, in this paper we have chosen to deal with the value of English in underprivileged contexts since the answer to this question will mark the starting point in the way we will teach. We strongly believe in the fact that our daily practice is related to this issue. Is the topic I teach valuable for the community where I work? What do children think? What about their parents? For the purpose of sharing the information gathered we have decided to present the subjects' answers since we think that they are worthwhile reading. We have chosen to focus on this rather than developing theoretical matters because of the richness of the answers and the light they throw to our everyday work.

### **1-The parents**

The surveys administered to parents were in the form of *Likert scales* which included the possibility of giving reasons for the selected answers.

Most of the parents (96,13%) agreed with their children having English at school. These number was divided into those who "strongly agreed" (252 = 69,61%) and those who "agreed" (96 = 26,5 %). Below we quote some of the reasons that supported their answers.

#### Reasons in favor

##### Related to the children's future or work expectations:

- *Para un futuro mejor*
- *Para que tengan la posibilidad de un trabajo*
- *Le va a servir en los próximos años*
- *Para desempeñarse mejor en su futuro*
- *Amplía las posibilidades en el plano laboral*
- *Capacita mejor para la vida*
- *Para cualquier profesión*

Related to knowledge or study:

- *Para su conocimiento*
- *Quiero que mi hija aprenda*
- *Para el secundario*
- *Para ser una persona instruida*
- *Todo lo que se pueda aprender edifica*
- *Da la posibilidad de una mejor educación*
- *Aprenden algo que antes no enseñaban*
- *Tiene una oportunidad que yo no tuve cuando fui a la escuela*

Related to the value of the language

- *Es un idioma mundial / que se habla en todo el mundo*
- *Es muy útil para la vida de hoy*
- *Usan palabras en inglés a diario*
- *Para una sociedad que desea crecer y nuestra ciudad, por ser turística, tiene el deber de tener preparados a sus habitantes para que ante la consulta de un turista extranjero pueda responder.*

Other reasons

- *Para la computadora*
- *Que empiecen desde primero*
- *Porque es más fácil de chicos*
- *Para viajar (only 1 answer)*
- *No se lo puedo pagar*

The rest of the answers was divided in equal terms answering that they "neither agreed nor disagreed" (1,93%) or that they "disagreed" (1,93%). We quote all the reasons given since they were very few and we think that some of them deserve some reflection from the part of the teachers.

- *Yo prefiero que aprenda a leer y a sacar cuentas que inglés.*
- *No aprenden nada.*
- *No lo puedo ayudar.*
- *Mejor más matemática y lengua.*
- *Todas enseñan lo mismo.*
- *Mejor algo nacional como folclore o teatro.*
- *No es el nivel de un instituto con la misma cantidad de horas.*

## **2- The learners**

The children answered questionnaires with four open questions. These questions gave light as regards their conformity with the English lessons, motivation to learn the language, favourite games and topics they would like to learn about in the English lessons. We got answers from 627 students in all; 220 of 4<sup>th</sup>, 207 from 5<sup>th</sup> and 200 from 6<sup>th</sup>.

#### **a- About the English lesson**

As regards their likes about the English lessons 478 learners (77,25 % ) answered in a positive way, 87 answered that it was all right (14,23 %) and 62 (10,14%) stated that they did not like the subject. We noticed differences among the three groups. Most of the students belonging to 4<sup>th</sup>, 84,09%, like the subject but there is a slight decline as students grow older : 76,53 % in 5<sup>th</sup> and 70,25% in 6<sup>th</sup> of students like English lessons.

#### **b- About the topics**

We included a question related to the topics they would like to learn through the English lessons and we compared these answers with the topics included by the teachers in their syllabuses. Below we include the topics chosen by the learners and the order in which they are included is guided by the frequency of occurrence in the learners' answers. We have decided to write the children's own words since we think that they are enlightening because of their straightforwardness. Those that were surprising to us are in bold type.

- 4<sup>th</sup> : *animales ( de campo, terrestres); planetas, sistema solar; dinosaurios; "números grandes"; comidas; amigos; familia; cuerpo humano; canciones; ciudades; clima; colores; cosas de clase; cuentas; la hora/ los días; países.*
- 5<sup>th</sup> : *animales salvajes, insectos; los planetas, planeta tierra, sistema solar, el espacio; los números; países, capitales, provincias; canciones, música; hablar , pronunciar; alimentos, vegetales, comidas , frutas; autos, marcas de autos, mecánica de autos; juegos, dibujos, Dragon Ball Z; naturaleza, plantas, medio ambiente, ecosistema; cuerpo humano; nombres ,de personas; **adjetivos , verbos , preguntas, abecedario, oraciones, sinónimos y antónimos, lectura ,palabras**; adivinanzas, poemas ,rimas; matemáticas; cosas , más cosas ; días , meses; películas.*
- 6<sup>th</sup>: *animales, reino animal, naturaleza, ecología marítima; mapas , continentes, océanos, países, planetas, espacio, mundo; como se habla, hablar, más, oralmente , leer, **pronunciar bien**, diálogos, comunicarme; lenguaje, más palabras, **verbos**, ser – estar, oraciones, palabras, **adjetivos, infinitivos** ; números; cuerpo humano.*

In this group we found that there was a wider variety of topics of interest than in the previous groups but the topics were selected by fewer students. The following topics were mentioned by just three or less students:

*la hora; abecedario; autos ,arreglar autos, carpintería; canciones, cantar; colores; **cosas divertidas, románticas**; economía; música , instrumentos; **teatro en inglés**; medicina; navidad, año nuevo; ropa; nombres , personas ; juegos, **lo que me sirva para más adelante; malas palabras***

It is interesting to notice and to bear in mind the teaching implications of this section for syllabus design. There are topics that are of interest for the

three groups and the students themselves mark the subtleties. For example the topic *animals* lends itself the possibility of being recycled by introducing the differences suggested by the children: those students in 4<sup>th</sup> chose the topic *Animales (de campo , terrestres)*, in 5<sup>th</sup> the choice was *Animales , salvajes , insectos* whereas in 6<sup>th</sup> the same topic is extended to : *Animal ,reino animal, Naturaleza, ecología marítima*. The rest of the cross topics identified are: *the family, the human body, colours, and numbers*.

### c- About learners´ motivation

The next question aimed at learning about the learners´ motivation to learn the language. We present their answers divided according to the type of orientation they showed:

#### Instrumental orientation:

- 4th : *viajar, pasear, ir a Estados Unidos , Inglaterra, ir a Londres; hacer hotelería, negocios; **cuando un turista pregunte, responder bien;** cantar; leer , libros, en inglés; entender juegos; traducir; ver, entender películas.*
- 5th: *por si viajo, viajar, a Estados Unidos, Europa, Italia, Disney, ir a países que hablen inglés, pasear; **ser alguien y tener un trabajo, el día de mañana si surge un trabajo, saber inglés, trabajar, un buen trabajo, cuando sea grande conseguir un buen trabajo, algún día tener una carrera, mi futuro; cuando sea grande** ya sepa hablar, trabajar en lugares extranjeros, **que cuando sea grande me haga progresar, buscar trabajo, usarlo de grande;** entender películas,mirar películas sin leer; tener la mejor nota subir la materia, pasar de grado; entender canciones, cantar; aprender sobre mecánica de autos; chatear , con chicos de otros países; **para cuando hable por la tv;** saber que dice una remera, entender mis juegos; si me mudo a otro país, adaptarme rápido; ser secretaria, traductor.*
- 6th: *Viajar estados Unidos, a países donde hablan inglés, vivir; ser maestra, profesor/a ; **trabajo, digno, tener un oficio, salida laboral ; cuando sea grande, me sirva, desenvolverme cuando sea grande;** chatear ; ser traductor ,traducir canciones; divertirme; entender películas (sin leer); **Para el basket. Si me hago profesional tengo que saber inglés;** para cuando trabaje de banquero o de empresario y viaje; **trabajar de doctora en USA,** trabajar de turismo, ser azafata.*

#### Knowledge orientation:

- 4th: *aprender ,saber otro idioma, saberlo y entenderlo; saber; estudiar; para el secundario; pasar de grado; saber muchas palabras; hablar otro idioma; **tener un título.***
- 5th: ***saber más, aprender, mucho;** saber el idioma, aprender; ser profesor/a, maestra, enseñar; estudiar, leer, saber escribir.*



- 6th: *aprender, a leer y a escribir , el idioma, leer y hablar, leer de corrido; **saber, más, bien; en un futuro saber;** saber otro idioma, diversas lenguas, lenguajes; **estudiar en la vida,** la secundaria*

#### Communicative orientation:

- 4th: *hablar, hablar bien, hablar con personas, extranjeros, ingleses, en otro país; saber hablar ; entender lo que me hablan; **hablar rapidito;** comunicarme.*
- 5th: *poder hablar, hablar, hablar mejor, bien, con alguien, conversar, saber hablar, aprender a hablar; comunicarme, con otros, entender a los de Estados Unidos, entender.*
- 6th: *hablar, sin problemas, bien, con otros, saber hablar, comunicarme, cuando voy a otro lugar, saber hablar, comunicarme; entender ; decir frases, **decirle cosas a mi hermano y que no entienda;** relacionarnos con otra gente*

#### Humanitarian orientation /social concern

- 4<sup>th</sup>: *para cuando sea grande; **poder tener una vida por delante; ser alguien; ser inteligente***
- 5th: ***cuando sea grande y me case, ayudar a mis hijos; ser inteligente***
- 6th: *cuando salga del país, sepa hablar y **ayudar ; enseñar/ a mi familia***

Only 3 students in 5th and 1 in 6th did not show motivation to learn English. When asked "*Me gustaría aprender inglés para...*" they answered "*para nada*" but did not give any reasons for their lack of enthusiasm.

## **Conclusion**

One of the aims of the study is to design a FL curriculum for our primary schools based on the construction of resilience. The first and starting point of such a learner-centred curriculum is to acknowledge learners needs and strengths. *Resilience typically refers to a pattern of positive adaptation in the context of adversity* (O'Doherty and Masten, 2005). The resilience approach supports interventions designed to improve the odds of children growing up in poverty or disadvantage by developing protective processes in them. We think that it is part of our responsibility as educators to teach the contents of our area of knowledge making it as significant as possible to help children become successful human beings. With this idea in mind, we thought we needed to start from the very beginning: getting to know the value of what we are teaching for the community where we work. Though this work is far from complete we intended to share a first impression on the issue. It is now necessary to cross the information collected concerning different teaching practices and beliefs with what our children bring to the classroom.

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## **"Intercultural constructs across age groups/ cultural groups/ social groups: classroom explorations and proposals"**

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### **Abstract**

Nobody can deny the interest intercultural studies have generated over the last decades. However, what are the constructs of "intercultural" we hold? How permeated are they by our own sense of belonging to specific cultural groups? The aim of this workshop will be to explore through different materials and media our constructs of intercultural across age groups, social groups (among them, professional groups) and cultural groups we have belonged to over our whole lives. It is expected that by exploring our constructs we will be able to produce meaningful materials and teaching practices which address the intercultural gap and transcend the communicative gap.

### **Introduction**

The field of Intercultural studies has aroused much interest over the last few years, with proposals ranging from those which see Intercultural communication as a mere fifth skill, something to exploit as even an additional skill, to those such as Corbett (2003) based on Byram (1997 and others) which see Intercultural issues at the centre of the curriculum. In this way, there is no such thing as a fifth skill, but Intercultural education becomes the central aim, with a view to helping students develop Intercultural competence and not just Intercultural awareness –awareness is not enough- so that they can become intercultural users of the language, mediators between people who speak different languages and live in different cultural groups and might communicate through English.

In this way, Intercultural education transcends English teaching. It could be the basis for the teaching of any language other than English and of the teaching of any subject other than English. It is a view of the world and a vision, one that explores otherness and tolerance and conflict as important themes in our lives, one that makes our identities surface to enable us to communicate and live better.

### **Intercultural constructs**

As part of our experience of “intercultural”, we all have preconceptions of what a culture is and what different cultures are like. These preconceptions are what we sought to explore as part of our classroom-based research project. As a consequence, we included an unassessed task in the First Mid term test in the language school where we teach, for all courses, including Children, Teens and Adults, of all levels.<sup>20</sup>

Our aim was to explore the a priori constructs students brought to our intercultural classrooms –seeing intercultural as a notion that transcends *culture= nation*, and includes different cultural groups, gender, social class, professional groups, ethnicity. Such constructs could then be “used” as a basis for our teaching, in order to explore them further, deconstruct them, reconstruct them into new constructions and debate on them in the classroom.

An exhaustive description of the research results falls beyond the scope of this paper, but we can summarise them as follows:

The questions we asked addressed the target culture more than other cultures. We wanted to see what students’ constructs were as regards the main aims of English teaching so far: whether any teaching of culture is carried out, meeting integrative motivation needs, or instrumental needs when people travel to English-speaking countries mostly. Thus, some of the questions were:

What clothes do children/ teens/ people wear in England?

What about other countries of the world? Choose two and describe what people tend to wear.

What games do children play in England? What music do teenagers listen to? What TV programmes do people watch?

What do people do on a typical day in England?

What school subjects do children like?

Can you describe a typical American house?

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<sup>20</sup> We thought that the effect of having these questions as part of an unassessed task would enrich our tests, which are on the way to becoming intercultural, add validity to the task itself, and produce washback effect which would translate itself into enhanced intercultural teaching.

Some of the answers to these questions were quite accurate and descriptive, some were based on simplification, some were just clear about something: "we don't know". It was clear to us that the questions were very simplistic, on purpose. We knew this was the beginning of extensive work in order to explore these constructs and to make them explicit, laugh at them and enrich them with our world experience. Our central concern in this respect is to explore how subjects in different age groups/ social groups/ cultural groups construe the "other", taking this "other" as different members of those social groups. It is with this purpose in mind that we will expand our questionnaires and do workshops in different social contexts in order to explore students' views as regards other "cultures", "the target culture" first (English-speaking countries, which we propose are not target cultures any more, since the aim of intercultural education is to develop plurals, not singulars), other national cultures and other cultural groups.

### **Exploring other constructs**

As we have said before, the concept of "otherness" is central to Intercultural studies. Additionally, authors such as Holliday et.al (2004) see "otherization" as a potentially active process with potentially very harmful results. We believe otherness takes place in every classroom where two people meet, we are all "another" to each other in terms of background, life experiences, how we construe similar experiences, how we account for the world we live in and our desires and dreams with respect to that world we live in.

It is in this line of thought that we extended our research to a new context: a Centre for Adult Education (CEA 726) belonging to the Ministry of Education of Buenos Aires Province. Students in this centre are people who have received literacy instruction fairly recently, and some of the groups include some students who are not literate yet.

We planned a workshop in order to carry out some ethnographic exploration of students' constructs of the Intercultural through questions to be asked to/by one of our teachers, a student intern of the Sociology major /Education minor Mount Holyoke College, Mass, US who is doing research with us. Unfortunately, results cannot be reported in this paper but will be reported in the workshop, since the H1N1 flu pandemic forced us to postpone the workshops till after the winter holidays. Students in these groups have not received English instruction so far, and it is also our aim to explore their preconceptions as regards the usefulness of English learning, along the lines of Pennycook's work (Pennycook, 1999).

### **Ethnographies**

Along the lines of the intercultural approach (Byram 1989, 1987, 1997, Corbett op.cit.), it is central to enable learners to develop the tools to become ethnographers, and to use the kinds of activities that are usual in any ELT classroom (such as role-plays, projects, tasks in general) but with a view to spelling out the role language plays in the construction of identity and also in the negotiation and mediation between different identities.

Our private school has been part of the *Intercultural Connections project* (Profs. John Corbett and Alison Phipps, The University of Glasgow) for three years, which means our students have developed home ethnographies based on the tasks proposed in the programme and sent their results as

PowerPoint files to Glasgow. Such ethnographies have included the exploration of dressing codes among young people, going out conventions, supermarket layouts, the way our homes/houses are displayed, among others.

Some of these ethnographies will be explored in the workshop to show instances of how this methodology could form the basis of tasks and materials.

### **The workshop**

The workshop we propose for the FAAPI Conference 2009 will be an instance of Action Research in itself, for we seek to explore the constructs **with** participants, **share** our research results and **together** develop some materials that address the needs derived from the analysis of such constructs.

The final outcome should be a "manifesto" of what we see as Intercultural teaching, not only language teaching but teaching, and how this teaching should be based on our own unbiased analysis of our identities in order to promote, as a minimum proposal, awareness of self and others in the dynamic realities of a changing world with a strong need to enhance totally unprejudiced tolerance and understanding among human beings.

A maximum proposal would be a redefinition of teacher training aims, course design and materials design, defining ways to make ELT a multidisciplinary endeavor. In order to do this we seek to promote intercultural materials development, test improvement, and building bridges between materials development in the classroom and teaching methodology to make ELT a more creative profession. (A first initiative as regards materials development which can be taken into account is the ICRP Project which led to the development of De Matos et.al (2006) with ELTeCS and British Council support).

The final outcomes of the workshop will be reshaped into a PowerPoint file and paper and shared online with workshop participants, and will form the basis for further exploration and a new workshop to be proposed for FAAPI Conference 2010.

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## **"Our Teaching beliefs revisited"**

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### **Abstract**

In this presentation we wish to share some insights gathered through the research project. *El análisis de la propia práctica como factor de desarrollo profesional tendiente a mejorar el aprendizaje del inglés* (Res 206/07-CD-FFHA-UNSJ) and through various activities we implement as teacher trainers. Our concern is the need to review the concepts that back our teaching procedures. The main threads of our presentation will refer to our teaching beliefs related to our conception of language and learning. The third issue we want to address is the significance of the contents we choose to teach.

### **Our Teaching beliefs revisited**

In this presentation we wish to share some insights gathered through a research project<sup>21</sup> and through the various activities we implemented as teacher trainers. We will be concerned with the need to review the concepts that back our teaching procedures. We carried out this conscious reflection of our teaching practices since, to facilitate efficient learning, we strongly believe that a teacher must be conscious of the strategies he/she puts into practice and of the reasons that back that choice.

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<sup>21</sup>*El análisis de la propia práctica como factor de desarrollo profesional tendiente a mejorar el aprendizaje del inglés* (Res 206/07-CD-FFHA-UNSJ).



The first issue to be addressed is related to the conception of language that we have as teachers of English as a foreign language: Do we think that language is "... rule governed, meaning based, a means of self-expression, a means of learning about oneself and the world, a means of getting things done." (Graves, 2000: 31)

According to Tudor (2001), the study of a foreign language can be viewed from four different perspectives, one is the belief that teaching the target language is studying its **linguistic system**, that is to say its grammar with its structural patterns, morphology, word formation, tense system, modality, or quantity; or its vocabulary, namely how to express meaning; or its phonology, taking into account segmental or supra-segmental features. Within this system there are also other aspects that can be considered, like discourse and the features of language use that go beyond grammar, including cohesion, coherence, paragraphing, genre, as well as considerations of style and appropriacy and varieties of the target language.

Another view is the **functional perspective**, in which the emphasis is on the social or functional uses of the language. A central concept in this perspective is Hymes' theory of communicative competence (1972), incorporating the idea of appropriateness. The main exponent is CLT methodology, whose main goal is to enable students to use the language in socially defined contexts; the main focus is what the learner has to do with language. In this approach it is essential to help students find a link between the subject and their current life and concerns.

A third vision is to see language as self expression, that is to say following a **humanistic** perspective. The goal is to use the language as a medium to build up personal relationships, to express our emotions, aspirations, and explore our interests. According to this perspective, language is primarily a means to our own personal self-definition, our understanding of feelings, personal emotions and aesthetic appreciation, of building up social relations, friendship and co-operation, as well as developing responsibility, need for public scrutiny, criticism and self-correction. An expression of the intellect, of our knowledge, our reasoning and our understanding also form part of this humanistic side. Besides, we can also regard as part of this vision the need for self-actualisation, the quest for full realisation of one's own deepest qualities, the capacity to analyse problem and challenge, and the ability to incorporate strategies into programme design.

A fourth conception of language has to do with **culture and ideology**, in which learning a language is seen as a means of expression and communication used by a community of human beings. taking into consideration cultural factors would involve the inclusion of, for example time relations, the tense system, the organisation of phenomena and entities in lexis such as modes of address, silences, appropriate behaviour (verbal or non-verbal), business communication, varieties of English, etc.. Learning a language can also depend on the desire that each learner has to acculturate. In addition, ideology can be seen in the expression of attitudes and values, which in turn could be expressions of the hidden curriculum. The inclusion of gender, ethnic origin, disability, occupation, age, and social class are also signs of ideology. The ideological presentation of the target language or its community influences the learners' view of that particular community and the reaction he has towards that language.

The concepts that back our teaching procedures and that we foster as teacher trainers in the practicum is the use of language with a functional perspective; we especially encourage future teachers to try to find a link

between the subject and their students' current life and concerns, and, in order to do so, they have to see the system of the language as subsidiary to this view. The humanistic and cultural perspectives also permeate our conception of language.

The next aspect we wish to explore is our view of teaching, which in turn implies our conception of learning. The questions to be answered at this stage refer first to how we think our students learn, and then to the way we organize the class to foster that type of learning we explicitly advocate. In our subject we strongly regard our learners as **individual** and **democratic** explorers. In the former the teacher acts as a facilitator, organising the class "in such a way as to enable the learners to explore for themselves and come to their own conclusions with a minimum of prompting from the teacher." (Williams & Burden, 1997). Being a democratic explorer means going a little beyond, it is when the group states its goals and ways of working, and decides when or if it needs the assistance of the teachers.

These concepts clearly match a **social constructivist approach** in which the notion of ZPD<sup>22</sup> takes a special relevance. This is why in the practicum we implemented quite a lot of pair and group work. Additionally, we encouraged students to do abstraction of meaning, and to carry out an interpretative process aimed at the understanding of reality; conceptions that belong to communicative and task-based approaches, in which some sort of transfer and meaningful interaction are sought. We hope that this can also lead to some form of personal change so that the activities selected can have personal significance to the learner and be relevant to society or the world in some form.

As teacher trainers we should be deeply concerned with making our student teachers reflect on the meaningfulness of the contents we teach. So we should ask ourselves: is the learning we promote worthwhile? We deem worthwhile learning as a complex process that is feasible to produce personal change of some kind and can involve the creation of new understandings which are personally relevant. This type of learning can take a number of different forms and is always influenced by the context in which it occurs. It is crucial that it results from social interaction, and it often needs to be mediated. Another important feature to be considered is that for learning to be effective it should be personalised, that is to say, it should be considered that it varies from individual to individual and that it is closely related to how people feel about themselves. It involves emotional as well as cognitive development; what is more, we think it is a lifelong process.

After addressing this issue, we need to depict the subjectivity of the students we have in our classrooms today. These students match a new kind of subjectivity, one we describe as massmediatic, based on Corea and Lewcovicz's (2007) conception. This helped us examine the contents we taught under a new light, hence, we made a series of changes in our teaching.

Globalization, progress in technology and mass media are inherent characteristics of current times. This is an era heavily characterized by a strong development of information and communication. Our students, immersed in this context, have subjectivities that are quite different from their teachers. There are many aspects that contribute to this difference. First of all, at present, the pedagogic subjectivity students used to have has been replaced by a mediatic one, thus showing that students have developed new

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<sup>22</sup> Zone of Proximal Development

ways of operating in the real world. Secondly, the concept of time that students have nowadays is not linear; there is an over stimulation that places a primary emphasis on perception, and then, if any, on conscience.

Another characteristic of this time is that each individual generates his or her own conditions to communicate. So, the goal for teachers should be to try to generate strategies that lead to effective learning for this kind of students: the challenge is to avoid what Lewkowicz (2007: 35) calls *the disconnection between the hypothetical student and the real one*. That is why the kinds of activities that we decided to put into practice in our subject integrated the use of technological devices such as video, OHP, power point presentations, interactive board, Mp3, self-audio recording material, etc. This last strategy helped students in the reflection on their own practices. Corea (2007: 168) states that current university practices are decadent given that nowadays in these contexts there are *students* "who have the experience of the image and do not have the culture of the word" [a common characteristic of pedagogic subjectivities present in the university environment]. Taking this into account, another strategy we implemented in the practicum was opening a yahoo group in which students and teachers could post messages, new bibliography, tasks, upload videos or any other material students found relevant to their practicum.

Nowadays teachers need to have an idea of the kind of subjectivities that modern students have so as to implement the right didactic configurations<sup>23</sup>; hence encouraging significant learning. Dellepiane (2005: 117) points out that, in order to foster significant learning, it is the task of the teacher to personalize learning, to present challenging situations, devise problem solving activities that can promote divergent thought. He also states that it is vital to include activities that imply the work with others and which in turn facilitate reflection on the processes of learning; in addition to this, teachers should take into consideration that this process should be enjoyable, given that students are more likely to learn if their affective filter is low. The kind of student we have in the practicum requires formative mediation (Bronckart, 2008: 11), that is to say, teachers should try to generate the conditions to combine the appropriation of theoretical constructs and the ways in which these concepts are to be acquired, since these students in turn will mediate learning to their own students, who are also massmediatic (Bixio, 2006).

We are convinced that any teaching scenario requires a conscientious analysis of these factors if we want our teaching to be effective. To do this we need to be reflective. Santos Guerra (in Sagastizabal and Perlo, 2006) claim that "it is the reflection upon the teachers' own practice with the sole purpose of understanding and improving it, that can make possible significant change in schools." In order for a teacher to teach efficiently, he must be conscious of his own ways in the classroom (Bailey, 2006).

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## **“Putting theory into practice: an Innatist Theory of Language Acquisition and Foreign Language Learning”**

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### **Abstract**

This session gives the basic insights of Innatism, one of the most influential theories of language acquisition. Providing evidence for the biological basis for language, this theory accounts for the acquisition of our mother tongue. Universal Grammar, an innate mechanism containing universal principles and language-specific parameters, plays a crucial role here, but what is its role in Second and Foreign Language Acquisition? Is Universal Grammar operative? Do we use a more general abstract problem-solving system? Teachers will be able to reflect on the implications for teaching, and also to understand and improve our students' linguistic behaviour.

### **Introduction**

In *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (1965), Noam Chomsky argues that every linguistic theory must account for language acquisition. The process of language acquisition presents many striking facts. For the child, acquiring such a complex system is an effortless task. At about the age of three, the child will be able to produce rather complex sentences in the correct order. However, this process occurs in identical ways across different languages under varying circumstances in a limited amount of time, without explicit teaching, and on the basis of positive evidence, that is, on the basis of what children hear.

In order to account for this universal phenomenon, innatists claim that human beings are endowed with Universal Grammar, which is a set of universal principles and language-specific parameters, and by simply being exposed to the “degenerate” linguistic input, children will begin to work out

the underlying linguistic rules by themselves. The theory will also be briefly compared to Jean Piaget's Constructivism. In addition, some criticism will be expressed so as to demonstrate why Constructivism is not an adequate theory of language acquisition

After discussing some of the basic concepts of Innatism as regards first language acquisition, we will briefly focus on Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Foreign Language Learning (FLL) from a generativist perspective, so as to encourage teachers to reflect on our students' linguistic behaviour.

### ***The Innateness Hypothesis***

#### ***The Poverty-of-the-Stimulus Argument***

The linguistic input the child is exposed to is "degenerate", that is, it contains incomplete sentences and even ill-formed ones. However, his knowledge of language is quite complex and abstract: he can produce an infinite number of sentences although he hears a finite number of them, he can also distinguish well-formed sentences from ill-formed ones even though nobody teaches him that, and he does not make certain errors that would be expected if they generalized from the linguistic input. So, the question is: "How do we come to have such rich and specific knowledge, or such intricate systems of belief and understanding, when the evidence available to us is so meagre?" (Chomsky, 1987). This is known as the *poverty-of-the-stimulus argument*, which means that the data in the linguistic input are too poor to justify the knowledge that is built out of them.

This situation is often referred to as *Plato's problem*: how is it possible to know so much with so little experience? Plato's solution was to say that we remember from our past lives. Chomsky, on the other hand, concludes that this knowledge is innate and that language is part of our genetic endowment, because it is we human beings that learn the language.

#### ***The Process of Language Acquisition***

Following Chomsky's model language is *knowledge*, and that linguistic knowledge is called *competence*, different from performance, which means the use of language in real time, under pressure, involving comprehension.

In the process of language acquisition, the child moves from an initial or zero state to a final steady state. In the initial stage state, there is a newborn baby with no knowledge of language. The child is exposed to language and he manages to process all the reduced/degenerate information in the process of acquisition. Universal Grammar (UG) is the innate set of constraints responsible for the course of language acquisition. It is a genetically-determined scheme characterizing the initial state and that "permits the range of possible realizations that are the possible human languages (...) and it is specified, articulated and refined under the conditions set by experience, to yield the particular grammars that are presented in the steady states attained"(Chomsky 1980:234).

The child will learn the language of the linguistic environment he is exposed to, so not all the linguistic knowledge is innate. From the interaction between inborn factors and the environment, language will emerge at the appropriate time. UG consists of a set of *principles* and *parameters*: principles encode the universal properties that are common to all languages, such as the Extended Projection Principle, whereas the parameters encode the properties that differ from one language to another, constraining the possibilities of the principles, such as the PRO-Drop Parameter. This knowledge of principles and parameters is a mechanism in itself, since it restricts the possibilities the child has to consider.

Having reached the steady/fixed state, the child has acquired the grammar of a language, and the result is full competence. The child has all the knowledge he needs to understand and produce language. What he has learnt is the core grammar (the basic concepts of the language), a peripheral grammar and a mental lexicon.

The grammar that the child acquires is a psychological entity, a finite system since it is represented in the mind. By means of this, human beings are able to produce an infinite number of sentences. The child uses the attained linguistic knowledge to understand and produce sentences that he has never heard before, and also to distinguish well-formed sentences from the ill-formed ones. In addition, that linguistic knowledge is used to deal with ambiguity, since the grammar assigns structural representations specifically constrained to the sentences, and those constraints establish what is possible and what is impossible in a language.

The linguistic input provides the child with information about the language, that is, primary linguistic data. This is information about what is possible in a language, and it will give the child positive evidence, that is, evidence that something is possible in the language. Negative evidence stands for what is ungrammatical in a language, and it may be given in the form of correction or explanations provided by adults. In Chomsky's opinion, positive evidence would be enough for children to acquire a language.

### ***Evidence for the biological basis of language***

Based on Lenneberg (1967), Gleitman and Newport (1995) give some evidence for an important biological endowment supporting and shaping language acquisition. These authors support the idea that language is universal, as human beings are born with an innate capacity to learn it, so language acquisition is determined by our biology. In addition, they highlight the role of a specific environmental stimulation that affects language acquisition. The child learns the language he listens to, but all languages share certain properties which will be learnt during the child's maturation.

The evidence given to account for this biological endowment that supports and shapes language acquisition comes from two different sources: uniformity of learning within and across communities, and the fact that the child's generalizations go beyond what is available from experience. As regards the first type of evidence, it is clear that the course of language acquisition is similar in all the languages. To prove Lenneberg's position, these authors separate the environment exposure from the maturation of the child, so as to show that while the alterations in the environment have no effect on

language acquisition, alterations in the child's maturation have significant and decisive effects.

The second type of evidence considers the changes in the child's mental endowment, and the authors show learners of a language who, despite the isolation from much of the information required to learn a language from mere exposure, were able to learn the language because language acquisition is biologically predisposed.

### ***The Modularity of Language***

The issue of the modularity of language has been included since it is important to highlight that the linguistic modules of the mind behave in an autonomous way.

After studying patients who had hemiplegia, Brocca and Wernicke provided substantial evidence that language has a physical basis, which is the left hemisphere of the brain: thus, it is part of our genetic endowment. In addition, they discovered that open and closed classes are processed in different parts of the brain, so it can be concluded that language functions as a cognitive module, a fact which makes it more economical.

Crain and Lillo-Martin (1999) explain that this follows from the Modularity Hypothesis, a proposal about the "functional architecture of the brain". Taking into account this hypothesis, "linguistic knowledge is a module separate from any other cognitive module, processed independently from other cognitive processes and with its own characteristics for acquisition, breakdown, timing, etc."(Crane & Lillo Martin 1999:7). In addition, each module uses its own principles, each operates separately and none affects the functioning of the others. Under this view, not only linguistic skills (comprehension and production) are separated, but also linguistic components: syntax, phonology, morphology, pragmatics, semantics and the lexicon. In the same way the brain has its own modules with different ways of functioning, so does language.

### **Constructivism**

First of all, I would like to highlight that Piaget's theory is not aimed at studying language but the development of intelligence. Language is only one of the aspects which are part of the human mind. According to Piaget, the active individual learns in interaction with the environment and in this interaction, the neurological structure of the child will be modified.

Knowledge is a process of adaptation, which consists of assimilation and accommodation: we assimilate something that is new to the existing structure, and when that piece of knowledge has to be integrated in the new



system the balance is disrupted, giving as a result its accommodation, that is, the system "makes room" for that new piece of knowledge which affects it.

As mentioned above, Piaget was not very interested in language development. The child is able to acquire the language at a certain moment since it depends on the development of thought. Thus, cognitive development precedes linguistic development in this theory. Language is not autonomous and it develops as our intelligence or cognitive structures develop. Intellectual development is based on action: all knowledge is based on concrete actions that later on become abstract.

There are four different cognitive stages, and each stage is based on the previous one, so no stages can be skipped. Rather than being passive, the individual interacts with the environment, and for a cognitive structure to develop, other pre-requisites are needed. The stages are: the Sensorimotor Stage, the Preoperational Stage, the Concrete Operations and the Formal Operations. All these stages can be adapted to language. According to Piaget, pre-existing and identical mental schemata both in the speaker and in the listener are necessary for the children before seven in order to comprehend. The real language appears after the seventh or eighth year of age, when the child's real social life begins.

### **Criticism**

Constructivism has some drawbacks that make linguists disregard it as an adequate theory for language acquisition.

For example, one of the pre-requisites for language acquisition is the notion of conservation, that is, that things remain the same in spite of a change in structure. The child has to understand, for example, that the same quantity of liquid remains the same in different containers. So, if cognitive development precedes linguistic development, the child must acquire the notion of conservation before passive constructions, where the meaning remains identical despite the change of form:

- (1) a. The dog bit John.
- b. John was bitten by the dog.

However, this is not case, as Sinclair and DeZwart (1985) showed that children who had not passed conservation tests were able to understand passives structures. There were no linguistic pre-requisites. It was shown that language development and linguistic development are not so much linked. However, the acquisition of a part of the lexicon will depend on the child's knowledge and his interaction with the environment. For example, the acquisition of concepts such as "wide" and "narrow".

In addition, mentally retarded children and the ones suffering from Down Syndrome are able to acquire a language despite their incapacity to learn other things.

## **Innatism and Foreign Language Learning**

### ***The Logical Problem of Foreign Language Learning***

As we have observed, the insufficient linguistic data children are exposed to cannot account for the acquisition of such a complex system as language. Now, considering that adults may also learn foreign languages, we should explain how acquisition takes place. But foreign language learning (FLL)<sup>24</sup> differs from first language acquisition in a number of factors: overall success, general failure, variation, goals, fossilization, intuitions, instruction, negative evidence and affective factors. Moreover, Bley-Vroman (1989) adds that "the learner already has a knowledge of one language and a powerful system of general abstract problem-solving skills" (Bley-Vroman 1989:41)

These differences imply that FLL differs from first language acquisition because of changes in the language faculty due to age. Adult learners use L1 and general problem-solving processes, whereas children use UG and language specific processes.

Recall that the logical problem of language acquisition comes from the impossibility to explain the acquisition of language based on the "degenerate" input. Bley-Vroman suggests that the logical problem of FLL is the explanation of the high level of competence found in some cases, while permitting the wide range of variation that is also observed. He proposes the Fundamental Difference Hypotheses, that is, that the adults' native language knowledge and a general abstract problem-solving system fill the function of the innate domain-specific acquisition system used by children.

As regards the adult's knowledge of a language, we mean the set of well-formed sentences and also the intuitions that native speakers have: a great deal of information about the general character of language – about language universals – is implicit in a single language precisely because universals are universal (Bley-Vroman 1989:50). This means that learners will expect the foreign language to have a syntax, a semantics, a lexicon, a phonology, etc. Using this previous knowledge, the learner constructs a kind of replacement for UG, and will sift those aspects of language that are likely to be universal from the ones that are accidental properties of the native language. Thus, the process of FLL will not have the same success for all learners, as they will be expected to carry out this task in a different way, and not all of them will come up with the same surrogate.

When considering the general problem-solving cognitive system, we can say that it arises around the age of puberty (that is why children lack this system), and that its solving capacity is quite powerful. However, this powerful generality will reduce its efficiency specifically with language. It is characterized as being goal-oriented, as having a way of using feedback and instruction, and also as understanding explanations.

To conclude, the previous knowledge of a language and the general cognitive ability to deal with abstract formal systems are used by adults to compensate approximately (but not perfectly) for the lack of the child's

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<sup>24</sup> In order to simplify terminology, the term foreign language learning (FLL) will be used, as a more general term, including second language acquisition (SLA), even though the terms are not identical.

knowledge of UG and of a Learning Procedure designed specifically to construct grammars.

### ***Universal Grammar and FFL/SLA***

Much research has been carried out in order to establish the function of UG in FFL. Cook (1993) suggests three different alternatives:

⇒ The *no-access* position: the grammar is learnt in the same way as we learn other things, such as physics, geography or whatever; that is, through other properties of the mind. In this position, learners acquire the L2 grammar without any reference to UG.

⇒ The *direct-access* position: the L2 grammar is learnt in the same way as the L1 grammar. Learners set values for parameters according to the L2 evidence they encounter without any other influence.

⇒ The *indirect-access* position: L2 learners have access to UG through their knowledge of L1, though their starting point L1 parameter-setting rather than the initial neutral state.

This author also some gives arguments against the continued access to UG (including the Fundamental Difference Hypotheses) and also provides some evidence to support the no-access, coming from different pieces of research: subadjacency experiments, grammaticality judgements and word order in German.

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## **“Reading Aloud: its Communicative Value in the Teaching of Phonetics”**

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### **Abstract**

Reading aloud has been considered an outcast teaching technique to improve student's language proficiency, associated by many linguists, with traditional methods. The reading of texts, meant to be read aloud, using the appropriate suprasegmental and paralinguistic features, promotes students' fluency, confidence building and self-monitoring of their performance in relation to the audience's reaction.

In this multi-layered process, the responsibility of “the communicative burden” falls to the reader aloud who has to make him/herself understood.

### **Paper**

Even though reading aloud has been considered an outcast teaching technique to improve student's language proficiency, as it has usually been associated with traditional methods by many linguists, in our teaching experience concerning supra-segmental and paralinguistic features, it has proved to be very useful within the sequence of activities going from controlled to communicative.

Our aim is to show that reading aloud does have an important place in the teaching of prosody and pragmatics, since it contributes to awareness raising on the part of the students with respect to the pragmatic information conveyed, which is bound to the culture of the foreign language.

We cannot disregard the natural language acquisition method in which L1 linguistic competence develops through the following natural stages: first, hearing and listening; second, speaking; third, reading (which implies matching sounds to symbols) and finally, writing, matching symbols to meaning. Bearing this in mind, if we follow these stages, we may assume that in the acquisition of a second or foreign language in our case, this method can lead students to a successful communicative performance, preventing them from "failure to make use of the appropriate pragmatic discourse features of English intonation" (Clennel, 1994:117) which may result in serious communication breakdown. In agreement with Keys (2000), the fact that our learning setting is a foreign language learning setting, that is, the target language is not part of the linguistic culture outside the classroom, deprives our students of potentially helpful input which is non-pedagogic and therefore, more natural. Together with this, we have to consider the fact that learning in a target language environment will lead to a more rapid learning with a more solid foundation and that consequently, "the target language phonology will somehow spontaneously enter the learners' subconscious if they are placed in a context where that is what they hear" (Keys, op. cit.).

Having described our teaching setting, in order to achieve our aim in our courses, to help students become intelligible communicative speakers of English, we must focus our teaching on meaning, context and authentic language. This implies flexibility on the part of the teacher in her use of didactic materials and being on the alert for any activity that might be tailored to the needs of particular learners in particular contexts and with particular learning styles.

When we come across good readers, we may infer that their reading aloud generally mirrors their spoken language as they are able to use appropriate phrasing, intonation and paralinguistic features. So reading aloud can be used to engage the students while developing background knowledge and increasing comprehension skills in their "transition from decoding text to constructing meaning by connecting the prosodic features that are inherent in text to the established spoken language system" (Hook and Jones, 2002). As Derek Kelly (2000) states, "reading aloud adds the sound dimension (which is critical to listening and speaking) to silent reading, thus bridging the gap between the eyes (sight) and the ears (hearing and listening). It also connects the eyes and ears to the tongue as well to the entire body, which is involved in body language".

At the Teacher Training College at the National University of Río Cuarto, students receive training in English pronunciation for three years. In the last one, they are supposed to learn about the intonation system, rhythm and the paralinguistic features characteristic of the English language. Our purpose is to help students become aware of and produce communicatively effective texts. We present different genres to them such as narratives, speeches and drama, so that they can realize that each genre has different linguistic features and address different types of readership.

We are going to illustrate our use of "reading aloud" and how it is integrated into the teaching of supra-segmental and paralinguistic features. We start by deciding what type of reader we are supposed to be according to Brazil's definition of the reader aloud and decide on adopting a "direct

orientation" to clearly state what the text means to us. The first genre the learners encounter is the narrative, as it is thought to be the most universal genre because all cultures have storytelling traditions (Martin and Rose, 2008). They analyse the stages in the narrative: orientation, which includes the time of the story, the setting and the characters involved in the story, as well as the key words that mark those stages. Afterwards, they browse through the text identifying the lexical choices made by the author to refer to the topic and its syntactic structure. They listen to the tape, in which the text is read by a native speaker of the language and later convey their first impression about it and reflect on the effectiveness of the paralinguistic features exploited by the reader aloud.

One of the texts we analyse is "The Prize" (O'Neil, 1976). It consists of three parts. The first two texts are narratives and the third one is a speech. In the first one, the author narrates memories from his childhood which took place during the First World War and in the second part, memories from his adulthood during the Second World War. In part one, the author tells us about his parents. The memories concerning his father are rather blurred, since he was hardly ever at home and died in war. His mother died in the influenza epidemic after the war. The author expresses judgments as to probability of his parents' relationship and love to him through the use of modalization such as: *must have been, must have loved*.

All his memories revolve around war, even the ones which refer to his school days. Some verbs like *remember* and *seemed* are repeated. *Remember* refers to clear memories, whereas *seemed* is used to express the speaker's perception of the reality around him. There is a marked contrast between the reality he had to face at school, and the one that was taking place miles away. Both realities affected his life and future. This contrast is shown by the use of the personal pronoun *I, They* and *She*. We can notice that he does not feel any resentment but loneliness and sadness at the loss of opportunity for sharing nice moments with his parents and being an orphan after the war. With respect to the lexis used in the text and the reader's voice quality, the students are able to perceive his sadness and his hard experiences. Once the learners have analysed all these elements, they are able to convey the same feelings placing themselves in the author's mood. Their peers evaluate the reader by saying whether they were moved by his/her performance or not.

In the second narrative the author refers to his adulthood, his experiences as a journalist in different countries and the friends he made in those places until many of them became "the enemy" due to the Second World War. His profession took him to witness the unfairness and cruelty of war in the front line. He uses passive voice to refer to events in which he is involved involuntarily; active, when he is the actor/doer of the action. He describes an air attack by means of similes as:

*They sounded like huge kettledrums that were being tuned for a concert, I felt as though I was inside one of those drums, As if someone had lit a match up there, It was like watching a film, Like a fly in a spider's net; sound images: We heard their engines. A town was being bombed. The bombs could be heard. Our guns began firing. The crew began to cheer and visual images: Two powerful lights, we could see the flames, I saw a flicker of flame, The flame suddenly spread.*

In this part, the reader resorts to loudness, quick tempo to convey that image of noise and rapid succession of unconscious actions due to the presence of alliteration used in short sentences. Suddenly, the author becomes aware of the fact that they were all human beings and that some of them might have been his friends. He describes soldiers on both sides as "puppets in a mad play". It is at this point that the author makes a final

reflection about war and the stupidity of mankind. The reader resorts to soft voice, slow tempo, articulatory precision while weighing his words and long pauses which, in most cases, coincide with grammatical boundaries to denote an emotional state of sadness and despair over irrecoverable life.

The story ends with a speech when the author is awarded the Nobel Prize for his book. Oratory, according to O'Connor (1979) is characterised by the use of comparatively little gradation and strong forms of words, short phrases, necessitating frequent connective intonation and frequent phrase final pauses. The glottal stop is often used for both separative and emphatic purposes. In his speech, the author highlights the word *simple* to refer to the language used to describe the reality he has seen, in spite of the terrible experiences he had to endure, and to stress the fact that it is easier to lie with more complicated words. The use of simple language, according to him, does not imply "*making reality more simple than it really is*", but it is probably the only way of getting at the truth. The reader aloud starts the speech with slow tempo, weighing his words to reinforce the verbal content of the message. Throughout the speech, he shifts from slow to quick tempo when he wants to clearly state the hidden purpose on the part of the government, when using complicated language to inform people about their decisions. The text is rich in the use of intensifiers, such as: *easily, very, equally, truly, deeply*. At the end of the speech, he encourages the audience in the search for truth, even though it is "*a complex and many-sided thing*".

In our experience, these activities have positively affected the learners, on the one hand, by raising their awareness as to the importance of the role played by paralinguistic features; and on the other, by encouraging them to use these features in any situation to enhance communication. Reading aloud promotes students' fluency and confidence building together with self-monitoring of their performance in relation to the audience's reaction.

Evidently, we must say that we do not think that reading aloud is a waste of time, especially if one gets students to read texts that are meant to be read aloud. Through reading aloud the students get a feel for the sound and rhythm of the language. They acquire a mastery of the sound system of English, together with the system of intonation and stress, all of which contribute to making a speaker understandable.

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## **"Reading Life Through Literature"**

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### **Abstract**

Hard science professionals are frequently used to reading expository texts to respond to their academic or scientific needs. The challenge is, then, to try with them a new reading experience in which both language acquisition and personal development are involved. Literature appears to be a valuable source as well as a useful resource for this twofold aim. A poem and an excerpt of a novel have been used to design activities which provide these professionals a flexible space to think aloud, discuss and, above all, enjoy the experience of reading what they usually call 'soft' texts due to rationalistic pre-concepts.

### **Introduction**

Literature, more than any other type of textualization, reflects a multi-layered reality in which linguistic, cultural and aesthetic elements closely intertwine. Pedagogically exploited, these elements allow for the design of a wide range of activities which, imaginatively and creatively thought, turn the English language classroom into a meaningful scenario where literature for language and language for literature reciprocally coexist. This way, language acquisition is likely to occur more pleasurably through the experience of

discovering fictional worlds which can become meaningful to the students' lives.

Young professionals in general -especially those coming from the hard sciences- are used to feeling the 'satisfaction' of discovering new worlds of knowledge through reading expository texts; these types of texts appeal to their intellects and are closer to their professional reality. Yet they are not used to feeling the 'pleasure' of discovering themselves in their human dimension through the world of feelings, emotions and sensations which underlie the 'process' of reading a literary piece<sup>25</sup>. The challenge is then to try with these professionals a new reading experience in which both language acquisition and personal development are involved. Literature then appears to be a very valuable source as well as a useful resource for this twofold aim. As Krashen (1982) has consistently argued, pleasure reading may be an important input for language acquisition.

This new experience of reading life through literature, however, has cognitive, psychological and linguistic implications:

- a) From the cognitive point of view, it appears to be more demanding since the reader should generate more inferences than the ones generated when reading expository texts; logical relations are not necessarily overt. Literature has then high potential for a multiplicity of meanings and, going beyond "efferent" reading, as Rosenblatt (1978) calls the reader's response to a text just to gain information, demands more cognitive effort.
- b) From the psychological point of view, the reader is supposed to become emotionally and affectively engaged with the text and this type of engagement may cause some resistance to inner-self exposure. This being "projected forward" (Widdowson, 1983), and taking the "aesthetic stance" (Rosenblatt, 1978) is a totally different experience from that in which only cognitive needs are satisfied. The aesthetic stance involves the construction of the Rosenblattian "private meanings" in which personal involvement with the text moves our whole being and not just a part of it.
- c) From the linguistic point of view, literary texts are realized through a series of linguistic devices and/or forms of text organization meant to create an aesthetic impact on the reader. This means becoming more aware of 'form' rather than 'content'; it means to see "how the language works rather than what it says: how it means rather than what it means" (McRae, 1991:6). This difference in the approach to accessing texts implies a greater effort to bridge the gap between recognizing linguistic exponents

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<sup>25</sup> The students in mind are professionals (MD's, engineers, biochemists, architects, among others) attending General English Courses at the UTN, Concordia, Entre Ríos, whose main interest is to have a good command of the language to communicate in every day situations, and in academic settings and events. They have already reached a pre-intermediate level of competence basically in their listening and speaking skills; however, they are capable of reading and comprehending non-fiction (mainly expository texts) far beyond the level at which they speak. In addition, they have demonstrated some kind of sensitiveness for the interpretation of symbolic/metaphorical uses of language, especially when working with very creative TV commercials, advertisements and songs, an activity that really surprised them but they enjoyed. Therefore, although the focus of their instruction has been "referential language" (John McRae, 1991) to respond to their immediate instrumental needs, this kind of intuitive connection with "representational language" appears to be advantageous for the introduction of fiction in our classes.

just to make sense and relishing words to taste the joy of finding a personal sense.

It is our aim to provide students with a "flexible space for the exercise of mental energy, creativity, interaction and involvement" (McRae, 1991:16). Two texts, a poem by Roger Mc Gough "The Sound Collector" and an excerpt of the novel *The Collector* by John Fowles (*See Appendix*) were chosen to design the corresponding activities. These texts, due to their rich literariness and overlapping topics, are highly exploitable: the poem has a particular musicality which provokes an immediate aesthetic effect; the excerpt creates a particular intriguing atmosphere which easily catches the reader's attention, and neither of them feature "gaps of indeterminacy" (Wolfgang Iser, 1971) so it is possible to have a fluent interaction reader-text. All the activities are thought of as a dynamic process to bring literature closer to their lives. After all, "it becomes the responsibility of the teacher...to encourage students to take risks, to guess, to ignore the impulses to be always correct." (Clarke & Silberstein, 1977:135).

## Activities

In order to facilitate the reading process, the activities have been organized as Pre-reading, Reading, Post-reading and Extension activities.

a) The **Pre-reading activities** are mainly prediction activities thought of as a warm-up exercise to help students get into the reading process with some previous elements in mind. Thus, activities based on the poem are meant to anticipate vocabulary which will be crucial for its understanding and interpretation while those based on the excerpt are designed to show what we should normally pay attention to (title, back cover reviews or plot summary) before reading a novel.

Poem	Novel
<p><b>-Before you read the poem, answer these questions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. What is a "collector"?</li> <li>. Do you have any collections of your own?</li> <li>. Why do you think someone would like to collect "sounds"?</li> <li>. Make a list of words you remember are used to express sounds. Where can you hear these sounds? Do they relate to any activities of life?</li> </ul>	<p><b>- Before you read, answer these questions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Taking into consideration the title THE COLLECTOR:</li> <li>. What do you think the novel will be about?</li> <li>. Why do you think I chose texts with similar titles?</li> <li>. The novel is about a lonely man named Frederick who one day happens to win a lot of money and buys a large house in the country. As he is a collector and loves collecting things, he plans to catch "something" he has been watching for two years. What do you think he will catch for his collection?</li> </ul>

To place students at a macro-level of analysis and prepare the territory to speak about their own experiences, memories, etc. related to the genre, a **Let's Talk** moment is considered before the predictions. This covers general

questions like: Do you like reading poems /novels?, Do you remember the last poem/novel you read? If your answer is positive, try to think of when you read it; what it was about; where you read it; etc.; Do you remember something special about it?

b) The **Reading activities** are meant to integrate cognitive, aesthetic and linguistic aspects. These first ones, for example, are aimed at confirming predictions as well as motivating students to have an aesthetic response to the text, in the case of the poem, and an affective response to the text, in the case of the novel, especially after discovering what type of “collector” the narrator is.

<b>Poem</b>	<b>Novel</b>
<p><b>- Now read the poem and find out if your sounds appear in the text:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Were your sounds similar to the ones in the poem?</li> <li>. What type of sounds has the collector collected?</li> <li>. What type of words does the author use to express the sounds? Why?</li> <li>. Do these words contribute to the description of something?</li> </ul> <p><b>- Listen to me reading the poem out loud and answer:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. How do you feel while listening to the rhythm and rhyme of the poem?</li> <li>. What is the first impression you get?</li> <li>. What relationship do you find between the author being a performance poet and the musicality it has?</li> </ul>	<p><b>-Now read the text and find out if your predictions were right:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Were you surprised? Why?</li> <li>. What did the collector do?</li> <li>. What phrase in the text shows that Frederick got what he wanted?</li> </ul>

As students are not very much familiar with these types of genres, activities to make them aware of some of their conventional generic elements are included. For example, the poem questions are meant to introduce students to the figure of the persona, the polyphony of voices, the way words are used to create artistic images, while the novel questions aim at familiarizing students with characters, setting, main events, etc.

Poem	Novel
<b>- Re-read the poem to find details and / or evidence to support your answers:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Who tells the poem –a man or a woman-:</li> <li>. What the house is like: (rooms, design, colors, etc):</li> <li>. What activities take place in the house:</li> <li>. How many people live there:</li> <li>. What type of relationship the dwellers of the house have (apart from the sounds, are voices heard?):</li> <li>. Who the stranger is and / or the role he plays:</li> <li>. Is it possible to make up a story out of the answers above?</li> </ul>	<b>- Now read the story again and answer these questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. How many people are mentioned in the story?</li> <li>. Who are they?</li> <li>. Who tells the story?</li> <li>. Where does the story takes place?</li> <li>. What time of the day is it?</li> <li>. What is the weather like?</li> <li>. Which verb tense is mostly used in the story?</li> <li>. How is the sequence of events marked?</li> </ul>

Word choice is also an important and an effective resource to cause emotional and aesthetic effects on the reader as the following activities intend to show. The idea here is to make them aware of different possible responses and reactions to lexical variations.

Poem	Novel
<b>-Find words or phrases in the poem which suggest:</b> sadness – fear – tenderness – impatience, and other feelings or emotions that you can find.	<b>- Find a word or phrase in the text which means the same as the following</b> (they are in the order you will find them) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Completely covered with clouds: .....</li> <li>. At that moment and place: .....</li> <li>. Very quickly and continuously: .....</li> <li>. To look carefully like inspecting: .....</li> <li>. To look extremely quickly: .....</li> </ul>

Agreeing or disagreeing or true/false activities help students see that interpreting literature also demands referential and inferential processing similar to the one in expository texts. By doing so, students begin to understand the interpretative potential of this process; it is also a good moment to make students speak about their own impressions, associations, opinions, etc. which help them give a personal touch to their interpretations.

Poem	Novel
<p><b>-Think about the following statements and say if you agree or disagree, justify your answer with evidence from the poem:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. The woman has a husband with whom she has practically no communication.</li> <li>. The stranger is in fact a criminal because he collects the things he steals.</li> <li>. Life and death are suggested in the sounds and the silence.</li> </ul>	<p><b>-Say if the following statements are True or False and why:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Frederick had made a plan to catch Miranda.</li> <li>. He knew exactly the movements she used to make.</li> <li>. Miranda always went out by herself.</li> <li>. Frederick did not care less about the two women passing by.</li> <li>. Apparently, the old women did not see him.</li> <li>. He had a dead dog in the back of his van.</li> </ul>

- c) The **Post-reading** activity Discuss 1) is intended to show that there is always a later elaboration of meaning (which in many cases is unconscious) that can even make us understand and interpret certain aspects of the text we have not been aware of at the moment of reading it. The questions in this case point at cognitive and affective meanings as well. Discuss 2) offers the opportunity of comparing both genres to deal with the overlapping topics or themes which mirror reality. Thus literature can become relevant and meaningful to their lives and even make them reflect and / or think critically as it is intended to do with the Charles Dickens' quotation.

Discuss (1)	Discuss (2)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. How do you think the story will go on?</li> <li>. What did you feel while reading the story?</li> <li>. How do you think Frederick planned kidnapping Miranda during two years?</li> <li>. What do you think the author's intention is?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Can you say that both texts have topics in common?</li> <li>. Charles Dickens at the very beginning of his novel HARD TIMES writes:   <i>"Now, what I want is Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them..."</i> </li> <li>.After having tried this new reading experience in class, what do you think of the above quotation?</li> </ul>

- d) Finally, the **Extension activities** like writing a movie script or producing a summary of the story motivate students to pick up the most relevant aspects of the texts and become aware of their degree of involvement with them. In addition, paraphrasing the message using their own words, either orally or in written form, makes them feel they have understood the main points and even leads them to make personal comments about the story line. This shows them they

have constructed (or re-written) their own story on a personal basis and that the resulting variations are just a mirror of their subjective, emotional and affective experience.

Poem	Novel
<p>- Imagine you are a script writer and you have to write the opening scene of a movie based on the first stanza of the poem. Using that information and your personal interpretation:</p> <p>. Write a description of the setting and the dialogue between the stranger and the person in the poem.</p>	<p>j) Summarize the story (if possible using your own words).</p> <p>- Pay attention to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the setting in which the story takes place</li> <li>- the characters' general goals or plans</li> <li>- the verbs used to indicate the characters' actions</li> <li>- the sequence of events</li> </ul>

### Afterthought

A couple of years ago, a 25-year-old veterinarian wrote at the end of an assignment similar to one above:

"Now I understand,  
 what you tried to say to me  
 how you suffered for your sanity  
 how you tried to set them free  
 they would not listen  
 they are not listening still  
 perhaps they never will..."

**Vincent**  
 (Don Mc Lean)

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## Appendix

### The Sound Collector

A stranger called this morning	The drumming of the rain drops
Dressed all in black and grey	On the window pane
Put every sound in a bag	When you do the washing up
And carried them away	The gurgle of the drain

The whistling of the kettle	The crying of the baby
The turning of the lock	The squeaking of the chair
The purring of the kitten	The swishing of the curtain
The ticking of the clock	The creaking of the stair

The popping of the toaster	A stranger called this morning
The crunching of the flakes	He didn't leave his name
When you spread the marmalade	Left us only silence
The scraping noise it makes	Life will never be the same

The hissing of the frying pan

The ticking of the grill

The bubbling of the bathtub

As it starts to fill

**Roger Mc Gough**

"She came out alone, exactly two hours later, it had stopped raining more or less and it was almost dark, the sky was overcast. I watched her go back the usual way up the hill. Then I drove off past her to a place where I knew she must pass.

There was just this one place.

Two old women with umbrellas (it began to spot with rain again) appeared and came up the road towards me. It was just what I didn't want, I knew she was due, and I nearly gave up then and there. But I bent right down, and they passed, talking nineteen to the dozen. I don't think they even saw me or the van. There were cars parked everywhere in that district. A minute passed. I got out and opened the back. It was all planned. And then she was near. She'd come up and round without me seeing, only twenty yards away, walking quickly. I could see there was no one behind her. Then she was right beside me, coming up the pavement. Funny, singing to herself.

I said. "Excuse me, do you know anything about dogs?"

She stopped, surprised. "Why?" she said..

"It's awful. I've just run one over," I said. "It dashed out. I don't know what to do with it. It's not dead."

I looked into the back, very worried.

"Oh, poor thing" she said.

She came towards me, to look in. Just as I hoped.

"There's no blood," I said, "but it can't move."

Then she came round the end of the open back door, and I stood back as if let her see. She bent forward to peer in. I flashed a look down the road, no one, and then I got her."

***The Collector by John Fowles***

# **“Reading of Research Paper Abstracts in Applied Linguistics and Sociology: what can the rhetorical sections communicate?”**

BENSON, SILVIA

SANCHEZ, JORGE

## **Abstract**

English is the world's language of scholarship. Thus, the bulk of scientific knowledge is basically produced in English nowadays. Journals specify in their editorial policies that an abstract should accompany all papers. An abstract allows readers to have an overview of the content of the research. Readers, particularly those whose first language is not English, may have limitations in understanding the rhetorical information included in an abstract. This paper aims at raising awareness of the importance of the abstract as an academic discourse genre and assessing the applicability of international models in empirical research paper abstracts from the fields of applied linguistics and sociology. Findings indicate that Santos' model best captures the rhetorical organization of abstracts in applied linguistics. The application of the models to Sociology abstracts shows the inclusion of rhetorical sections such as purpose, methodology, results and conclusions. However, there is not a definite pattern concerning the order in which these sections appear.

## **Introduction**

English is the world's language of scholarship and, for this reason; the bulk of scientific knowledge is basically produced in English nowadays. Besides, scholarly journals specify in their editorial policies that an abstract in English should

accompany all research articles. An abstract should be accurate, self-contained, concise and specific, non-evaluative, coherent and readable (APA, 1983, 1994 and 2001) since it allows readers to have an overview of the content of the research. Thus, readers, particularly those whose first language is not English, may have limitations in understanding the rhetorical information included in an abstract.

According to Duddley-Evans, et. al. (1998: 4-5), ESP is designed to meet specific needs of the learner; it makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the disciplines it serves; and it is centred on the language, skills, discourse and genres appropriate to these activities.

Swales, et. al. (2000: 35) define a rhetorical section or move as '...a defined and bounded communicative act that is designed to achieve one main communicative objective ...'

Some of the rhetorical sections an abstract should include are the main features of the research, the purpose of the study, the methodology, the results, the conclusions and each one of these sections or categories specifies a particular communicative purpose; i.e. the abstract author describes the main features of the research or, in the case of the methodology section, the author gives indication of the design of the study in terms of subjects, procedures, materials and instruments.

Different international models -such as Weissberg & Buker (1990) see appendix 1, Santos (1996) see appendix 2 and APA (2001) see appendix 3- can be used in order to assess their applicability when analyzing empirical research paper abstracts from the fields of Applied Linguistics and Sociology.

## **Objectives**

The main objectives of this paper are: a) to raise awareness of the importance of the abstract as an academic discourse genre; b) to assess the applicability of international models in the reading of empirical research article abstracts in applied linguistics as well as in sociology; and c) to grasp the rhetorical information included in the abstracts by means of different reading comprehension tasks.

## **Materials and methododoly**

In order to overcome the problem of understanding the rhetorical information in abstracts, a set of reading tasks were systematically designed to help Spanish speaking advanced students and academics at Universidad Nacional de Cuyo optimize their reading skills of empirical research paper abstracts in applied linguistics written in English.

These reading tasks included reorganizing jumbled sentences to form abstracts, matching halves of sentences, inserting linguistic exponents/signals that have been deleted from abstracts.

Weissberg & Buker (1990), Santos (1996) and APA (2001) models were applied to six Applied Linguistics abstracts as well as to six Sociology abstracts taken from empirical research articles.

Swales' table was used to find the linguistic exponents/signals in combination with Sanchez's (2007) contribution.

## **Results and Discussion**

Some of the findings include the fact that Santos' model best captures the rhetorical organization of empirical research paper abstracts in applied linguistics. The other two models are more limited since they do not fully describe the rhetorical sections or categories characteristic of the abstract genre.

Following Swales' CARS model (1990) -appendix 4- it can be seen that not all the linguistic exponents/signals (tense; lexical items; voice; meta-discourse phrases) are covered; therefore, the need for the addition of sections carried out by Sanchez (2007) appendix 5.

It is also noticed that abstract authors sometimes make use of more than one linguistic exponent/signal within the same sentence because of the reduced or limited textual space characteristic of the abstract genre.

The application of the models to Sociology abstracts shows that most authors include rhetorical sections such as the main features of the research, the methodology, the results and the conclusions. However, there is not a consistent pattern concerning the order in which these sections appear. There are even cases in which the embedding of sections or moves is present. As regards the Applied Linguistics abstracts, it is important to highlight that they do follow a more consistent pattern as regards the order of their rhetorical sections.

## **Conclusion**

Although a limited number of empirical research paper abstracts from the fields of Sociology and Applied Linguistics were analyzed, some questions for further research arise:

- a- Do abstract authors communicate the most salient features of their research because of their awareness of the reduced textual space of the abstract genre and, thus, attracting their potential readers to the contents of the research article?
- b- Do they follow the recommendations of the journals in which they seek to publish and, in this way, become established members of international discourse communities? or

c- Is it one or all of these factors that prevail at the time of producing their abstracts?

d- Are there any differences and/or similarities as regards the rhetorical organization between empirical research paper abstracts written in English from Applied Linguistics and Sociology and from other fields, such as engineering, mathematics, agronomy, among others? If so, what are these differences and/or similarities about?

e- Do the international models applied in this study fully capture the rhetorical organization of empirical research paper abstracts from other fields such as engineering, mathematics, agronomy, among others written in English? If not, what is/are the possible rhetorical section/s that these models do not account for?

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1

<p><b>MODEL A</b></p> <p><b>Weissberg &amp; Buker (1990)</b></p>
<p><b>B</b> = Some <i>background information</i> of the study.</p> <p><b>P</b> = The <i>principal activity</i> (or <i>purpose</i>) of the study and its scope.</p> <p><b>M</b> = Some information about the <i>methodology</i> used in the study.</p> <p><b>R</b> = The most important <i>results</i> of the study</p> <p><b>C</b> = A statement of <i>conclusion</i> or <i>recommendation</i></p>

### Appendix 2

<p><b>MODEL B</b></p> <p><b>Santos (1996)</b></p>
<p><b>MOVE 1</b> = <i>Situating the research</i></p> <p><b>Submove 1A</b> = <i>Stating current knowledge</i> (Authors may (i) identify the field by stating that a given topic is of considerable professional concern, (ii) state current ideas or practice in teaching and research or (iii) offer the reader something like a generalization regarding the state of the art.)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">and/or</p> <p><b>Submove 1B</b> = <i>Citing previous research</i></p> <p>(The reference to the state of previous research is accompanied by the naming of specific researchers)</p>

and/or

**Submove 1C** = *Extended previous research* (Authors provide a weak challenge to previous research while presenting their research as being in accord with current research trends)

and/or

**Submove 2** = *Stating a problem* (Problem statements point out that previous research has not been thoroughly successful or complete.)

**MOVE 2** = *Presenting the research*

**Submove 1A** = *Indicating main features* (an announcement that justifies the article by describing the key features of the research)

and/or

**Submove 1B** = *Indicating main purpose* (an announcement that justifies the article by presenting its purpose.)

and/or

**Submove 2** = *Hypothesis raising* (Authors outline their research hypotheses or questions)

**MOVE 3** = *Describing the methodology* (The authors indicate the design of the study in terms of subjects, procedures, materials, instruments.)

**MOVE 4** = *Summarizing the results* (Authors summarize briefly the main findings of the research)

**MOVE 5** = *Discussing the research*

**Submove 1** = *Drawing conclusions* (Conclusion statements are meant to answer the question "What do the findings mean?")

**Submove 2** = *Giving recommendations* (Recommendation statements may briefly outline suggestions for future practice or investigation.)



## Appendix 3

<b>MODEL C</b> <b>AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION (APA, 2001)</b>
1) The problem under investigation, in one sentence if possible.
2) The participants or subjects, specifying pertinent characteristics, such as number, type, age, sex, and genus and species.
3) The experimental method, including the apparatus, data-gathering procedures, complete test names, complete generic names and the dosage and routes of administration of any drugs.
4) The findings, including statistical significance levels; and
5) The conclusions and the implications or applications.

## Appendix 4

### **Swales' CARS model (1990)**

Move 1: Establishing a territory

Step 1: Claiming centrality

and/or

Step 2: Making topic generalizations

and/or

Step 3: Reviewing items of previous research

Move 2: Establishing a niche

Step 1A: Counter-claiming

or

Step 1B: Indicating a gap

or

Step 1C: Question-raising

or

Step 1D: Continuing a tradition

Move 3: Occupying the niche

Step 1A: Outlining purposes

or

Step 1B: Announcing present research

Step 2: Announcing principal findings

Step 3: Indicating research article structure

**Sanchez's additional rhetorical categories**

<b>RHETORICAL SECTION</b>	<b>COMMUNICATIVE PURPOSE</b>	<b>LINGUISTIC EXPONENTS/SIGNALS</b>
<b>Specifying the methodology</b> (Sánchez, 2007a; 2007b)	- indication of the design of the study in terms of subjects, procedures, materials, instruments	<p>The beginning of this rhetorical section can be marked by A followed by B or only B):</p> <p>A) A syntactic subject realized by the materials, subjects, instruments and procedures.</p> <p><b>Tense:</b> Simple Past</p> <p><b>Voice:</b> Active</p> <p><b>Lexical Items:</b> be, read, receive, include, complete, consist</p> <p>B) A syntactic subject realized by the materials, subjects, instruments and procedures.</p> <p><b>Tense:</b> Simple Past</p> <p><b>Voice:</b> Passive</p> <p><b>Lexical Items:</b> examine, assign, administer, analyze, use, devise, collect, compare, ask, give, measure, distribute, determine, take, record, perform, present, test</p>

<b>RHETORICAL SECTION</b>	<b>COMMUNICATIVE PURPOSE</b>	<b>LINGUISTIC EXPONENTS/SIGNALS</b>
<b>Presenting the conclusions</b> (Sánchez,	- a more general explanation of the findings summarized	<p><b>Tense:</b> Simple Present</p> <p><b>Voice:</b> Active</p>

2007a; 2007b)	in the Results section	<p><b>Lexical Items:</b> indicate, interpret</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Occasional use of a fronted passive as a means to advance what is to come.</li> <li>- <b>Metadiscourse Phrases</b> with deictic elements ("This", "These" or "The") which refer to the findings or data.</li> <li>- <b>Metadiscourse Phrases</b> with deictic elements ("The", "This" or "These") + nouns which refer to the genre or type of inquiry.</li> <li>- <b>Conjunctions</b> that mark a result/consequence or a conclusion of the results previously announced: Thus, In sum.</li> </ul>
<b>Indicating the implications</b> (Sánchez, 2007a; 2007b)	- indication of the implications of the results either in a brief or detailed way	<p><b>Tense:</b> Present Simple</p> <p><b>Voice:</b> Passive; occasionally Active</p> <p><b>Lexical Items:</b> implications, imply; metadiscourse phrases: Implications of the results ..., Implications of this study ...; Further implications of the findings ...; The implications of these findings ....</p>
<b>Indicating the applications</b> (Sánchez, 2007a; 2007b)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a brief indication of the applications of the results or</li> <li>- the pedagogic value of the results of the study are given in a more detailed way</li> </ul>	<p><b>Tense:</b> Present Simple</p> <p><b>Voice:</b> Passive, occasionally Active</p> <p><b>Lexical Items:</b> applications, utility; metadiscourse phrases: Possible applications of these findings ...</p>

# **“Social Representation of English as a School Subject: How do High School Students Conceive English as a School Subject?”**

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## **Abstract**

Following Moscovici's theory (1988), we have elucidated students' social representation of English as a school subject in their last year of high school in Villa María in the belief that, although it may not reflect objective reality, awareness of its nature can help us analyze students' attitude towards learning EFL at school. A free association and a pairing technique provided the semantic universe of this construct, while an extended interview revealed its inner content. Results showed that students evaluate the school subject negatively, regard EFL as a relevant tool, and assign teachers a key role in the learning process.

## **Introduction**

To analyze students' attitude when learning EFL at school from a group or social approach related to the conditions where this practice takes place, we drew on Moscovici's (1988) theory of social representations (SRs), and designed a profile of the social representation of English as a school subject (SR of ESS) that sixth year students in Villa María have. According to this author, SRs are a functional vision of the world which enables individuals to understand reality through their group system of references, thus conferring meaning to their

behaviour in different social practices. Therefore, and regarding ELT classes in high school as a particular social practice, we believe that awareness of students' SR of ESS may improve teachers' understanding of classroom dynamics.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The Romanian social psychologist Serge Moscovici (1988) argued that SRs are mental constructs, which, given their main functions of communication and action, engender and determine behaviour. SRs not only define the nature of individual or group responses, they also help determine the stimulus itself. These mental constructs underpin social practices, modelling and construing the context where they develop. They give sense to individuals' behaviour by supplying them with notions to justify their actions and to establish efficient relations. According to Moscovici (1988), representations are always social due to the fact that they develop as a result of the permanent dialogue that social practices and interaction imply. Nevertheless, representing an object, a state, or a piece of reality is not simply repeating or reproducing it in the individual's mind. In fact, it implies developing a functional version of the world, reconstructing it, changing its narrative as it is assimilated into pre-existing mental constructs. Therefore, individual or group representations make the world appear to be what we think it is or should be, and not the other way round.

Following Moscovici's footsteps, the French psychologist Jean Claude Abric (2004) argued that the relevance of SRs in the analysis of social interaction derives from the functions of knowledge, identity, practice, and justification. The function of knowledge provides individuals with the elements to construe a given portion of reality by integrating it into a comprehensible frame consistent with their values. This function is essential for social communication given the fact that it helps define the common frame of reference that makes social interaction possible. The function of identity fosters the sense of belonging to a group; it defines its specificity, and is crucial to sustain group cohesion over individuals. The function of practice guides individuals' behaviour in different situations. Identifying the purpose of a given activity, this function a-priori determines the type of interaction and the type of cognitive scheme that individuals will put into practice. SRs provide a system of anticipation and expectations that conditions the actions, which is why they are said to be prescriptive of socially acceptable behaviour. Finally, justification is the function which, a posteriori, provides individuals with the grounds to explain and account for attitudes and behaviour.

Abric (2004) advanced his theory of the "central core" (p. 18) according to which all SRs are composed of a central core and of peripheral elements. The central or structuring core contains cognitions which, associated to a particular referent, carry the meaning of the representation and are called dimensions (Singery, 1984 as cited in Abric, 2004). The centrality of these dimensions derives from the recurrence of their referents when individuals associate cognitions, and from the relationships they establish between the dimensions themselves. Once they have analyzed the content of dimensions, the researchers should be able to elaborate what Singery has called "the minimum reasoning" (1984, as cited in Abric, 2004:165), a statement that summarizes the individuals' prevailing attitude towards the object, a phrase considered to be the organizing idea of the representation where all the cognitions and their associations are implied. While the central core is more resistant to change and modifications, peripheral elements or cognitions are more suited for needed change and adjustment to evolving contexts and may be said to exemplify the meaning in the central core.

Finally, regarding centrality of cognitions, Abric's collaborator, the social psychologist Claude Flament (1987, as cited in Abric, 2004) distinguishes two types of representations: a) autonomous representations, which are those whose organizing or central cognitions constitute or are directly related to the object represented; and b) non-autonomous representations, which are organized around certain elements which are not constitutive or directly connected with its object, but are included in the structure of the representation.

Having considered the main guidelines in our theoretical framework, we move on to present the methodological procedures.

## Method and Results

Fifty students from ten high schools, five private and five public, served as participants in this study. Five individuals per school were chosen at random. Following the above-mentioned researchers' methodology, three instruments were considered suitable for data collection: a) a free association technique; b) a pairing technique for relating concepts; and c) an extended interview. While the free association yielded the semantic universe of this social representation, the pairing activity aimed at clarifying what students referred to with the words they provided in a). Finally, the extended interview completed our search for the students' SR of ESS.

Identification of the different dimensions derived from the analysis of the results of the pairing activity, which revealed the aspects/referents of the real object to which students referred to with the cognitions provided during the free association task. The analysis of the content of each dimension consisted in a qualitative analysis of the students' expressions, which eventually led to the "minimum reasoning" of the representation summarising its logic and the students' opinions.

All the cognitions were classified into three dimensions: *Materia*; *Idioma*; and *Profesor/a*. Asked about the reasons why they had paired two cognitions such as "densa" and "complicada", students would say: "la materia me parece complicada..."; regarding the pair "aplicación" and "lindo", students argued: "Aplicación porque es algo que vos siempre vas a tener que aplicar...por ejemplo, si querés un estudio universitario, la vas a necesitar...y más si te vas a otro lado vas a necesitar hablar inglés." On the pair "profesora" and "evaluación", they said: "me parece que la profesora es la clave para que los chicos puedan aprender...teniendo una buena profe, los chicos van a aprender bien." Centrality of these dimensions resulted from a) the number of cognitions each referent collected, and b) the associations formed between dimensions establishing relations of cause/effect and comparison/contrast. With regard to a), the referent "materia" collected 55% of all cognitions; the referent "idioma" collected 37%; and the referent "profesor/a" collected 8%. Concerning b), when asked about their pairing, students established relationships of cause/effect and of contrast. For example, establishing a relationship of cause/effect, students assigned relevance to the school subject arguing that the English language was very useful nowadays. They said: "...sí es importante [to have English at school] porque para todos los aspectos de la vida utilizas el inglés." On the relevance of the teacher when learning EFL at school, students said: "Me gusta la materia y la profesora...tiene que ver mucho cómo ella explica el inglés para que yo siga atraído en la clase." Relations of contrast were established by students to express their perceptions of the school subject. They said: "[la materia es] necesaria porque prácticamente es imprescindible en la

sociedad actual conocer inglés,...desinterés...por la actitud que toman los alumnos frente a la materia inglés.” Relating “útil” and “difícil”, they said: “Útil porque te sirve mucho para expresarte si te vas a otro país...por lo general...siempre es el inglés, y a mí personalmente...se me hace difícil traducir...aprender...los ejercicios...todo eso.”

After having analyzed the content and the hierarchical order of the dimensions of this representation, a synthesis in the form of a key phrase, the “minimum reasoning”, was elaborated: “Es una materia obligatoria, aburrida, repetitiva y larga, en la que la profesora es muy importante para que los alumnos puedan aprender, y es una materia que no sacaría de la escuela porque saber inglés hoy es muy útil.” Clearly, it can be stated that students evaluated the school subject negatively, regarded EFL as a relevant tool for their future, and assigned the teacher a key role in the learning process in ESS.

## **Summary and Conclusions**

The following conclusions arise from the whole process of this research work in view of its main objective. The instruments for collecting data used proved to be suitable for the group of adolescents in the sample, who would have otherwise been reticent to express their perceptions. The free association technique introduced us to the content of this representation and the pairing task and extended interview made it easier for the students to express themselves, establishing relations between their notions.

We have achieved our main objective and found that the SR of ESS is an autonomous representation shared by the students in their last year of all high schools in Villa María. In fact, all the students in the sample referred in the same way to the same aspects of this school subject, whether they attended public or private high schools, which implied a wide range of different social backgrounds. Whether students studied EFL at private institutes or not, and whether they planned to study or to work when they finished high school, all of them evaluated the school subject negatively, considered EFL a valuable tool, and thought that the teacher held a key role in the learning process.

## **Pedagogical Implications**

A better understanding of the learning process of EFL at schools may derive from the awareness of these group constructs called social representations. The functions of knowledge, identity, justification and action attributed to these mental structures are prescriptive of not only actions and perceptions, but also of attitudes and behaviour. Therefore, by being aware of the notions that guide students’ perceptions and actions, teachers may be able to carry out a more critical analysis of the ELT practice at schools, one that incorporates the social or group element as it has been dealt with in the present research study. Pedagogical implications are likely to emerge from the reflection on the content of each dimension in this representation: *materia*, *idioma* and *profesor/a*.

Regarding the dimension *materia*, and according to the information provided and analyzed in the present research study, teachers may want to discuss different aspects of ESS with their students. First of all, reflecting on the objectives set in the



syllabus with students is likely to avoid false expectations on their side. Informed of the subject's aims for the year's learning progress, students would be aware of what is expected from them, which, according to the theory of SRs, would set in motion specific cognitive mechanisms likely to foster better results in the learning process. Lastly, being instrumental in accomplishing those objectives, topic units and grammar contents, as much as the procedural plan described in the syllabus, should also be discussed in order to transmit to the students the sense of unity that they believe that ESS lacks.

Regarding the dimension *idioma*, teachers should profit from the fact that students assign a significant relevance to this foreign language. Aware of this, teachers should be able to draw student motivation from this positive perception. Nevertheless, knowing that students believe that the skills they learn at school in the foreign language are useful but not enough for their future needs, teachers may want to discuss with their students the limitations and possibilities of ELT practice at school. Clearly establishing the relevance of the language, the aims of the course, and what is expected from students may not only yield positive learning results, it may also help improve the group representation that students have of ESS. Moreover, modifications in the students' representation could result in further changes in the social practice this representation underlies, changes such as those of attitude that teachers are hoping to see in their students.

Finally, as regards the dimension *profesor/a*, the students clearly expressed that they conceive the teacher's role as central in the process of learning EFL. Nevertheless, based on their own experience at school, the students did not evaluate their teachers positively. If teachers are aware of this, they will be in a better position to understand students' attitude, and may want to consider changes in their practice to enhance rapport with students and therefore improve classroom interaction.

According to Moscovici's theory (1988), SRs are not an exact copy of the objective reality, and therefore, students' perceptions may not depict ELT practice at school today. Nevertheless, these spontaneous expressions constitute students' SR of ESS, and they operate as such. They condition perceptions, attitudes and actions, providing students with arguments for justification.

All of the above is intended as a modest contribution to the ELT practice at schools, which, we hope, will shed new light on the understanding of the dynamics of this particular social practice: the ELT class at school.

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## **"Speech Acts and Politeness in Letters of Complaint"**

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### **Abstract**

A speaker is inevitably polite -or impolite- in different degrees. This is a phenomenon present in every speech act; then, polite expressions can be viewed as impolite by another culture. Owing to this differing view of courtesy, non-native speakers are always exposed to misunderstandings. As a contribution to the use of appropriate communicative forms, the present study exemplifies the realization of a set of speech acts in letters of complaint written by advanced students of English, following E. Olhstain and L. Weinbach (1993) who categorized the act of complaining in five realization patterns based on the degree of face- threat.

Politeness is a sociocultural phenomenon present in every speech event. A speaker is inevitably *polite*- or *impolite*- in different degrees. For example, in the speech act of complaining, the speaker can express displeasure or annoyance-censure, in a variety of fluent realizations. However, a speaker who may be considered *fluent*, may still lack *pragmatic competence* and thus be unable to produce language culturally and socially *appropriate* (Nash, 2006). As part of the research done for the Master's thesis of the author, the present study attempts to make a valuable contribution to the use of appropriate forms by following E. Olshtain and L. Weinbach's categorization of the speech act of complaining and exemplifying five realizations of complaining along a continuum (Kasper and Blum-

Kulka, 1993) in letters of complaint written to the Water Company (WC) by advanced students of English at the Profesorado Superior de Lenguas Vivas de Salta.

In the letter of complaint, the writer (*W*) verbalizes his disapproval of a violation on the part of the addressee (*A*), whom *W* considers, partially or entirely, responsible for an offensive action and, from his point of view, there are preconditions described so that the speech act of complaining takes place:

1. *A* performs a socially unacceptable act (*SUA*) that is contrary to a social code of behavioural norms shared by *W* and *A*.
2. *A* perceives the *SUA* as having unfavourable consequences for himself.
3. The verbal expression of *W* refers directly or indirectly to the *SUA* thus realizing the illocutionary force of censure.
4. *W* perceives the *SUA* as freeing in the sense that he expresses his frustration or annoyance, even though it may result in conflict (Leech, 1983), and gives *A* the right to repair the *SUA*.

Expressing censure or complaint is a face-threatening act (Brown and Levinson, 1987) and the writer makes choices considering the extent to which he will risk social advantages in order to correct a situation (Haverkate, 1994), for example, this is the case in which the WC is not offering the users a good service. *W* needs to judge the best way to achieve effective solution considering that the avoidance of complaining might ensure repair over a straightforward reproach. Thus, Olshtain and Weinbach (1993) enumerate *payoff considerations*, based on Brown and Levinson's description of the path of decision making (Brown and Levinson, 1987), in a series of what they call *three main junctures of decision-making steps*, which the writer faces before the actual realization of the act of censure takes place:

1. At the first juncture, the writer is considerate to the addressee; he refrains from expressing censure and opts out from performing the act. In the case of bad service, this would risk the possibility of repair and *W* might remain frustrated. The decision to write a letter of complaint is a way of verbalizing the problem (Riley and Mackiewicz, 2003). This option is not considered relevant for the present analysis.
2. At the second juncture, *W* may choose to carry out the act *on* or *off* record (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Off record may show evasion of censure and *W* will not explicitly mention either the *SUA* or *A*. For example, in the case of a letter to the WC, *W* may just express "Water is necessary for our daily life and I believe things will be done the right way" (see Sara G., Appendix). On record censure is stated in the third step.
3. At this stage, *W* may choose to realize the act *with* or *without* redress. If *W* does not choose redress, he will mention both the *SUA* and/or *A* as violator and the censure will take place with no mitigation. An example of this is when *W* insults *A*; thus provoking open conflict. If *W* chooses to use redress, he can follow two options: the positive politeness orientation or the negative politeness orientation. In the first case, *W* chooses to mention both the *SUA* and *A*, but he shows mutual concern and understanding, thus creating mitigation and avoiding real conflict. For example, Juan C. explains that "So there is an influx of excessive mineral content in the water which we need to investigate..." (see Juan C., Appendix). Even though he expresses the censure directly, he still shows consideration in that he uses *we* to show that they are cooperators and share responsibility (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In the second case, where the decision is negative politeness oriented, the

censure takes the form of a mitigated expression. For example, *Daniela A.* claims that there is a generator in front of her house that causes unpleasant noise, and ends the paragraph in this way: "Please clean up your mess and kindly move your generator to a location where it won't cause trouble to us or to other neighbours" (see *Daniela A., Appendix*), where the use of *please* and *kindly* soften the complaint and minimize the risk.

In their study of the act of complaining, Olhstain and Weinbach collected the data from 35 Israeli students, which led to the development of a five-point scale along a continuum for the perception of the severity of the complaint, based on the degree of face-threat that the writer is willing to assume when expressing censure. Examples of the different categories were observed in the letters of the advanced students of English to the Water Company.

The scale of complaining follows:

1. *Below the level of reproach*: *W* avoids offence or direct focus on *A*. According to the payoff considerations, *W* believes that there is *no* violation on the part of *A* regarding the *SUA*. As letters of complaint involve violation on another part, this case is not considered relevant for the present.
2. *Expression of annoyance or disapproval*: *W* expresses censure here but with no direct mention either of the *SUA* or of *A*. There is no open confrontation with *A* but the violation is clearly stated. Statements like "I would appreciate it if this situation could be solved as soon as possible" or "I respectfully request the courtesy of a reply..." (see *Carla R. and Anabella A., Appendix*) do not specify what was wrong and who was responsible, and *A* might ignore the illocutionary intent. However, in the letters to the WC, there is always responsibility on the part of the Company.
3. *Explicit complaint*: here *W* decides to use open face-threatening act toward *A* but not necessarily to initiate sanctions, and either the *SUA* or the *A*, or both, are mentioned. A good example of this category is "I remind you that it is the Company's responsibility to safeguard our health..." (See *Antonela P. Z., Appendix*)
4. *Accusation and warning*: *W* chooses to perform an open face-threatening act of complaint and anticipate sanctions against *A*. A good example of this is "I insist on explanations and...or I will be forced to take legal action." (see *Silvia. S., Appendix*)
5. *Immediate threat*: in this category *W* decides to openly attack *A*. Statements starting with "You'd better..." or "I warn you..." would be good examples of this but they were not found in the writings.

The situation in the letters from the advanced students denote social obligation (explicit/implicit contract) in which *A* is responsible for the *SUA* and so confer *W* more social power. Having analyzed the final paragraph in each of the twenty writings, this study provides -Table 1- partial results on the preference of *W* at the time of performing the act of complaining and suggesting what should be done.

Table 1

Strategy	W (+ P) A ( - P) (%)
Below level of reproach	-
Disapproval	20
Complaint	20
Warning	60
Threat	0
	100

W= writer, A= addressee, P= social power

To conclude, three junctures of decision making as a series of payoff considerations and a five point-scale reported by Olhstain and Weinbach have been developed in this paper. These features have been analyzed in the last paragraph of twenty letters of complaint from advanced students of English to the Water Company. The choice of the different categories at the time of expressing the complaint and what should be done proves that the learners prefer to use the *warning*. A good explanation of this may be that they know that there is social obligation on the part of the Company and so they do not need to focus on the use of polite expressions. However, it is evident that they avoid the *threat* – and, above all, the *insult* – which could violate the maxim of *tact* (Leech, 1983), lower the level of politeness as regards the social distance (Brown and Levinson, 1987) and so affect negotiation of their illocutionary speech acts of complaining (Fraser, 1990). Finally, when compared to letters of complaint from native speakers of the target language in the same situation, those of the learners appeared more offensive and more face-threatening, and, as a result, their overall choice of realization in the present situation was consistently closer to the most severe end of the scale.

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## Appendix

...

I assume that your service will be improved since I pay for it. I expect a good product. Water is necessary for our daily life and I believe things will be done the right way.

Yours faithfully,  
Sara G.

...

It has come to our attention that within recent weeks there has been an influx of excessive mineral content in our water, and that of other neighbors. Proof of that is the circle of mineral deposits in our pots, pans, bottles, glasses, etc. Our doctor has indicated that this mineral content may be bad for our health, particularly the kidneys which filter the water intake of our bodies.

So there is an influx of excessive mineral content in our water which we need to investigate and we will appreciate your urgent response to our plea.

Juan C.

...

At night, after your work is done, there is usually an intolerable amount of garbage, used pieces of cable, empty bags and trash that we have been forced to collect. This is not acceptable.

Please clean up your mess and kindly move your generator to a location where it won't cause trouble to us or to other neighbors.

Truly,

*Daniela A.*

...

For this reason I had to buy a water purifier to filter the water. It cost me \$70, and its installation, \$100. The total sum was \$170. But that wasn't all. My family had problems to cook, to bathe, to wash the dishes and clothes, to clean the house and, in general, to do the house-work.

I would appreciate it if this situation could be resolved as soon as possible.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours faithfully,

*Carla R.*

...

This lack of prompt answers is causing the accumulation of the water bubbling though the pavement in the main street of the neighbourhood, which makes it almost impossible to cross. Moreover, the danger to contract many illnesses has increased.

I respectfully request the courtesy of a reply and hope that I am kept apprised of action according to this complaint.

Yours faithfully,

*Anabella A.*

...

Even though your Water Company advertises "top quality", I have had many problems ever since I hired its services, and just to mention, problems with water pressure or recent sewage flood.

I remind you that it is the company's responsibility to safeguard our health. Consumption of this contaminated water increases the possibilities to get an illness. Taking into account that this is my third complaint letter, I hope you resolve this matter promptly.

Yours sincerely,

*Antonela P. Z.*

...

As you can imagine, I am extremely upset. I insist on explanations and a written apology from the operator or else I shall be forced to take legal action. I expect to hear from you as soon as possible.

Yours faithfully,

*Silvia S.*



## **“Teaching EFL or teaching ART?”**

CASTELLANI, ELADIA ANDREA

DABOVE, CLAUDIA NOEMÍ

COLUCCI, LUCIANA

PERROUD, MARÍA INÉS

SPOTO ZABALA, DANIELA

Bachillerato de Bellas Artes - Universidad Nacional de La Plata

### **Abstract**

This paper is the result of the joint project and research in English and French as Foreign Languages within the Foreign Language Department at the Bachillerato de Bellas Artes, UNLP. This project is being carried out with students that start 1<sup>st</sup> year at secondary school. Our proposal is inserted within the Institutional Theoretical Frame that is based on the Communicative Approach. Within this approach the axes we are working on are: Art, Music and Literature. Our Department has targeted this project on the principles of CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), focusing on learning strategies and the use of NTICS. Our aim is to find common strategies and methods within the Foreign Languages Approaches, incorporate English and French as essential and active languages included in students' main subjects, revise bibliography and edit our own material.

## **Project Basis**

### *Diagnosis and problems*

This project emerged as a way of finding common grounds on methodological criteria within English and French teaching and learning practices. As teachers of Foreign Languages we feel the need to look for our own materials because the material proposed at the market is neither suitable for our students' needs nor for ours. We considered the themes and subjects presented in books as disposable material. These contents were not rich enough for our students that are Art and Music specialists to be. We decided to look for contents that could be of interest to our students and could be part of their specialization. We followed the three axes within the School's Institutional Frame: Art, Music and Literature. Students analyze and decode these different languages in the same way as we intend to do with the Foreign Languages. We adopted the theoretical principles of CLIL (Content Language Integrated Learning) since this theoretical frame was the most suitable we found to back up our project. We considered that the teaching and learning of the Foreign Language at the same time of the specific content would be of great benefit for us and for our students. We really believe that our students can learn a foreign language through, with and within different artistic expressions. The choice of this methodology will help us develop learning strategies since it is an Institutional and particular need of the Department. We believe that students that start their first contact with the interpretations of different languages need to develop different strategies that will later be transferred to other subjects. Our aim is to develop metacognitive, cognitive and socioaffective strategies through our daily work focusing on content. We also propose the implementation of NTICs as a tool that enriches and helps our daily work. Students are helped by teachers to enter a platform that belongs to the University and there they will develop different tasks that will complement our face-to-face work. We really believe that the teaching and learning based on relevant contents, the focus on developing learning strategies and the complement of technology will help our students develop their foreign languages and feel motivated to learn and investigate, learning to use and decode different languages at the same time.

## **Theoretical background**

CLIL (Content Language Integrated Learning) was coined for the first time at the University of Finland in 1994 to refer to methods in which subjects are taught through the foreign language following a dual purpose: the teaching and learning of content and the foreign language at the same time. Why has CLIL become the main teaching paradigm change in the XXI century? Globalization has redefined the concept of native speaker all over the world. Technology and the extended use of English as a lingua franca have modified the purpose of learning English as a foreign language. English is taught to be used; it is included within other areas. The point is: are we going to focus on the Foreign language or on content? The aim is to find a balance between both. We know as foreign language teachers that we generally base our curriculums mainly on grammar and certain skills or abilities that do not help our students develop strategies for their real needs. Our students have a strong need to master contents that will form them as specialists on different interpretation of languages. If our students can master the foreign language they will be able to learn content and the same will happen inversely. Our aim is to form a profile of student that can decode different systems of language, including the foreign languages.

Following Stoller (2002), we will follow four axes: a) teaching and learning will integrate the foreign languages and the content naturally; b) the methods to acquire the foreign languages will improve and benefit the learning of contents; c) different techniques will be used to grade the complexity of tasks; d) the curriculum has to present coherent methods to achieve these aims.

### **Main Aims**

- To revise and look for new bibliography related to the teaching and learning of foreign languages.
- Discuss and consider different and new paradigms in the teaching and learning of foreign languages.
- Revise and analyze the methods used in classes.
- Exchange and discuss different teaching and learning theories in the foreign languages within the Department.
- Come to an agreement on methodological procedures.
- Introduce and systematize NTics in the classroom.
- Produce and edit our own working material.
- Publish our material.

### **Secondary Aims**

- Follow and adopt CLIL principles in the teaching and learning of foreign languages: cognition, community, content and communication.
- Incorporate the content systematically to the teaching and learning of foreign languages.
- Consider and treat the contents and the linguistic exponents of the foreign languages as having the same importance.
- Contribute from the teaching and learning of the foreign languages to the conceptual formation of students as decoders of different artistic expressions.
- Relate Art, Music and Literature with the specific cultures of the foreign languages.
- Foster group and collaborative work.
- Foster autonomous learning.

- Change students' expectations as regards the learning of foreign languages.
- Foster the use and implementation of NTics in the classroom.
- Stress the use of learning strategies to be transferred to other subjects.

## Expected Outcome

We really believe that this project will integrate the Foreign Languages to the Institutional curriculum and that it will also change our students' expectations and views about learning a foreign language. The Foreign Language is integrated within the curriculum and it is the means to learn new contents. We hope our students can learn different languages, incorporate the use of technology and transfer all their learning and skills to other content areas. Our expectations lie in forming a student that can integrate all his/her knowledge and use it wisely and critically.

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## **“Teaching young learners- A risk or a challenge?”**

VALENTI, VIVIANA

### **Abstract**

As we all know, there is a subtle distinction between knowing and believing. And although proof is essential for a supposition or belief to become knowledge, teachers cannot avoid getting trapped by beliefs. Some of them even become myths in the long run. Such is the case of *children learn a foreign language only by understanding messages, children will start producing when they are ready for it, little children cannot work in pairs, kids are more difficult to teach than older students*. Probably, these and other similar statements may hold some truth but this does not speak of their truthfulness. In the particular case of young learners, input-driven theories, such as Krashen's Monitor Model can be said to be partly responsible for the survival of some of the beliefs stated above. What's more, the impact of theories that advocate for acquisition and minimize the role of learning has become noticeable in the language teaching field, even when the words *teacher* and *teaching* have been left aside.

This paper will not aim at proving the validity of any statement in particular but it will aim at defying some of them. A good starting point, if you want to join in this enterprise, will be to distrust your own beliefs so that you can momentarily free yourself from their influence and be open to value other ways of approaching the teaching of young learners in a foreign context. In other words, it will be a question of *giving the ideas below the benefit of the doubt*.

### ***Little children are more difficult to teach than older ones***

I do believe that what makes a group more difficult to teach is not necessarily its age. Every single age group will have its own characteristics. And this does not only account for the broad distinction among children, adolescents and adults but also for the differences existing within each age group. If you have taught four, five, six or seven-year old children, you will agree that a year of difference makes a *world* of differences. Then, where does the difficulty lie?

A good starting point is to ask ourselves a basic question – *How well informed am I about what characterizes a young child?* Children of the same age think and behave in similar ways just because they are growing and undergoing the same stages of development. Therefore, being acquainted with such features will position teachers better to take decisions and make methodological choices that will affect both the way in which the group will behave and respond and the effectiveness with which learning will take place. Facilitating learning, thus, will not be a simple matter of deciding what and how to teach but mainly of knowing how learners are intellectually equipped, emotionally predisposed and socially and culturally shaped to respond. Definitely, the difficulties that may be encountered when teaching little children (and why not any other age group) will depend on the extent to which we understand our roles as teachers as forming part of a broader one – that of educators. In other words, how much we may enhance learning will depend on the extent to which we consider the learner as a whole.

For practical reasons, I will group features into those that explain how young learners *behave* and those that determine the way in which they *learn*. Probably, and I believe this is the case of most inexperienced teachers, there is a greater concern about the latter. English teachers feel responsible largely for planning, i.e. selecting or devising techniques that may appeal to their students and promote learning. We cannot deny that teaching in a language that is not our own or the students' poses a great challenge. Thus, there is this feeling that we must call our students' attention and motivate them if we are to succeed.

Then, what features should we take into account and how can they affect our choices? Below I have considered what I believe are the main characteristics and I am suggesting some possible applications. Your task will be to expand both of them.

<b>Children are positive about learning</b>	<b>SO</b>	-If the activities you choose are stimulating in themselves, if they create expectations, give the students opportunities to make contributions and feel satisfied, you will be contributing to this positive attitude. Tip: TPR, music, games, stories should not be missing in <i>any</i> of your lessons.
<b>Children have a vivid imagination</b>	<b>SO</b>	<p>-When telling stories do not use visual aids so fast. Before starting (warm up), let the students imagine what the characters are like, where they are, how they are feeling, what they are doing. Having an initial mental image will help them check their predictions while listening. At the same time you will be setting a good purpose for listening.</p> <p>-Do not tell or end the stories so fast. Once again let them make predictions and create expectations. They need to generate stories in their minds and confirm them.</p>

<b>Children can reason and plan activities</b>	<b>SO</b>	-Do not anticipate answers or solve their problems so fast. Just guide them to find solutions by themselves. Provide good scaffolding and avoid being teacher-centred. This applies to any moment of the lesson.
<b>Children cannot distinguish fact from fiction.</b>	<b>SO</b>	-Be ready to produce unexpected objects from unexpected places. Kids will have fun and they will also be ready to make their own fantastic contributions. Exploit this feature whenever possible (when playing games, telling stories). Remember that young children rely more on their narrative thought than on their scientific thought. (Bruner)
<b>Children have a very short span of attention and concentration</b>	<b>SO</b>	-Vary techniques constantly. The younger the student the more activities you will need. This does not mean making abrupt changes. A slight modification will do. E.g. If you are working with a semantic area like school objects you can – give orders for the students to touch, give orders for the students to make the corresponding gesture when they listen to the word, do lip reading, guess the object when you make a gesture, guess which object is missing by hiding the picture
<b>Children love having fun</b>	<b>SO</b>	-Having fun is not equivalent to playing games. Enjoyment will not depend on how stimulating the activity might be but on how the student will get engaged in it. But all the students are different. So make recourse to their multiple intelligences. Revise your activities and check that you are making recourse to the student's visual-spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, verbal-linguistic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalistic and logical-mathematical intelligences.

So far so good, but there is more to take into account. Haven't you ever noticed that young learners become more riotous when the Spanish teacher leaves the classroom and we come in? What is it that students perceive that tells them they can behave differently? It is here where we must stop to reflect. Planning, introducing variety to stimulate children, taking into account individual differences is only part of the issue of teaching. What is difficult is not so much devising what to do but implementing it in the classroom. The question to ask ourselves now is - *What should I know about children so as to control them better and generate an atmosphere that can promote learning?*

If I had to choose among all the many features that characterize children, I would centre on the following: children cannot view the world in the way an adult does; they do not have decided views of the world; they are very self-centered; they know that the world is governed by rules; they may have feelings but are unaware of what causes them; they can talk about what they are doing, what they have done or heard, argue for something and give their opinion; they can understand direct human interaction.

These features can explain why some little children may interrupt you just to tell you that their dog made wee-wee in their bedroom, or why they start crying without any obvious reason, why they move to a corner or start doing anything they want without caring, why they refuse to share their belongings and get angry if they have to. And these are just a few examples. What makes matters worse is that several of these types of behaviour may take place simultaneously driving the teacher crazy. The teacher may experience this unpleasant feeling of not knowing where to start, who to pay attention to first, and if successful, how to resume the



activity that was interrupted. Children are lovely, children are sweet and daring, but when we are managing a bunch we may be overwhelmed by unrest and distress.

It is here where our role as educators comes into being. Children are not only learning a foreign language but they are learning how to belong to the adult world and behave in it. They will have to abandon their self-centered world to be able to see themselves from the point of view of others. Therefore, we are responsible for making the classroom a safe place, a place where children want to belong, but at the same time a place where everybody is heard when appropriate, a place where feelings are considered when there is no overacting, a place where individual space and rights are permanently redimensioned by taking into account those of others. As I see it, the only way of managing this age group is by working on rules from the very beginning. I always say that it takes young children only 20 seconds to realize the kind of person you are and decide how to behave. They just need to trespass the first limit (any) and check your body posture, your gestures, hear your tone of voice to evaluate how strict or lenient you might be. Only 20 seconds is enough. That's it!

Working on rules, therefore, should be a priority during the first month. It does not matter how much English will be learned during this period but how well children will learn to work on their attitudes and behaviour. A good working atmosphere needs to be redefined as that where there is a high degree of motivation and engagement as well as respect and order.

Here are some tips to help you create it.

- Before the year begins, **generate your own list of rules**, which of course should comply with those of the institution where you work. Remember that rules do not respond to a mere code of behaviour but are supported by social, moral, religious beliefs. These ones will be observed in the way students line up, enter the classroom, sit down, greet each other, take turns, apologize, ask for permission, respect property, respect their peers.
- **Introduce rules openly** in the first weeks. A good idea is to have simple pictures illustrating them (a child greeting, a hand up, etc).
- **Enforce rules.** Call your student's attention whenever a rule is broken. Effectiveness will depend on your quick reaction. Do not interrupt the class but just let the child know that you have noticed he is not respecting a rule. Pointing quickly at your (rule) pictures may sometimes be enough.
- **Encourage your students when they obey rules.** Appreciate but do not reward their good behaviour. They should not learn that they can get things in return if they obey. Obeying is just part of the social contract established in the classroom.

### ***Children will start producing when they are ready for it***

Let's challenge the idea behind this statement. According to input-driven theories children need to be exposed to the language and understand it in order to acquire it. This implies undergoing a silent period before they start to produce. The question here is, *will this work in a context where English is a foreign language that is not spoken outside the classroom?* I believe that, in our situation, relying so much on input will not be enough. What I am suggesting is that, together with input, we should encourage students to produce. But be careful because by producing I do not mean imitating but making contributions in meaningful contexts. Here



goes an example in connection with story telling.

➤ **Analyse the script provided by the book.**

(Pict 1) Queen: A little seed

(Pict 2) Queen: Oh! A little turnip!

(Pict 3) Queen: Oh! A big turnip!

(Pict 4) Queen: Oh. A great big turnip, a great big enormous turnip!

(Pict 5) Queen: Oh dear! King! King! Help! Come and pull up the turnip!

King: Hello, Queen. Ooh, eeh, ehh (They pull at the turnip)

➤ **Improve the level of input** by making sure that what the characters say contain *repeated patterns* and language that can be reproduced by the students. Add a narrator who will speak at a higher linguistic level and add some of the key words to the character lines

**Narrator:** *This is the story of a queen and a little plant. Look at the queen! She's in the garden. Look at the seed! It's small.*

Queen: *Oh! A little seed. My seed is small. It's very small*

**Narrator:** *Look at the queen. She's in the garden. Look at the plant! It's small.*

Queen: *Oh! A little plant. A little turnip!. My plant is small. It's very small*

The repetition of patterns and key words will give the students more opportunities to recycle new information in their short term memory and it will help them become confident to make contributions later on.

➤ **Decide all the gestures you will use for every single statement or key word.**

Remember that a good story is told with the body.

➤ **Tell the story using gestures and good intonation.** Enjoy telling it. Students will not like what you don't like. Feel confident by rehearsing it in advance.

➤ **Tell the story in the next three consecutive lessons.** This is the key! Do not tell the story just once. Just set new purposes for the students to listen to it. Students will not mind when they like the story. Every time you tell it rely on the gestures and keep silent, thus, gently inviting the students to fill in the gaps. Increase the number of silent moments gradually. You will notice that children will start producing. Some will even tell you most of the story.

Like in the story above, plant your little seed and enjoy watching it grow. It is the most rewarding part of being a teacher!

**"Technology doesn't bite:**

**How computers and the internet can help to enhance your  
teaching and brush up your language skills"**

ARRARÁS, PAMELA V.

**Abstract**

There used to be a time in which teachers of English in Argentina had very limited options when it came to professional development. Geographical as well as monetary limitations made the number of workshops, conferences, journals and other field-specific information available to teachers quite scarce. Today, thanks to technology and the web, all this has changed. This paper aims at providing teachers with an overview of the possibilities that these new tools and resources have to offer, and suggesting a process that teachers can use to plan their own informal professional development by means of these new technologies.

**Teacher Training vs. Teacher Development**

In order to get a realistic idea of what to expect from the resources and tools included in this article, it is necessary to define what professional development is as compared to teacher training. The purpose of this distinction is not to say that it is not possible for teachers to receive training through the new technologies available, but to establish that teacher development, not training, is the goal of this article and the resources presented here.

Training refers to *activities directly focused on a teacher's present responsibilities and is typically aimed at short-termed, immediate goals. It involves understanding of basic concepts and principles as a prerequisite for applying them to teaching and the ability to demonstrate principles and practices in the classroom* (Richards & Farrell 2005, p. 4). Training can take many shapes, but mostly we

connect the word with either pre-service training, such as obtaining a degree in EFL; or in-service training, such as it could be organized by a school for their staff.

Development, on the other hand, refers to *general growth not focused on a specific job. It serves longer-term goals and seeks to facilitate growth of teachers' understanding of teaching and themselves as teachers. It often involves examining different dimensions of a teacher's practice as a basis for reflective review* (Richards & Farrell 2005, p.5). It is in my opinion a much broader term than training: "development" might mean something very different to a teacher depending on his/her years of experience, degree of formal training received, place of work, etc. (check rephrasing – quotation still needed?)

Teacher development is in most cases a "bottom-up" process, in that it is started by the individual and not an organization, following the teacher's needs to improve themselves as professionals. This is certainly the case for many EFL teachers in Argentina, who have limited opportunities for professional development sessions organized and/or funded by their employers, and who have to be creative in order to continue learning with little money, little time, and little guidance. It is with the needs of those teachers in mind (myself being one of them) that the workshop at FAAPI 2009 was designed.

This paper offers a summarized version of a possible "action plan" to be used along with the new technologies and resources suggested and listed here. A companion website can be found at [www.pamelaarraras.com.ar/faapi2009](http://www.pamelaarraras.com.ar/faapi2009) with all the links, including the Powerpoint presentation slides and a downloadable copy of the "Action Plan Worksheet".

## **Introduction to the Action Plan**

There are basically four steps to this action plan:

1. Identify your professional development needs: What do you want to learn? The following list contains suggested areas of improvement to brainstorm ideas and find a starting place. Choose one, or many, or even add some of your own. The areas included can fit into one or more categories too.
  - 1) Subject matter knowledge: areas that involve skills specific to *language* teaching.
    - i. Language
      - 1) Skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening)
      - 2) Grammar
      - 3) Vocabulary
      - 4) Discourse
      - 5) Pronunciation
      - 6) Second Language Acquisition
      - 7) Linguistics
      - 8) Cultural background information: history, literature, geography, etc.
      - 9) Intercultural awareness.
    - ii. Methodology
      - 1) Communicative approach
      - 2) Task Based learning
      - 3) Computer Assisted Learning
      - 4) Content and Language Integrated Learning
    - iii. Curriculum/materials development. Syllabus design.
    - iv. Assessment, evaluation & testing
  - 2) Pedagogical expertise: specializations and ability to teach different areas or skills *within* language teaching.
    - i. ESP (English for Specific Purposes)

- ii. EAP (English for Academic Purposes)
    - iii. International Exams: TOEFL, GRE, FCE, IELTS, CPE, etc.
    - iv. Teaching young learners/teenagers/adults.
    - v. Becoming a teacher trainer.
    - vi. Learning more about program management.
  - 3) Self awareness: principles, values, strengths and weaknesses. For Non-native English teachers, it also includes issues such as beliefs about our roles, capabilities and language skills.
  - 4) Understanding of learners:
    - i. Learning styles
    - ii. Multiple intelligences
    - iii. Grouping techniques: pairwork, groupwork, etc.
    - iv. Motivation
    - v. Discipline
    - vi. Classroom interaction.
2. Establish goals for your professional development activities: What do want to do with that knowledge? Possible goals are:
- 1) Publishing an article for an electronic journal such as: The Internet TESL Journal (<http://iteslj.org/>), TEFL.net (<http://edition.tefl.net/>), or TESL-EJ (<http://tesl-ej.org>).
  - 2) Reviewing books for online journals such as the ones already mentioned. For guidance on how to do that, read the Reviewer's Guide at <http://www.tefl.net/reviews/reviewers-guide.htm>, and the Book Review Policy at <http://tesl-ej.org/revpolicy.html>.
  - 3) Making a PowerPoint presentation and share it online at [www.scribd.com](http://www.scribd.com)
  - 4) Writing your own blog or electronic journal. Use [www.edublogs.org](http://www.edublogs.org) to host your page, as they have superb support and a community of educators who help each other a lot. If you have a Hotmail or Gmail e-mail account, use GoogleSites or WindowsLive Spaces which are included in your account.
  - 5) Designing activities and materials for your students and sharing them online at places such as <http://a4esl.org>. Find the instructions to designing quizzes for them at: <http://a4esl.org/t.html>.
  - 6) Preparing a "virtual workshop" for your peers by making a slideshow with audio and uploading it to [www.YouTube.com](http://www.YouTube.com) or [www.TeacherTube.com](http://www.TeacherTube.com).
3. Choose tools to help you organize all the information and resources that you will collect during the process. Navigating the web seems easy but it is full of digressions and distractions. To avoid that, the following tools can be of use:
- 1) Get an e-mail account. You will need it if you want to subscribe to newsletters, open account with interesting sites that allow you to download materials, etc. My suggestion is to get a Gmail account ([www.gmail.com](http://www.gmail.com)), since it includes many other services that may come in handy, such as a free website, etc.
  - 2) Bookmark pages that you find useful to a social bookmarking account such as <http://del.icio.us> or [www.diigo.com](http://www.diigo.com). I recommend Diigo as it has a version for educators (available at <http://www.diigo.com/education>) and also teachers can join groups that share their interests (see Group search engine at <http://groups.diigo.com/>). Active groups include: Classroom2.0 and Resources for Languages. For an explanation of what social bookmarking is, watch the video called "Social Bookmarking in Plain English" at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x66IV7GOcNU>
  - 3) Subscribe to different blogs and RSS feeds so that you don't have to come back to a blog to see if the author has published something new. Good RSS aggregators are: Google Reader, Netvibes, and Bloglines. I

suggest GoogleReader, as it is the most user-friendly of the three. For an introduction to RSS and subscribing to blogs, watch the video "RSS in Plain English" at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0klqLsSxGsU&feature=channel>.

- 4) Download iTunes or similar audio players that allow subscribing to podcasts. A description of what podcasting is, along with a list of useful podcasts to listen to connected to EFL can be found at: <http://pamelaarraras.com.ar/tesol2009/podcasts-for-cpd>. Podcasts can also be downloaded to an mp3 player or sometimes even cell phones.

4. Decide on tools, sites and gadgets to help you achieve that goal. The ones mentioned above are just a few; for a more comprehensive list and ideas according to the objectives and goals chosen, go to [www.pamelaarraras.com.ar/faapi2009](http://www.pamelaarraras.com.ar/faapi2009).

### **The Action Plan in Detail: Finding resources for development online**

Once decided on the areas for professional development, the next task is to find places where we can get information or start learning about them. Although it is possible to start by "googling" some keywords, I have found that after an initial search, the best thing to do is to explore some good websites in detail, especially if they have a "Links" or "Resources" section that can lead to other useful sites.

Online resources can be mostly divided into those that are "self-access" resources such as an online e-book (See Project Gutenberg); and those that involve interaction with peers, facilitators and other experts by means of synchronous or asynchronous communication. One of the most important sources of synchronous interaction is that of webinars. The list below includes places where you can look for future webinars available, as well as recordings of past webinars. Regarding asynchronous interaction, one of the most powerful opportunities for development is that of social networks. Ning is a social network platform that allows teachers to interact asynchronously with fellow educators who share their same interests. The list below includes some examples of networks that have been created for EFL teachers. You need to sign up to access the content, as they are not open to the general public to prevent spam messages and other inconveniences.

Make sure you subscribe to any newsletters or mailing lists they might have in connection to your area of interest. The following is a small list of EFL sites that can help with an initial search. All sites are free.

#### **Journals & Databases**

<http://tesl-ej.org>

<http://www.jalt-publications.org/jj/archive/> Japan Association of Language Teachers' Journal

<http://iteslj.org/> The Internet TESL Journal

<http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/~tesl-l/> - Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages mailing list.

<http://www.eric.ed.gov> The Education Resources Information Center database. Make sure you check the option "Full text availability" on the advanced search to find complete materials.

<http://oro.open.ac.uk/> Open Research Online is the Open University's repository of research publications and other research outputs. It is an Open Access resource that can be searched and browsed freely by members of the public.

[http://www.asian-efl-journal.com/subject\\_matter.php](http://www.asian-efl-journal.com/subject_matter.php) Asian EFL Journal Archive

#### **EFL Teachers Communities and Portals:**

<http://www.britishcouncil.org/eltecs> The English Language Teaching Contacts Scheme is an information-sharing and teacher development network. Through

ELTeCS, ELT professionals can make new contacts, share information, build their knowledge, and create partnerships.

<http://eflclassroom.ning.com/>

<http://efluniversity.ning.com/>

<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/>

<http://cuentacuentos.ning.com/> (Storytelling for language learning)

[http://www.wikieducator.org/Professional\\_Development/Integrating\\_Technology/EF\\_L](http://www.wikieducator.org/Professional_Development/Integrating_Technology/EF_L)

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/>

<http://www.cambridge.org/elt/resources/appliedlinguistics/>

#### Webinars

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/marketplace/webinars/webinars.html>

<http://www.pbs.org/teachers/webinar/archive.html>

<http://www.schoolsmovingup.net/cs/smu/print/htdocs/smu/webinars/upcoming.htm>

<http://www.learner.org/resources/series201.html?pop=yes&pid=2108#>

<http://www.teachertrainingvideos.com/>

<http://community.discoveryeducation.com/>

#### Websites to develop your language skills

<http://www.librarything.com/> Online bookclubs

<http://librivox.org/> Free audiobooks in English

[http://www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](http://www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Main_Page) Huge archive of free downloadable books (all legal!)

<http://www.forvo.com/> hear the words pronounced by native speakers

[http://www.cambridge.org/elt/resources/skills/pron\\_podcasts.htm](http://www.cambridge.org/elt/resources/skills/pron_podcasts.htm) Words alive: Pronunciation podcast

<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/transform/teachers/specialist-areas/pronunciation/websites-discussion-lists> Pronunciation Websites & Discussion Lists

#### Websites with authentic videos

Movie Image Archive - <http://www.archive.org/details/movies>

PBS - <http://www.pbs.org/video/>

Teacher Tube - <http://www.teachertube.com/>

Biography - <http://www.biography.com/video/index.jsp>

CNN Student News - <http://www.cnn.com/studentnews/>

Animal Planet - <http://animal.discovery.com/videos/>

Teachers TV - <http://www.teachers.tv/>

EduTube - <http://www.edutube.org/>

Free TV Channels: Education section -

<http://www.tvchannelsfree.com/channels/5/Education>

Teachers Domain - <http://www.teachersdomain.org/>

Online Videos for Language Development -

<http://nikpeachey.blogspot.com/2008/12/online-video-for-language-development.html>

Software & info on how to download videos:

VDownloader - <http://download.cnet.com/VDownloader/>

3000-2071\_4-10888393.html?tag=mncol

You Tube Downloader - <http://youtubedownload.altervista.org/>

OneStop English guide on how to download & upload a video -

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/section.asp?catid=59960&docid=156001>

## **Conclusion**

This article has intended to give teachers a very shallow overview of what the possibilities for professional development are when it comes to the new web 2.0. In the XXI century teachers cannot afford to stay behind. Our students are using podcasts, mp3 players and uploading content and videos to the web; as professionals we cannot pass on this opportunity to use all these free resources to our and our students' advantage. Let the adventure begin!

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## **“Using Young Adult Fiction in the Classroom”**

DE ANGELIS, ALEJANDRO

### **Abstract**

Young Adult Fiction has become a well-established genre in the past decades thanks to the contribution of a number of authors whose work relates to teenagers in a more relevant way than classic literature does. By exposing adolescent readers to the same literary features that adult literature does, YAF relates to teenagers in a meaningful way, mainly through the authenticity of characters who they find identifiable, like the ones in contemporary novels such as *Twilight*, *Gossip Girl* and *Teacher's Dead*. Thus in this paper I will address the status of YAF today by providing both a theoretical framework and examples.

### **What the Term Young Adult Fiction (YAF) Implies**

The present phenomenal success of the *Twilight Saga*, the *Gossip Girl Series* and Pottermania, which fall into the category YAF, is not in fact a new invention. The classification of fiction as Young Adult was first adopted about the time when the novel *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton was published (1967). The term refers to fiction written, published and marketed for adolescent readers; consequently, such classification has been a useful tool for adults ever since, as they are often in charge of deciding on the appropriacy of texts aimed at a young audience.

Sagas, series, television novelizations, book tie-ins, coming of age and fantasy novels ... Teenagers connect to these works of fiction better than to classic literature since they are presented in a context they are familiar with and themes are embodied in characters whose interests they relate to. Furthermore, the recurrent themes which good YAF deals with, such as alienation, sex, alcohol and drugs, death, friendship and family, are meaningful vehicles for adolescents to experience literature as a record of human experience since they are featured in stories that they can identify with.

Classic adult fiction tends to demotivate students because of its complexity (syntax and vocabulary, intricacies of plot and subplot, use of multiple characters, geographical settings and historical references), but according to Leila Christenbury (2000;17), *there is rarely this kind of struggle with young adult literature. The compressed plot, the limited number of characters, and the length of the works themselves distinguish YA lit from classic literature and make it more accesible and often more immediately understandable. In addition, the focus on a young adult protagonist with issuses and concerns that engage and resonate with readers of that age ensures that many works of YA lit find a ready home with adolescents.* Therefore, good YAF offers adolescents a selection of high quality literature tailored-made to the needs of a young reader.

### The Young Adult Novel in the Classroom

Richard Peck, author of a number of novels for adolescents such as *Are You in the House Alone?* (1976) and *Close Enough to Touch* (1981), proposes a series of questions to elicit reader response from students in an innovative way once they have finished reading a YA piece.

Question	Ulterior Motive	Example*
What would this story be like if the main character were of the opposite sex?	To discuss why the author has given the protagonist a specific gender to express viewpoint.	Would a girl deal with facial disfigurement the same way that Martin does in <i>Face</i> ?
Why is this story set where it is (not <i>what</i> is the setting)?	To consider the setting as a recognizable trapping used to draw the reader into the action.	What makes the East End of London an appropriate place setting for <i>Face</i> ?
If you were to film this story, what characters would you eliminate if you couldn't use them all?	To compare the variety of characters in a novel with the necessary simplification of film.	What minor characters would you eliminate in a film version of <i>Face</i> ? Why?
Would you film this story in black and white or in colour?	To approach atmosphere and tone.	Would you film <i>Face</i> , a story about 'facialists', in black and white?
How is the main character different from you?	To get readers to identify with the protagonist.	How are you different from Martin? Would you excuse Natalie's selfish attitude?
Why would or wouldn't this story make a good TV series?	To contrast the structure of plot.	Would you break up the plot of <i>Face</i> in the same way it is written for a TV series?
What's one thing in this story that's happened to you?	To elicit an anecdotal response from readers that draws them to the book.	Have you ever taken part in a sporting event like Martin?
Reread the first paragraph of Chapter 1. What's in it that makes you want to read on?	To analyse how the author engages readers to read on the book.	What does Zephaniah anticipate when he opens <i>Face</i> by using quotes from the characters?
If you had to design a new cover for this book, what would it look like?	To consider the paratext outside the book.	How would you design the book cover of <i>Face</i> to be used in high schools as a class reader?

What does the title tell you about the book? Does it tell you the truth?	To connect the title of the book with its plot and themes.	What does the book title <i>Face</i> reveal about the novel?
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\*The sample questions in the last column are based on Zephaniah's *Face*.

Putting forward questions like these is a meaningful way of reaching out to young readers, as the story becomes an excellent vehicle for addressing critical literacy (including literary terminology like theme, diction, style, characterization and point of view) and exploring imagination. Students are provided with a perspective on universal themes such as self-sacrifice and the search of identity and they are offered opportunities to explore the motives and actions of the protagonists.

### Using *Twilight* in the Classroom

Stephenie Meyer is undoubtedly one of the leading writers of literature for adolescents at present. Her novel *Twilight* (2005), the tale of star-crossed lovers Bella and Edward, a human girl and a vampire, has won readers all over the world, turning the books in the saga into the best-selling novels since the publication of the last installment in the *Harry Potter Saga*.

The novel shares elements of both coming of age and fantasy stories, appealing to adolescents in a number of ways. The main female character, for instance, embodies an ordinary teenager who faces the same situations and conflicts that most teens do regardless of the supernatural elements featured in the novel. Moreover, according to psychologist Beatriz Goldberg, adolescents feel connected to vampires since they represent a forbidden world of eroticism, which resonates in teenagers' own sexual awakening and the restrictions imposed by adults. Vampires are transgressors who exist in two worlds, the one of the dead and the one of the living; teenagers also wish to break down the barrier which imposes a given order to create one of their own. In a symbolic way, vampires cannot see their own reflection in mirrors, thus making adolescents relate to that when their bodies start to change and they find it hard to recognize themselves. Finally, the setting of the novel is attractive to teenagers indeed since most of the action takes place in a school, where the ordinary becomes extraordinary for Bella when she meets the Cullens. It is a place setting that adolescents are familiar with but which is revisited in an enticing way.

The following excerpts, together with the corresponding scenes of the film version, may be used to address point of view when using the novel as a class reader:

*It was absolutely silent for one long second before the screaming began. In the abrupt bedlam, I could hear more than one person shouting my name. But more clearly than all the yelling, I could hear Edward Cullen's low, frantic voice in my ear. "Bella? Are you all right?"*

*"I'm fine." My voice sounded strange. I tried to sit up, and realized he was holding me against the side of his body in an iron grasp.*

*"Be careful," he warned as I struggled. "I think you hit your head pretty hard." I became aware of a throbbing ache centered above my left ear.*

*"Ow," I said, surprised.*

*"That's what I thought." His voice, amazingly, sounded like he was suppressing laughter.*

*"How in the ..." I trailed off, trying to clear my head, get my bearings. "How did you get over here so fast?"*

*"I was standing next to you, Bella," he said, his tone serious again. Twilight.*  
Chapter 3 Phenomenon

*The first fear was the greatest fear. As the screaming of the witnesses erupted around us, I leaned down to examine her face, to see if she was conscious—hoping fiercely that she was not bleeding anywhere.*

*Her eyes were open, staring in shock.*

*"Bella?" I asked urgently. "Are you all right?"*

*"I'm fine." She said the words automatically in a dazed voice.*

*Relief, so exquisite it was nearly pain, washed through me at the sound of her voice. I sucked in a breath through my teeth, and did not mind the accompanying burn in my throat. I almost welcomed it.*

*She struggled to sit up, but I was not ready to release her. It felt somehow...safer? Better, at least, having her tucked into my side.*

*"Be careful," I warned her. "I think you hit your head pretty hard."*

*There had been no smell of fresh blood—a mercy, that—but this did not rule out internal damage. I was abruptly anxious to get her to Carlisle and a full compliment of radiology equipment.*

*"Ow," she said, her tone comically shocked as she realized I was right about her head.*

*"That's what I thought." Relief made it funny to me, made me almost giddy.*

*"How in the..." Her voice trailed off, and her eyelids fluttered. "How did you get over here so fast?"*

*The relief turned sour, the humor vanished. She had noticed too much.*

*Now that it appeared that the girl was in decent shape, the anxiety for my family became severe.*

*"I was standing right next to you, Bella." I knew from experience that if I was very confident as I lied, it made any questioner less sure of the truth.*

*Midnight Sun. Chapter 3 Phenomenon*

These excerpts offer readers a unique experience to analyse point of view since the author provides here the same account told by the two protagonists in different books. On the one hand, Bella and Edward's feelings for each other are fully explored, making readers aware of their intentions with every word they utter as they follow the characters' thoughts in detail. For example, when Bella shows that she is feeling pain because of the concussion, Edward seems to suppress laughter to her, which she finds amazing; this is clarified to readers when they read his version and discover that it is a silly, happy feeling of relief which is making him react that way. On the other hand, the same dialogue can be read in two ways, thus analysing the implications and repercussions of the protagonists' actions, particularly Edward's, as he has exposed himself to Bella as an unusual person. The film adaptation was shot bearing the text in mind but lacks the detail of emotions shared by the characters. The scene becomes a bland reenactment of the words written by Meyer, without capturing any of its depth but just the gist of the story.

### ***Gossip Girl: The Age of Innocence Revisited***

The acclaimed *Gossip Girl Series* by Cecily Von Ziegesar is an excellent choice of YAF to bridge the gap between the classics and modern readers. The first book in the series, *Gossip Girl* (2003), may be a suitable alternative to introduce readers to the world of New York's upper-classes when being assigned to read, for instance, Edith Warthon's *The Age of Innocence* (1920).

As regards similarities, both stories are set in the same city, New York, and feature a female protagonist, Countess Olenska in Warthon's novel and Serena van der Woodsen in Von Ziegesar's, who become the object of desire of men and the source of gossip and envy of the women belonging to Manhattan's elite. Both of them return to New York after a scandal has kept them away from their inner circle of friends and have to face the judgement of their peers. A love triangle between

the protagonist, a close female friend and her fiancé is also featured in the two novels, thus making the connection between the stories natural, necessary and workable.

Students will surely find *Gossip Girl* (2003) relevant to their own reality: the intertextuality of the novel mixes electronic messages, blogs and first person accounts by an unknown narrator who calls herself Gossip Girl and oversees the action taking place in the story. Many of the pages of the novel are published following the format of webpage, with phrases like 'sightings' and 'your e-mail' together with Gossip Girl's comments. This allows for a multiplicity of points of view and rich character development, which may engage readers to consider the themes of the novel, as they are reexamined when reading *The Age of Innocence* (1920). The first episodes of Season One of the television series *Gossip Girl*, based on Von Siegersar's first book, can also work as a trigger to discuss Warthon's novel by comparing and contrasting characters, themes and plot. It may also be thought-provoking to ask students to discuss the simplification and alterations made to the novel in order to turn it into a TV show; in this way students will be able to rise up in defense of their favourite characters, who add texture to the book but might end up being eliminated in the process of adaptation.

### **Teacher's Dead: Current Issues Today**

Benjamin Zephaniah's novels provide young readers with simple diction, dynamic characters and relevant issues to teenagers like bullying, peer pressure and prejudices. Such is the case of *Teacher's Dead* (2007), whose main character, Jackson Jones, becomes a victim of bullying at school as he sets out to understand why two fellow students have murdered a teacher in cold blood. As the plot of the novel develops, the mystery is unravelled and a number of issues, mainly prejudices about people's backgrounds, are explored.

In order to analyse the novel from a different perspective, the paratext both inside and outside the book may work as the trigger to foster critical thinking strategies. For instance, thematic anticipation based on the illustration on the book cover (two adolescents walking away, a briefcase and a pool of blood) and the information printed in the blurb on its back (*My name is Jackson Jones. I stood and watched a teacher die. For the first time in my life I felt real shock ... My whole body actually went numb. They say the brain is like a computer – well, my computer crashed*) can help students predict the themes that the novel deals with or look back on them once they have finished reading it. Chapter titles can also provide an interesting tool for readers to become familiarized with the characters' names, place and time settings, and the diction employed by the author. Chapter 1, entitled The Ending, makes readers want to know more about what is to come, especially after reading the opening paragraph: *The knife was pushed so far into Mr Joseph's stomach that it almost came out of his back. Lionel Ferrier closed his eyes, held the handle tight, and turned it vigorously. Mr Joseph grunted towards the sky as the knife was twisted deep into his intestines, and as the sharp stainless steel sliced through his organs blood pumped out of his body with so much force that it splattered Lionel's chest. Lionel pulled the knife out and jogged away slowly with his friend Ramzi Sanchin following behind him* (2007, 5). One of the main events in the plot is presented straightaway, as well as the characters involved in it. The reader learns from the very beginning who the victim and the perpetrators of the crime are, thus turning the novel into an usual whodunit. All these elements present curiosity in the reader, who becomes engaged in trying to put the pieces together of what has turned these teenagers into murderers.

### **Conclusion**

It may be said then that YAF is a rich genre in constant evolution which provides high quality literature to modern readers. It is a challenge for teachers of English as a foreign language to motivate students to read fiction. However, the novels mentioned in this paper can help bridge the gap between what they are expected to learn in a literature class and what may facilitate such task.

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## **Demonstrations**

# **“Designing Tailor-made Language Activities through Computer-Based Activity Generators”**

CANTARUTTI, MARINA N.

## **Abstract**

The Internet has made an undeniable impact on ELT in terms of the possibilities of exposure and practice that it provides. However, many of the tasks proposed on ELT-based sites may not match the reality of a particular teaching environment. In these circumstances, the adoption and use of free *activity generators* available online allow teachers to design tailor-made language games and activities to test the formal acquisition of specific linguistic items as dealt with in class. This paper aims at analysing a selection of activity generators and the notion of automated computer-based tasks (ACBT) in the light of current theories of learning.

## **Introduction**

The inclusion of computers to English Language Teaching is not new. It has been going on for decades, and it has evolved together with technology. CALL (Computer-Assisted Language Learning) has been associated with different learning theories, ranging from behaviourism to constructivism, and a whole e-learning dimension has been created, overruling the exclusiveness of face-to-face, distance-bound learning.

Just by typing “English” in any search engine, the regular teacher or student will easily find a myriad websites aimed at practising grammar, vocabulary and



reading skills, mainly. Among the most popular websites lie *BBC Learning English* and *British Council Learn English* for all linguistic skills and areas; *Flo-Jo* for Cambridge Exam Practice; *English Page*, *English English*, *Using English* for linguistic practice, among others. However, these websites provide standardised practice exercises, with limited or no context, and with varied degrees of creativity in the production of examples. Entertaining and useful as they may be, teachers sometimes feel that these websites do not provide practice in specific grammatical or lexical items as taught in a particular classroom at a particular time.

This article is meant at introducing and assessing a selection of *activity generators*, i.e. software and applications designed for input of data to produce automated computer-based activities. The applicability of these tools for ELT will be put to the test, and the principles behind automated computer-based tasks (ACBT, henceforth) will be revealed, from an educational and cognitive perspective.

## **Paper vs On-Screen Tasks**

An initial distinction needs to be made between paper-based tasks and on-screen activities, if ACBTs, as facilitated by *activity generators*, are to be assessed.

Automated computer-based activities differ from paper-based tasks in many ways. To begin with, the learner's eyes face downwards towards the book with a downward movement of the neck for paper-based activities, whereas a more straight posture of the neck and eyes towards the front is to be adopted for activities on the screen. The learner's input in the first case is done with a pen or pencil, usually manipulated with one hand. In the second case, learners may use a mouse or a keyboard, which apart from being manipulated with one or two hands, does not have a "concrete" effect, rather an "abstract" and "projected" one, since the results of the physical manipulation appear on the screen and cannot be touched. Correction on the screen may be automatic or delayed, and self-correction is usually allowed. In this respect, both activity-types are similar.

However, these factors seem to determine different types of attention. The ability to manipulate the book or piece of paper appears to affect students' attention to keep to the task, since there is an external world around which also has its own movement. The screen, on the other hand, covers the full eyesight field and distractors usually come "from within". In this sense, the inability to manipulate the screen physically and the unpredictability of "hypertext" in terms of "what is to come", creates a sense of *mindfulness* (Salomon and Globerson, 1992), of voluntary attention which engages the higher levels of thinking, which the task requires. *Mindfulness* fosters the creation of *cognitive residue*, that is, the set of skills and knowledge left from a computer-based task to be later transferred to other situations. From this perspective, ACB tasks seem to carry far more advantages than paper-based ones. It remains to be seen whether *activity generators* generally fall within the scope of the theories of learning EFL teachers want to privilege in their teaching.

## **Activity Generators in the Language Classroom**

A typical instructional sequence in ELT includes stages of awareness-raising of linguistic items, followed by systematisation, controlled and freer practice.

Whatever the approach chosen, there is usually some degree of metalinguistic work in ELT lessons and there is always some moment when students are expected to fix a particular structure. This is the moment when activity generators can be best employed.

Activity generators are applications which can either be downloaded and executed on the computer, or available on the Internet for online use. These tools allow teachers to input data or media, and this is processed by the system to be outputted as the type of electronic task selected: e.g.: multiple choice quizzes, crosswords, word puzzles, to name but a few. ACBTs can appear as stand-alone activities, or as part of packs, in which one task leads on to the next, with increasing levels of difficulty. These tasks can be done and repeated by learners as many times as they wish. A self-correction option is offered in all, and percentages or impression comments can be delivered to students on account of their performance.

The most popular activity generators can be found below:

- *JCLIC* is an application that requires installation on the PC. This tool allows the user to input data (text) and media (sounds, images) to create interactive packs of activities. Some of the featured tasks are association (matching), memotest, identification activities, puzzles, text-based activities (gap-fill, dictations), crosswords, word-mazes.  
Downloadable from: <http://cllc.xtec.cat/es/jcllc/download.htm>
- *Hot Potatoes* is another application which requires downloading. It enables the user to create individual activities which can later be stringed together. The possible tasks are matching activities, multiple-choice and other types of quizzes, crosswords, ordering activities. It allows .html output, which means that the tasks can be used from any Web browser offline (e.g.: Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, etc).  
Downloadable from: <http://hotpot.uvic.ca/>
- *Puzzlemaker* is a website which allows teachers to create printables using user-generated input. Activity types include word search, crosswords, double puzzles, fallen phrases, letter types, cryptograms, hidden messages and some non-linguistic activities: math puzzles and mazes.  
Available at: <http://puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com/>
- *ESL printables*: This website requires free registration. There are different types of online games such as quizzes, multiple choice, word searches, only available for publishing on the site. There are many handouts and flashcards for download as well.  
URL: <http://www.eslprintables.com/>
- *eGames generator* requires free registration and can only be used online. It enables users to create games of various types and with an appealing interface: ordering, multiple choice, proofreading, memotest, classification, labelling.  
URL: <https://egames.clsllc.com/default001.asp>
- *SMILE - CLEAR (Centre of Education and Research – University of Michigan)*: After a free registration, users may access SMILE, an application including generators of multiple choice, true or false, drag and drop, sentence mix and paragraph mix tasks.  
URL: <http://clear.msu.edu/clear/>

## Automated Computer-based tasks and learning theories

None of the task types that activity generators propose is foreign to the ELT teacher since they constitute typical exercises on textbooks and websites. However, they stand under scrutiny in terms of theories for learning.

Most of these one-possible-answer tasks are usually associated with behaviourism. Most software related to this view is that used for practice based on repetition, with a lineal succession of activities.

In spite of the fact that the behaviouristic view does not seem to fit in the current view of learning and the need to engage learners actively in the learning process, computer applications which can be described through this approach do show some advantages, such as the ones below (collected by Urbina Ramírez, year unknown)

- Learners can check on their learning as much as they can;
- Learners get immediate feedback, which can act as reinforcement;
- Learners get trained in basic skills and content to be able to face more complex activities later on.

Gagne, a follower of information processing theories, highlights the role of immediate feedback that educational software provides as *informative*, as well as *intrinsic motivator* (in Urbina Ramírez, year unknown).

To this initial framework accounting for the ideas and principles behind ACBTs, some other views can be added. Ausubel's theory of *meaningful reception learning* contends that learning takes place whenever the content and the learning experience can be related to previous knowledge. Learners generally know how to make use of computers, and the application of their previous know-how of computing strategies, as well as their familiarity of the topic being tested on the ACBT, constitutes an instance of meaningful learning. In terms of "reception", this theory also recognises the role of the teacher as a guide, who sets the right conditions for the acquisition of new items and does not leave the student on its own. In Ausubel's standpoint, this shows the irreplaceable role of the teacher to organize the learning process, for the applications to do the rest afterwards. The teacher is also responsible for providing a significant context and a communicative setting for use of the structures in the following stages.

Bruner's view of *scaffolding* is also useful to explain what can be done through ACBTs: paving the way for further learning, providing extra opportunities for practice beyond error, leading the learner towards a freer use of the grammar and vocabulary being assessed.

Finally, Vygotsky's notion of *zone of proximal development*, which posits that:

*"the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers."*

(Dahms, M., Geonnotti, K, Passalacqua, D, Schilk, J, Wetzel, A and Zulkowsky, M 2007)

can now be related to computers, as tools that may also help to reduce the distance between the present state of performance and the potential application of knowledge of a student.

## **Conclusions**

The use of computer-based activities has been both overrated and seen with distrust. Arguably, the employment of ACBTs in ELT is a behaviouristic activity in itself, as many practice exercises in textbooks and websites are, but with the benefits of instant feedback and repetition. Moreover, ACBTs constitute *meaningful* instances for scaffolding towards further application of set vocabulary and grammar.

Undeniably, activity generating applications have some limitations. They allow teachers to input the data they want and need to use, but they do not usually cater for multiple answers. The teacher is not there on the screen to clarify queries, and tasks are frequently neither communicative nor contextualized.

Therefore, these tools must be seen as another means to an end, in terms of practice and fixation of linguistic items, rather than *the* teaching tool in itself. As with all resources, teachers can choose when and how to use them, and the input of information on the blank templates of the generators is a key decisive moment for the educator in search of innovation.

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# **"FACILITATING LEARNING – From General English to English for Specific Purposes"**

VALENTI VIVIANA M.

## **Abstract**

This paper will attempt to clarify the notions behind the terms noticing and awareness with the ultimate aim of relating them to the teaching of grammar. Following Skehan, noticing will be related to those elements of the surface structure of utterances and awareness to the state of mind which allows the individual to find regularities, make comparisons across instances and undergo metalinguistic reflection on the basis of the instances of language that have been attended to. The internal and external factors affecting noticing will be briefly discussed and a practical application within the context of ESP will be suggested.

## **Paper**

Do the words input, noticing, monitoring, noticing the gap, awareness, consciousness raising ring a bell? Probably they do as any professional teacher needs to be acquainted with theories of second language acquisition. However, the literature produced in this newly-born field is still loaded with ambiguity and vagueness in the use of terms sometimes leading to confusion. This paper, therefore, will try to cast some light on the terms *noticing* and *awareness* which are, more often than not, used indistinctively. It will be fundamentally based on the belief that reaching a clearer understanding of the concepts behind them may help teachers weigh the different factors affecting learners when the moment comes to focus on grammar. Selecting contexts for presentation, setting activities to channel the students' attention to certain linguistic features and guiding them in the process of constructing learning constitute a hard task where both theory and practice necessarily meet.

One of the earliest approaches to acquisition, and probably one that still has a strong hold, is that of input processing (Krashen, 1977, 1985). Acquisition of a second language was at first unnecessarily limited to **the role of input**. If comprehensible input was provided at the right stage of development, the individual could *unconsciously* notice features in it and acquire them. In other words, the permanent development of implicit knowledge depended on the amount of exposure to "quality" input (input + 1). This position did not deny the role of learning but it minimized it by making it clear that learning rules, that is, developing explicit knowledge, does not contribute to the development of the interlanguage system and can only be used as a monitor to correct one's production once it has been initiated by the acquired system. Briefly, researchers advocating for this **comprehension-based approach** supported subconscious acquisition and denied any possible connection between learning and acquisition

Still focusing on input but from a cognitive perspective, many researchers reanalyzed input in terms of attentional processes. This **processing-based approach** is concerned with the control of attention during comprehension rather than on the need to extract meaning which may not lead to any focus on form (notice the use of the modal "may"). Within this framework, it is believed that learners are capable of focusing on different cues in the input by applying appropriate learning strategies. For example, they can exploit the presence of time expressions or the presence of the past tense to understand propositions while listening or reading. What is evident is the compatibility of this approach with pedagogic goals as we can envisage teachers helping language learners to notice relevant features in the input and to process them more effectively.

In this respect, the contribution made by Schmidt's **noticing hypothesis** was crucial as he claimed that input which is noticed becomes available for intake and effective processing. *Noticing is used here as a technical term to refer only to the registration of the occurrence of a stimulus event in conscious awareness and subsequent storage in long term memory, not the detection of form/meaning relationships or inductive formation of hypotheses or other processes, that may lead to the organization of stored knowledge into a linguistic system* (Schmidt, 1994:179, the underlining is mine). This hypothesis clearly states that a degree of awareness is necessary to incorporate information that may lead to further modifications of the interlanguage system. However, it is convenient to clarify that noticing is seen as a necessary but not a sufficient condition for learning to take place.

At this point, further explanation of the terms used so far is required. Arguing practical reasons, Schmidt equated attention with awareness. In fact, there is a common assumption that these two terms are two sides of the same coin. However, researchers in cognitive psychology do not view attention as a unitary phenomenon but as a phenomenon that has several manifestations or mechanisms. These include alertness, orientation, preconscious registration (detection without awareness), selection (detection with awareness), facilitation and inhibition. Under this light, **attention** can be considered as that mechanism that channels and controls access to awareness. Later, Schmidt (1995) further refines his definition of noticing as being nearly isomorphic with attention.

If the learner is to pay attention to the linguistic properties present in the input, how can noticing be differentiated from awareness? Rod Ellis (1992) refers to two different types of **awareness**: awareness of formal properties of the target language that are consciously noticed and awareness in the sense of developing an explicit representation of the target form. As it can be observed, the same term – awareness – is used to refer to two different processes. The development of an explicit representation involves comparing, contrasting instances of the language to discover regularities or features. But all this metalinguistic reflection would not be

possible if the learner did not primarily detect the target features in the input. The confusion that might arise from the use of the same term to refer to two different processes is overcome by Roy Lyster (2007) who disambiguates it by making use of different terms to refer to each of the processes. Following Ellis, he argues that two phases are required to notice (used here as an umbrella term) target features – the **noticing phase** and the **awareness phase**. Under this light, attention and noticing are considered elements of the surface structure of utterances in the input. The learner will first have to discover the instances of language in the input. As we will see later on, attention is directed to certain features in the input which are then noticed. In this sense, **noticing** becomes restricted to a technical term equivalent to apperception (detection within selective attention and detection plus rehearsal in STM). Only then, can **awareness** follow but this phase will imply much more as the learner will process the instances noticed and become aware of any abstract rule or principle concerning them. In simple words, we can say that noticing paves the way to evaluating and understanding how the second language works. Interlanguage development cannot be said to depend entirely on comprehending input as suggested by the comprehension-based approach but on how information is processed. Complex, isn't it?

## **PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS**

The processing-based approach, unlike the comprehension-based, is compatible with pedagogic goals a good choice of input and a careful selection of tasks and activities may stimulate learners to process new information effectively.

The following pedagogic decisions will be based on a brief analysis of the six factors that affect noticing, according to Schmidt (1990).

But in an attempt to clarify the impact that these notions may have on the pedagogic decisions it is convenient to evaluate the six factors that Schmidt considers affect noticing. For practical reasons these factors will be grouped according to their source –the input, the individual, the teacher. References will also be made to an example provided in the Appendix.

### **a) Input qualities.**

The type of input chosen must guarantee both **frequency** and **salience** of the target structure. These factors are out there, right in the input and are consequently **bottom-up features**, i.e. linguistic features that are made prominent in the input. On the one hand, the more **frequently** a structure appears in the input, the more chances there will be of noticing it. We are limited-capacity processors and our attentional resources fluctuate. A form that appears only once may pass unnoticed while frequent encounters may increase the possibility of focusing. Frequency, then, should be contemplated when choosing a text. Unfortunately, frequency is sometimes taken to an extreme. This can be observed in those texts that only include the structure to be taught. Frequency should not be equated with uniqueness. For example, if the past tense is presented in a text which is only written in that tense then we cannot speak of frequency. Rather than facilitating the process of noticing, this one will be hindered.

The other quality of input relates to **perceptual salience**. The new form should be made visually prominent; it should stand out and call attention to itself. The linguistic feature may be bolded, underlined, capitalized or italicized. But if the teaching point is made prominent every time it appears in the text just for the sake of highlighting it, then, the student's capacity of noticing will be undermined. Just imagine a text in which all the verbs in the past tense appear in bold type. This

may even drive the students to focus on the words themselves rather than the text and its meaning. It must be remembered that the new structure can be made salient in a headline, a title, a caption or it may appear in bold type, for example, to provoke a certain communicative effect but there should always be scope for discovery. Salience should be a natural feature of the text itself and not a forced instrument meant to isolate the new structure to call the student's attention.

What is clear is that not all texts used for the presentation of a grammar point will be equally effective. Therefore, it is the teacher's task to analyse, select and adapt them. The text should contain a good number of instances of the new structure without making it so obvious or unnatural. It should also propose a good integration of both the new structure and those previously learned to help the students establish comparisons. If possible, the layout must also guarantee some salience.

Now have a look at the example in the Appendix. This one is intended to teach adverbs in an ESP context where future engineers are only taught how to understand and translate texts. If you go through it, you will notice that there is a good number of adverbs of frequency and manner which naturally add meaning to the text. The context was adapted from a bulletin (<http://www.osh.dol.govt.nz/order/catalogue/archive/earthmovingmachineops.pdf>) and it was modified to make sure that every single rule contained an adverb as this would add perceptual salience.

## **b) Focused Input**

The factors affecting noticing here relate to **instruction** and the **selective effect of tasks**. Students that are instructed, that is, who receive formal instruction will develop explicit knowledge or knowledge about the language. When learners are well prepared, **instruction** may help them notice features that were missed before. For example, the fact that the modal verb "may" has been dealt with formally in class can help a learner to notice the form in the utterance "*May I come in?*" which he might have used as a chunk for years. What has been undifferentiated input for a long time suddenly becomes noticeable and analyzable thanks to instruction. Instruction may cause noticing simply by directing attention to forms that were understood but which passed unnoticed before. As Skehan (1999:49) states *learning is still input driven (since the input is not being transformed) but it is the learner who chooses what to prioritize in the input*.

However, there are moments during a lesson on presentation where the teacher has the leading role, especially when the new grammar point is discovered and discussed and grasped. What is particularly difficult is to refrain from telling the students what is new, where to find it, what it means, when it is used, why it behaves the way it does; all of which we know very well. When teaching grammar, there is an unconscious tendency to become teacher-centered, simply because we hold the knowledge and its mere transmission may produce the satisfying effect of having done a good work. This tendency is also observed in the presence of Grammar boxes or explanatory charts in books, which leave no room for channeling attention, discovering and processing information effectively.

At this point a few tips make sense. Try to avoid tasks that may give the false illusion of guiding students to discovering features. Instructions like "underline what is new", "tell me which verbs are in the past", "find sentences in the past" (when the simple past is presented), will be ineffective. It is essential that the discovery process is done in relation to the meaning provided by the utterances that contain the structure to be learned. Human beings process meaning before



form, not the other way round. A task can be considered good if it directs the students' attention to the new structure without using it, without making reference to it. It will be effective if it guides the students to the novel linguistic features by paying selective attention to meaning.

In the example below this objective is fulfilled by the True or False exercise. This one was constructed to help students get the gist of the five rules in the bulletin and indirectly focus on the adverbs. To justify their answers the students will inevitably have to read the sentences that contain them. It is advisable to use the whiteboard and write down the justifications so as to be ready for the awareness phase. Remember that only noticing is taking place here.

### **c) Individual differences in readiness and processing capacity.**

These internal factors refer to the influence of long-term memory on what can be noticed. What the students know will affect the way in which input will be processed. They will definitely respond better if they can make recourse to their own store of information to make sense of what they are reading or listening to. In this sense, noticing is a **top-down process** that depends on already existing knowledge and the variable processing capacities that characterize each individual. Two remarks can be made at this point regarding the choice of topic and the teaching point. Choosing appropriate topics for the presentation of structures is essential as meaning will be processed by activating information stored in long-term memory. Also, the students must be developmentally ready for the structure to be learned, that is, their systemic knowledge should provide them with the necessary information to let them account for the new features.

In the example below you will find a slow process of guidance (scaffolding) under "Analysis". The idea is to respect the different processing capacities of the students. They will be making a great effort to draw conclusions and this process cannot be hurried up. Allotting sufficient time will cater for individual differences. Filling in the language awareness box will be the last but crucial moment during which all the features analysed will be put into perspective producing changes in the interlanguage system.

In brief, NOTICING has a MEDIATING ROLE as it can be triggered by aspects present in the input and/or by the activation of existing knowledge systems. Its main function is to channel attention to what can be attended to successfully and to provide the stepping stone to awareness. Then, why not adapt our teaching practices to respect the way in which the mind works?

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## APPENDIX

### EXAMPLE

#### READ AND INTERPRETE THE FOLLOWING BULLETIN

##### ATTENTION ALL EARTHMOVING MACHINE OPERATORS

##### HOW TO OPERATE YOUR MACHINE SAFELY

*The safety of earthmoving machine operators and maintenance personnel is a major concern.*

*This bulletin highlights the basic safety rules and procedures of your daily work routine.*

- **Always think and plan ahead** - Safety is thinking ahead. There is no substitute for an alert, well informed operator. Consult with your employer regularly before starting a job.
- **Never forget to use the safety gear** – Use the protective equipment such as safety hat, safety footwear, safety glasses or goggles, heavy gloves, ear protection, reflective vest or jacket.
- **Know your machine's capabilities well** - Are you familiar with all the controls, gauges and instrument? Check that they function correctly. For example: guards, canopies, shields, back-up alarms, roll over protective structures, seatbelts.
- **Don't forget to check the work area carefully-** Examine the terrain and take note of the ground conditions such as mud, dust, surface water, ice, and so on.
- **Check your machine daily** - Before starting work each day, walk around your machine and check cooling system, engine compartments, instruments and gauges, headlights and warning lamps. Look for apparently loose or missing bolts or pins, dirt or trash build-up, oil or coolant leaks or obvious structural cracks, wear or damage to moving parts, rims, wheels, tyres, air systems, hydraulic systems, brake systems and operating controls.

*Failure of hydraulic steering or brake systems especially is a deadly hazard.*

## TRUE AND FALSE. Justifica tus respuestas

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Es importante recordar el uso de equipamiento de protección
2. \_\_\_\_\_ No es función del operario chequear el área de trabajo
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Es importante que el operador esté informado.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ El operario debe olvidarse de chequear el área de trabajo
5. \_\_\_\_\_ La máquina debe revisarse

## ANALYSIS

### 1. Read the instructions again.

a- En todas ellas hay un aspecto resaltado. Subraya las palabras con que se logra tal efecto.

b- ¿Qué tipo de palabras son? Completa la tabla con el tipo de palabra que se está analizando.

c- Clasifica los ejemplos buscando un nombre para cada subtipo .

Type		
Subtype		
examples		

d- Busca otros ejemplos en el resto del texto y observa a qué tipo de palabras modifican.

e- ¿Observas alguna regularidad en la formación de estas palabras?

f- Si lees con cuidado encontrarás una palabra que es la excepción a la regla ¿Cuál? ¿Por qué?

## LANGUAGE AWARENESS

Los \_\_\_\_\_ son un tipo de palabras que pueden modificar a un \_\_\_\_\_ o a un \_\_\_\_\_. Podemos encontrar distintos tipos, por ejemplo: de \_\_\_\_\_, de \_\_\_\_\_, entre otros.

La mayoría de ellos son regulares y se forman agregando \_\_\_\_\_ a un \_\_\_\_\_. Otros son irregulares, como ser \_\_\_\_\_.

No todas las palabras terminadas en -ly cumplen esta función. Sabremos si son adjetivos al encontrarlos antes de un \_\_\_\_\_, como en el caso de \_\_\_\_\_.

## **"Language that Gets organized"**

AQUINO SERGIO

Centro Provincial de Enseñanza Media N° 78.

### **Abstract**

Teachers usually appeal to an array of strategies to make sure language is learnt. During this demonstration, participants will become "students" to experience how effective graphic organizers can be when it comes to helping students "get the idea". Graphic organizers can help motivate, assist understanding, combat boredom and organize thoughts in a very particular way that can become really appealing to students.

*"Language learning and teaching can be an exciting and refreshing interval in the day for students and teacher. There are so many possible ways of stimulating communicative interaction, yet, all over the world, one still finds classrooms where language learning is a tedious dry-as-dust process, devoid of contact with the real world in which language use is as natural as breathing".*

Rivers 1987, 14.

## **General Introduction**

*"Excuse me, how is it that you said ... in English?"* It may sound like a simple question. And yet this endless question seems to take us to square one all over again. We are left with two choices: either we pull our hair in plain desperation or we keep trying new ways to engage our students in the fascinating world of learning a foreign language. As teachers, we may be tempted to go for the former more than once but we know that it is in everyone's best interest that we should pick the latter. The purpose of this demonstration is to share with participants one tool that has been proven really successful when it comes to teaching not only a language but almost anything: graphic organizers.

In a nutshell, graphic organizers can help students construct meaning by providing the necessary scaffolding to use language in a meaningful way. They can be useful tools students use to build language on or from. They are a clear example that if a language gets organised, it will be better learnt. With the use of visual learning tools becoming widespread, there has also been a push towards the introduction of graphic organizers as a learning tool. By their very nature graphic organizers aid learning across all subjects and their processes are applicable across a spectrum of uses. However the effectiveness of these tools lies in the ability of teachers to teach students how to use them efficiently.

## **Graphic Organizers in a Thinking-Fostering Classroom**

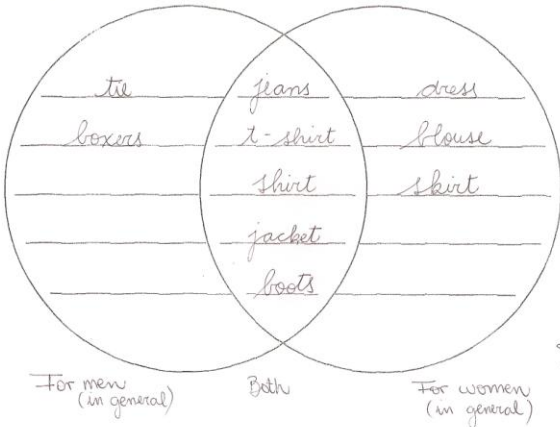
Graphic organizers are valuable tools for teaching. Unlike others, they demonstrate a flexibility and endlessness in choices of use. Teachers can use graphic organizers to structure writing projects, to help in problem solving, decision making, studying, planning research and brainstorming. A common trait is their ability to show the order and completeness of the student's thought process - how he or she understands becomes clearly evident. Their use in the classroom fosters students' thinking skills such as describing qualities, classifying/ categorizing (see *below*), sequencing, determining cause and effect, etc. Swartz & Perkins state that thinking "involves the use of keen critical skills and open creative exploration in which we call up and gather relevant information that we bring to bear on the issues with which we are grappling". This being the case, the use of graphic organizers can, for instance, help students consider more possibilities so as to reach more reliable conclusions as a desirable outcome. Using a range of graphic organizers can help language learners discover both the close-up and the larger picture of a particular language item. Another important aspect to bear in mind is that when using them, teachers are helping their students overcome the "blank page" situation when it comes to writing and/or even speaking. We are asking students to perform a particular task with something to begin with. As regards comprehension, graphic organizers can be really helpful to shape and share ideas if we agree with Smith (1994) when he says that "comprehension may be regarded as relating what we attend to in the world around us to what we already have in our heads". As it has been stated before there are a number of graphic organizers developed to foster this type of connection. Another important aspect to consider is the fact that the use of graphic organizers does not require a lot of preparation. At present, they are just a click away from us. It is just a matter of minutes before we find the right tool for the right group of students and for the right activity. By and large an effective teacher instruction model includes explicit and detailed instructions and independent practice by the students with feedback wherever

necessary. The teacher should determine and establish a purpose for which the graphic organizer is being used. All these three elements – instruction by the teacher, practice by the students and teacher, and feedback from the teacher – are inextricably linked. Failure at one of these stages may negate the benefits of using them.

To sum up, graphic organizers will help students classify ideas and communicate more effectively since they are designed to facilitate understanding of key concepts by allowing students to drill down to the basic points and ideas. When used effectively, graphic organizers have the potential to foster learning in a number of areas. Chief among these are reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge.

By the end of the demonstration participants are expected to appreciate the value that the use of this tool can add to our daily activity and dare to put it into practice.

### Example of use of graphic organizer to foster students' vocabulary and thinking skills.

<p>Subject: <u>Clothes</u></p> <p>Name: <u>Christina</u></p> <p>Date: <u>Friday June 19th</u></p> 	<p>This is an example of how students can use graphic organizers, in this particular case the Venn Diagram, for both working with vocabulary as well as developing thinking skills (classifying). Students were given copies of the GO and then they were asked what categories could be created to fit the diagram in order to classify the items of vocabulary introduced in the previous lesson.</p>
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## **“Literacy with very young learners”**

ABALOS, MYRIAM ELSA

### **Abstract**

Teaching very young learners in different contexts is a real challenge for teachers. It has to do with the basic combination of routines and thinking skills, kinaesthetic work and the building of confidence through significant games and ideas that promote *trust and a sense of industry* (Erikson, 1963 in Williams & Burden, 1997) in supportive, stimulating environments.

Teaching implies the idea of *transformation* (Freire, 1969) and this word seems to have a twofold purpose. Nowadays it is said that *real learning* (Holt, 1969) occurs when what is learnt is really *meaningful* (Ausubel's *Meaningful Learning Theory*, 1965 in D. Brown, 2000) for the learner, no matter the circumstances in which said learning is applied, in formal as well as in informal education. The question is: what is significant for a five-year-old child? As soon as we are in contact with kids this age, we realize that the here-and-now is the answer. Children want to know what happens around them and how and when they can play with others, which – of course – implies knowledge of the rules of interaction and games. In summary, they want to discover what is still unknown to them.

Children are naturally curious; therefore, helping them unravel the world around them in a natural and playful way definitely becomes what is known as significant learning.

At the same time, the idea of 'transformations' has to do with the obvious negation of *reproduction* (Moore and Hendry, 1990). Politically speaking, reproduction also holds philosophical and sociological ideas based on cultural capitalism and symbolic violence. *Are schools uniform?* (Bowles and Gintis, 1976 in Bilton, 1996). Are the central values of society *equally* transmitted to new generations? Why is culture always (considered to be) arbitrary?

Reproduction also holds the old view of the educational system in which techniques, strategies, contents, ideas were repeated automatically to form habits. According to this behaviouristic learning view, a child's mind was considered a 'tabula rasa', empty box or *blank slate* (Lightbown and Spada, 1993); therefore, each learner was supposed to receive and drill contents or ideas already thought of, already mastered by someone who knew 'more' and had the authority to conduct the whole process.

In conclusion, the concept of transformation represents not only a different social perspective of education, but also the new trend of thought-provoking ideas ready to be developed by someone who wants to know and discover by him or herself what learning is all about.

Consequently, transformations in young learners can be 'real' if they are fostered from kindergarten onwards, through significant ideas and contents put into practice in order to be re-discovered, re-invented and experimented by all students every time this is required along their truly diverse learning processes, as we know that we all learn in different ways.

My approach was based on stressing the idea of meaningful learning and on emphasizing the use of games, songs, ludic activities and kinaesthetic tasks in general that could actually promote a natural learning situation.

Through my pilot scheme, I could demonstrate how I have coordinated the teaching of English to Very Young Learners through meaningful classroom materials and activities in difficult contexts. As a teacher trainer, I have always observed and assessed primary and high school courses and, because I have been trained for this, it is not difficult for me to think of activities, aims or strategies for the different levels. But kinder was a new area of implementation, since six or seven years ago there was no teacher training college for kindergarten in English in our country.

However, when, in one of the institutions (Teacher Training College) where I work, I was asked to send my trainees to practise in kindergarten, a new perspective opened up to me. The knowledge of the *social constructivist theories* (Williams and Burden, 1997) of how small kids learn was one thing, but implementing the what, how and why was completely different. Consequently, I worked really hard trying to make my student teachers feel comfortable with the new experience. It was one thing to improve *my* own teaching, since I had worked in kindergarten at bilingual schools for many years; it was another to try to tell someone what to do and how to do it. Besides, these kids had never been exposed to a foreign language, as the schools I was made to choose from were Argentine state schools.

At first, my attention was focussed – quite naturally – on my student teachers! They had to succeed in doing this, and above all, they had to show what they were learning through their internship course. Little by little my attention was fully absorbed by the small kids and by what they offered us. This is why I have decided through this paper to demonstrate how the teaching of Literacy, i.e. the development of Reading and Writing (together with Listening and Speaking) can be fostered from Kinder 5 in different learning contexts through the use of teachers'



observations and consequent actions to help very young learners to set off building their own identities.

It is important to know that the experience of how little kids can and *do* learn English in state schools in our country was actually carried out through a real, applied pilot scheme in Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires at different schools. (Abalos, 2006) The first question that should be asked is: what is 'Literacy'? What does it imply? How and why is it important to promote Literacy in the early stages of learning a foreign language? The starting point is to reflect on what the process of reading is and what it implies from the central viewpoint that all learners learn to read in different ways.

According to Gary and Maryann Manning (1996: 1) *Young children construct many notions about reading and writing long before they begin kindergarten. In fact, some children can actually read and write before they start school; others find learning to read and write relatively easy once they start school. We have found that children who become literate at an early age or who become successful readers and writers share several common characteristics: 1) they have been read to regularly, 2) they have had many opportunities to handle books, 3) they have seen parents and other adults read and write for real purposes and for enjoyment and 4) they have been encouraged to express themselves through writing..*

There are clearly different analytic and synthetic approaches that explain the learning of reading from distinct and multiple viewpoints. What is it that kids note or ignore when they begin to pay attention to the written word? Do they notice similar characters? Do they first pay attention to pictures or to letters or words? In summary, What does learning to read and write imply? (Schickedanz, 1993) What is the connection between the progressions from the *physical* to the *cognitive skills* (Cameron, 2001) in the development of writing? Does writing merely mean the drawing of the letters? What are *reversals* or *mirror writing*? What are *doodles* and *mock letters*? Are they necessary? What is the meaning of pre-writing skills? What is the importance of *projective space* in children's writings? (Piaget, 1967 in Schickedanz, 1993). Cultural differences dictate to kids the conventions of reading and writing as well as those for listening and speaking in their native languages along with the social conventions through personal, communicative experiences in their different cultures.

All different theories explain a piece of the puzzle. Young kids construct many notions about reading and writing long before they come to school. Clearly, I agree with the belief that the development of reading and writing starts at home and it is context bound. In general, different and varied home and later school experiences and activities help to foster high levels of literacy development.

Children read the context of language, the situation at hand, and in this way they obtain clues about the meanings of words and sentences. What changes as kids get older is the way they read and write, not the basic nature of what they attempt to do. Children have to learn to answer fundamental though implicitly subconscious questions such as: Should I respond to this conversation? Should I request something verbally if I want it? How should I grasp a book? Shall I read it right side up from front to back and from left to right? Is this the first letter of my name? Is the sound and name of this letter the same or different? What is its shape? How should I hold the pen? Is this a real letter? Do different words form a sentence? Can print be read? Does print represent spoken language? Is this a story? Is it familiar to me? Summarizing, am I *an emergent or a beginner reader and writer*? (Schickedanz, 1993).

It must clearly be understood that learning to read and write has to be taught to small kids as they follow predictable stages which demonstrate

understanding, awareness, production and appreciation of reading and writing or print in general. The role of the adult is fundamental as different studies show that children who are made aware of different literacy aspects become proficient in a shorter time than those who are not. Helping children *to think* (Smith, 1990) seems to be the key for the achievement of these issues. Through play, children assume different roles and engage in routine-like behaviours associated with listening, speaking, reading and writing experimenting as well as initiating expertise.

Therefore, it is absolutely fundamental to focus on literacy steps or stages that are essential and that all learners go through in a normal developmental process in the same way as babies do when they learn to talk, to walk and even to hold things.

High in importance for the development of literacy skills is story reading as well as the teaching of key literacy concepts and strategies through the use of folk tales. Kids enjoy being told stories, learning about characters, comparing and contrasting them with different versions, discussing perspectives through dramatizing, predicting endings, singing, visualizing and making connections, in summary, asking questions about the text.

Another important aspect for the development of literacy skills is the use of the new interactive technologies that are present in daily life. These new approaches or possibilities emphasize the role of visualization and very early children begin to recognize that symbols carry meaning and that certain words in print carry *consistent* meanings, which obviously facilitate the understanding task. As a consequence, we, teachers, often tend to underestimate little kids even after they have *already* demonstrated to us their clear awareness and sometimes use of print long before it has been taught. As a result, the use of multimedia resources and the new technologies are absolutely advisable to enhance the teaching of literacy and language in general to very young learners.

There are several fundamental reasons which prove the importance of the development of literacy skills in young learners. First, the new theories of second language acquisition state that small kids learn better and faster. Secondly, the sooner literacy is promoted, the better the results are. Thirdly, difficult contexts should not be an obstacle to transform education and finally, we, as teachers, should foster educational equity.

As Fisher (2005: VII) says: *All human beings have a basic right to the full development of their minds and of their capacity for learning. There is a growing realization that the development of individuals and of communities depends on education, and on the quality of teaching and learning. The needs of individuals and the needs of society meet in the need to develop lifelong and autonomous learners, students who value learning as an empowering activity, who want to learn independently and who have self-determination, self-directions and self-respect. We need to develop students who can effectively participate in society and meet the challenge of rapid social change. For teachers the challenge is – how do we foster the learning that will help achieve these goals?*

Strengthening educational quality is one of the main aims all professional teachers should encourage in the teaching of language and literacy skills since it implies the use of multimedia resources and cultural knowledge which are essential for the kids' future. All kids should have access to this knowledge as it is necessary to promote the acquisition of different topics in meaningful ways following the contents and routines done in kinder despite the problematic contexts that children might live in. Therefore, schools should become *smart institutions* (Perkins, 1997)

which promote and generate real, practical knowledge and positive, productive thinking as the vehicles to learn and develop no matter the individual, familiar circumstances that each child has to go through.

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## **"Of Mouse and Book – Using Web 2.0 resources in Literature Teaching"**

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### **Abstract**

This article introduces the theoretical background upon which the demonstration offered at the Conference rests. It discusses the characterisation of "Millennial Learners" and the relationship between current pedagogical theory and the use of technology. It also summarises some of the features of social software, providing a succinct survey of popular resources and their potential for exploitation. The demonstration itself focuses on classroom materials and activities developed by and for students in Literature courses in Teacher Education, and suggests ways in which these can be adapted for EFL classrooms.

### **Of Mouse and Book – Using Web 2.0 resources in Literature Teaching**

*"Digital Natives accustomed to the twitch-speed, multitasking, random-access, graphics-first, active, connected, fun, fantasy, quick-payoff world of their video games, MTV, and Internet are bored by most of today's education, well meaning as it may be. But worse, the many skills that new technologies have actually enhanced (e.g., parallel processing, graphics awareness, and random access)—which have profound implications for their learning—are almost totally ignored by educators" (Prensky, 2001)*

Much has been written about the profile of "Digital Natives", "Millennial Learners", "Net Generation" or "Generation Y", students who were born in the 1980's and 1990's. It is usually highlighted that, being technologically savvy and

goal-oriented, they prefer information-connectedness, collaboration, multitasking, and share a focus on immediacy. While recent studies highlight the existence of a digital divide in this generation, both in access to technology and in operational capability (Committee of Inquiry into the Changing Learner Experience, 2009) or challenge the scientific validity of such a generalization (Bennett, Maton & Kervin, 2008), the fact remains that, as many of the learners in our classrooms do exhibit at least some of those characteristics, teaching practices should be adapted in order to cater for their learning styles and preferences. Moreover, it is widely agreed that information literacies are essential for life-long learning, employability, social inclusion and empowerment to ensure sustainable development (Paas & Creech, 2008), so education has a vital role in fostering such literacies. The effective introduction of ICT contents in Teacher Education Programmes is therefore crucial both for the development of the teachers-to-be themselves, and for the application of innovative uses of technology in their own teaching practices.

It should be borne in mind that ICT itself does not guarantee sound pedagogical quality. Technology can and has often been used to reproduce teacher-centred practices that actually hinder the achievements of students and contribute next-to-nothing to innovation and motivation. What matters is not the use of ICT but the pedagogical model that guides our practices and the learning tasks set to students, both of which can certainly be enhanced by resorting to technology:

*la tecnología (...) no debe ser el eje o centro de los procesos de enseñanza, sino un elemento mediador entre el conocimiento que debe construirse y la actividad que debe realizar el alumnado. El protagonista debe ser el propio humano que, en colaboración con otros sujetos, desarrolla acciones con la tecnología. (Area Moreira, 2007)*

From a constructivist perspective, effective learning is learning by doing, directed towards the learner's interests and undertaken in a community, focused on the process of learning rather than on content. The teacher – no longer the source of knowledge – should design experiences that enable students to become independent learners. Some of the essential skills to develop in our society, given the overabundance of information and multiplicity of sources, include effective search, authentication and critical evaluation (Committee of Inquiry into the Changing Learner Experience, 2009) or, to use a broader term, multiliteracies:

*From an educational standpoint, the concept of multiliteracies refers to how people must adapt to the changing nature of communication in a digital age and to what must be inculcated in students in order for them to succeed in lives where productivity depends on keeping up with technology. (Stevens, 2006)*

Many institutions have now implemented **VLEs** (Virtual Learning Environments) with a management information system, also known as learning platforms. VLEs bring together communication tools such as email, bulletin boards and chat rooms, collaboration tools such as online forums, electronic diaries and calendars, tools to create online content and courses, online assessment and marking – an array of resources available only to authorised participants in which the tutor can monitor frequency and quality of performance. They are closed systems that allow remote access, and can thus be extremely helpful for learners to catch up on missed lessons, work at their own pace, expand learning on a certain topic, and generally improve organisation of coursework. In addition to commercial versions, there are a number of free options, such as *Moodle* or *Dokeos*.

VLEs are nowadays often integrated with Web 2.0 resources or “social software”. Some popular examples of social software are:

**Blogs**, Internet-based journals or diaries in which a user can post text and digital material while others can comment (*Blogger*, *Wordpress*);

**Microblogging**, a small-scale form of blogging, generally made up of short, succinct messages, used to share news, post status updates and carry on conversations (*Twitter, Pownce*);

**Media-sharing services**, which enable the uploading or downloading of media files (*flickr, YouTube, Slideshare*);

**Wikis**, web-based services allowing users unrestricted access to create, edit and link pages (*Wikipedia, PBWorks, Wikispaces*);

**Social bookmarking services**, where users submit their bookmarked web pages to a central site where they can be found and tagged by other users (*del.icio.us, Diggo*);

**Social network sites** (*My Space, Facebook, Ning*), which can be defined as

*web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.* (Boyd & Ellison, 2007)

The advantages of integrating social software are numerous. As they constitute "horizontal" spaces, with no hierarchies, they foster the development of networking, teamwork, and collaboration, essential 21<sup>st</sup> century skills both for education and the labour market. They can also encourage bonding among members, even modifying traditional power structures. In addition, they can provide access to a wider variety of resources to encompass not only plural views but also a diversity of media (images, videos, audio), and allow for individual and joint discoveries and feedback.

Some difficulties of assimilating social software into teaching, as Bennett et al (2008) point out, refer to the fact that while young people do frequently own state-of-the art technologies, only a minority create their own content for the Web. Moreover, students

*identify certain technologies as 'living technologies', for their own personal and social use (e.g. SMS, games), and others as 'learning technologies' and more research is needed to determine the specific circumstances under which students would like their 'living technologies' to be adapted as 'learning technologies'.* (Dobozy & Pospisil, 2009)

However, as stated above, ICT and social software in particular need to be an integral part of education and Teacher Education in particular. They must become as invisible as chalk and board so that students learn to interpret and assess critically the information that surrounds them, and are able to express themselves and communicate using available technology (Area Moreira, 2007).

VLEs are useful for the classified storage of resources, quizzes, emailing, chatrooms and forums. Blogs are ideal for reflective journals open for comment by peers and tutor, and wikis for collective content creation and development, complementing or replacing lectures. Through social bookmarking, lists of articles or activities online can be expanded and commented on. Multimedia presentations available online can do away with the monopoly of textbooks, and the creation of such presentations by students to be shared through social media can show their emotional response and their abilities to deal with complex technological resources.

Based on this theoretical framework, I have been working to integrate ICT – and especially Web 2.0 resources – into my Literature classes in Teacher Education, and it is the tasks designed and their realisation by the students that are the core of this demonstration. The activities range from personal reading journals to forums to raise expectations or share responses; from selecting existing materials to

designing an imaginary film trailer based on a book discussed. Some of the resources illustrated through students' productions can be found at:

**VLE:** <http://ies28.sfe.infed.edu.ar/aula/>

**Yahoo Group:** [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/literature\\_in\\_english\\_I/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/literature_in_english_I/)

**Wiki:** <http://ieslit1.pbworks.com/>

**Social network:** <http://litineglsh.ning.com/>

**Social network** (reading preferences)

<http://www.goodreads.com/user/show/2354802-lucia>

**Social bookmarking:** <http://delicious.com/tag/litinenglish3>

**Media sharing:** <http://www.slideshare.net/mamez/masset-creative-writing>

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# **“Online collaborative project work: A road to real communication”**

CARNICERO, SILVANA

## **Abstract**

The aim of this demonstration is to show how English language learners benefit from online collaborative projects by interacting with English- speaking students from all over the world moving from simulated to authentic communication in the classroom.

Online collaborative projects can deal with a variety of topics related to different curricular areas fostering cross-curricularity. They are aimed at students from different ages and proficiency so they are suitable for all levels of the educational system. This paper gives some tips on how to organize them for students to go through a successful experience while learning the foreign language meaningfully.

## **Summary**

English language learners benefit from online collaborative projects by communicating with English- speaking students from all over the world in genuine contexts of interaction

Recognizing that motivation is a key factor for students to learn, I have decided to include online collaborative projects in my classes as a way of bringing variety to our classwork. Online projects have turned out to be motivating for students since they focus on content learning while students use the foreign language for real communication. Besides, they give students the possibility of practising skills they use in real life such as looking for information in the web, writing and reading emails, leaving comments in blogs or participating in discussion forums. Eventually, a face to face exchange can be the closure for an online project.

At the end of each project, students feel the satisfaction of having a final product that is the result of using the foreign language as a means of communication and not as an end in itself. Technology is genuinely integrated to make students interact with other project participants.



Online project work gives room to cooperative learning, integrated knowledge, cross- curricularity and learner autonomy. All these features are essential if we are teaching English to students so that they can apply what they learn in the real world. This approach to teaching English also develops students' learning and communication strategies which will be necessary for them to go on learning once they have left school.

Collaborative projects can be used with different ages and focusing on different curricular areas such as biology, literature, geography and history.

Communication among project participants from all over the world can be achieved either synchronously or asynchronously by using different tools provided by technology such as emails, discussion forums, chat sessions or blogs depending on the resources available.

The following are examples of projects my students from primary and secondary schools have been engaged with:

### **Online projects for primary school students**

#### **PROJECT 1: *CHRISTMAS CARDS EXCHANGE***

This project fosters communication among students from different cultures around a traditional celebration such as Christmas. Schools from several countries are grouped and students must make Christmas cards sending greetings and describing through pictures how Christmas is celebrated in their country.

When cards are ready, they are sent by regular mail to the schools in their groups so students receive cards from different parts of the world.

During the process, students post messages in a forum introducing themselves and showing pictures of them while making the cards.



This project focuses in the curricular areas of foreign language and arts.

## PROJECT 2: *BOOKS MARK THE WORLD*

The aim of this project is to develop students' pleasure for reading. The project starts when students choose books to be read in class and then they have to make a bookmark with the title of the book they have chosen and the name of the author as well as a picture illustrating the content of the book. At the back of the bookmark, they should state whether they liked the book or not and why.



Pupils interact with students through online forums and when the bookmarks are ready, they are sent by regular mail as in the previous project.

As it can be seen, both projects include the exchange of a product by regular mail. This is because as students are young, they regard the communication as more real when they feel they can touch a product that is the result of this interaction.

## Online projects for secondary school students

### PROJECT 1: *YEAR 1945*

This is another project belonging to IEARN Network but this time focusing on social studies in which students from all over the world had to make a newspaper similar to those available in 1945 at the end of World War II.



In that newspaper students should publish pieces of news describing what life was like in those times in different parts of the world. Before final publication, students had to send the rough version of their articles to other project participants for collaborative editing to take place.

At the end of the projects, all the articles were published in an online international newspaper. During the project students did research using the World Wide Web, wrote pieces of news, worked on their texts collaboratively with their world partners, took part in forum discussions and created an electronic publication:

## PROJECT 2: AIDS AND HIV BEYOND MY OWN BACKYARD

This project aims at making students research on the problem of AIDS and young people in their countries for them to become aware of their local situation in comparison to the one in the rest of the world. Students also learnt how cultural differences made a change in the development of this illness. The project fostered both a tolerant and responsible attitude in view of the disease.

Students researched on the topic using books, web publications and the stories told by other project participants. They made surveys and compared their results with those obtained by their world partners. They also made posters to have the topic of the project alive in their classrooms and they even talked to specialists online.

The image displays three screenshots from a Microsoft Internet Explorer browser window, showing various project materials related to HIV and AIDS.

The top-left screenshot shows a poster titled "HIV AND AIDS". The poster includes the text: "HIV: THE HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS IS TRANSMITTED VIA AIDS. THE PERSON WITH HIV CANNOT RESIST INFECTIONS, CAN GET SERIOUS ILLNESS, AND MAY DIE. TRANSMISSION OF HIV OCCURS THROUGH BLOOD, BLOOD PRODUCTS, AND SEXUAL CONTACT. WE CAN PREVENT THE SPREAD OF THE VIRUS IN THE POPULATION. LET US ALL USE CAREFULNESS IN OUR SEXUAL RELATIONS. WE MUST USE CONDOMS TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF THE VIRUS. IN THE CASE OF BLOOD, WE MUST MAKE SURE THE BLOOD IS SAFE FOR PEOPLE WHO NEED IT."

The top-right screenshot shows a survey titled "5. Do you know the difference between AIDS and HIV?". The survey results are as follows:

Response	Percentage	Count
YES	95.5%	40
NO	4.4%	2
I DON'T KNOW	0.0%	0
OTHER	0%	0
<b>Total Responses</b>		<b>42</b>

The bottom screenshot shows a text document titled "Daniel is twenty-three years old". The text describes a young man's experience with HIV: "Daniel is twenty-three years old. He learnt about his illness one month ago. He got infected through his first sexual relationship when he was eighteen years old. His friends haven't got any problems, only one of his friends discriminated him. Although the contact at work does not infect anybody, Daniel is trying nobody to discover his illness. But when in his work, they get to know about it, they will dismiss him. Then, he must confront discrimination."

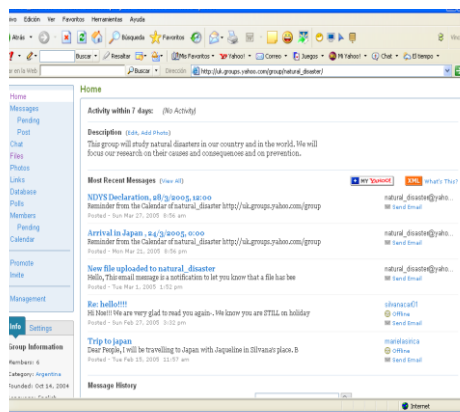
### PROJECT 3: **NATURAL DISASTERS PROJECT**

This project aimed at making students aware of the importance of natural disasters and their effect on the environment. Students were expected to exchange information about the most typical natural disasters in their countries. Before that, they had to investigate the causes and consequences of different natural disasters and they had to create Power Point presentations with the information they collected.

This was a cross-curricular project among EFL, biology and geography.

Some of the activities carried out during the process were:

- Tree planting: each participant country planted a tree in their school to enrich the environment and those pictures were shared in a forum.
- Topic selection: the class was divided into groups and each groups chose a natural disaster to focus on
- Creation of an electronic group: an e-group was created in each participant class with the purpose of centralizing and sharing the information among the students and organizing the work to be done



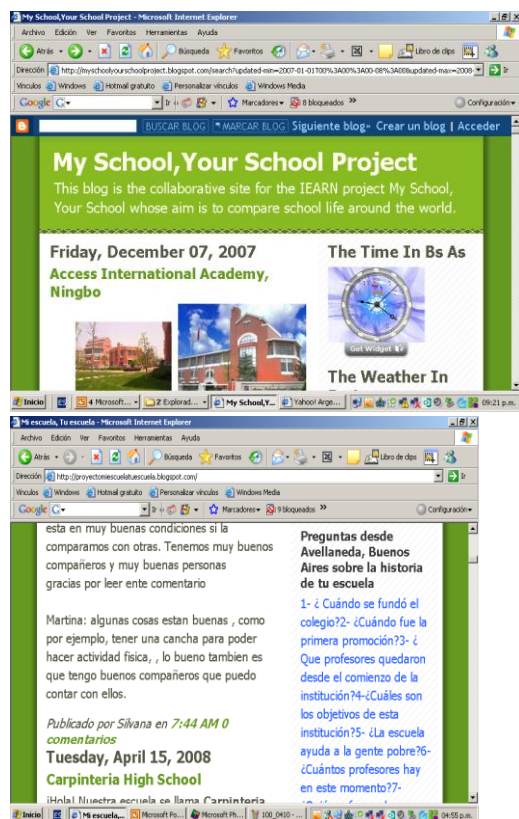
[http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/natural\\_disaster/](http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/natural_disaster/)  
<http://www.bubbleshare.com/album/460259>

This project ended with a face to face exchange carried out in an international meeting that took place in Japan in which participants from all over the world had to share their final products in a summit for Natural Disasters

### PROJECT 4: **MY SCHOOL, YOUR SCHOOL**

This online collaborative project connects students from different schools in the world for them to compare schools analyzing similarities and differences and to develop their sense of identity. Students are expected to interview their world peers about their educational system to become aware of cultural differences at the level of education.

The project is carried out both in English and Spanish. Students are expected to answer two questionnaires they can find in the project blog related to their school routines and their school history. Once the answers are published, participants are expected to comment on the blog posts.



<http://myschoolyourschoolproject.blogspot.com>  
<http://proyectomiescuelatuescuola.blogspot.com>

Some aspects to take into account to make online projects work in EFL classrooms for students to feel they have been through a successful experience are:

- Working along with students to choose topics according to their age and interests
- Considering time barriers especially when countries of both hemispheres participate
- Reducing the scope of the project
- Keeping the project audience in mind
- Being aware of the technology we have available
- Organizing the enabling tasks carefully
- Focusing on *fluency* and accuracy considering that the main goal of online collaborative project is *communication*
- Designing the final product carefully thinking that it will go beyond the classroom walls

Based on my knowledge and experience, I can state that technology will do a lot in our EFL lessons if we integrate collaborative projects since students will realize that they are not learning a language to sit for an exam but to communicate and to express their feelings and interests.

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## **“Poetry as a source of inspiration and creativity in the EFL class”**

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### **Abstract**

In this demonstration we propose to rediscover the value of poetry as a powerful resource in EFL classes. This power lies in the way poetry resonates in our hearts and minds, in its universality, compactness and ambiguity, which lead students to communicate authentically and to develop their imagination and creativity. We will show techniques for approaching and working away from the poem and ways of fostering creative poetry writing in the English language class.

## **Introduction**

The advent of the Communicative Approach in EFL teaching methodology created such a profound impact that it still reverberates in our present-day classes. However positive this movement has been as regards its emphasis on the utilitarian and pragmatic aspects of the language, it has often neglected the creative and aesthetic purposes for which language is used. When considering children's L1 development, it is impossible to disregard the fundamental role that rhyme, rhythm and play perform in mother tongue acquisition. This fact, along with other reasons pertaining to the L2 class, supports the need to provide opportunities for students to explore the creative aspects of the language. One of the ways of introducing creativity into the classroom is through the students' appreciation and production of poetry.

The use of poems in the EFL classroom offers a number of benefits to the EFL student. In the first place, poems explore themes of universal concern and every known language includes some form of poetry. This form of art embodies life experiences, observations and feelings and thus provides a rich and varied repertoire for students' understanding and production. In poetry, compactness of thought and vividness of imagery combine to create a powerful overall effect in the students' minds. This effect leads to a strong emotional and cognitive response in the reader and this authentic response is, in itself, highly motivating since each student's contribution to the interpretation of a poem is valuable. In fact, it is through this sharing of the poet's world that the reader becomes a new creator of meaning. Such an experience often fosters in the students the need to be creators of poems themselves. A classroom in which students' creative contributions are valued builds up their confidence as language users. In terms of personal growth factors, Maley and Duff claim that "interaction with a literary text usually involves a deeper level of mental processing, a greater personal involvement and response, and hence a greater chance of leaving traces in the memory (2007: 6)." Regarding students' linguistic development, poetry expands their range of receptive vocabulary and provides the possibility of playing freely with lexis and syntactic structures. In addition, the importance of poetry as a way of raising cultural awareness cannot be dismissed. In this sense, it is an essential tool for the development of tolerance and understanding of 'difference'.

In conclusion, the vast number of benefits that the use of poetry offers in the EFL class makes it an ideal material to foster an integral development of the student. Such a development embraces many areas including the cognitive, linguistic, emotional, and cultural aspects of the individual. Furthermore, poetry provides space for free creativity and experimentation, allowing students to produce tangible evidence of their learning.

## **On approaching and appropriating the poem**

A starting point in the students' approximation to poetry is their exposure to different poem types. This will gradually lead students to explore this unique form of literary expression and, eventually, give them the necessary confidence to experiment with and create their own poetic productions. Therefore, both the understanding and the writing of poems constitute two integrated and complementary tasks. In the following sections, ways of working towards and away from the poem will be suggested.



## On approaching the poem

A necessary step previous to exposing students to a poem is to activate schematic knowledge regarding its main theme. There are a number of techniques that serve this purpose. Among them, the teacher can resort to the use of images, such as paintings, photographs or video clips; students' life experiences and memories; auditory material such as songs or sounds; reading material that deals with the same or similar themes as the target poem like other poems, articles, quizzes and letters; visualizations; and dramatizations.

The following step consists of the reading and interpretation of the selected poem. During this stage, it is important to consider the application of non-conventional activities so as to encourage acceptance of a variety of interpretations. This freedom in readers' response to poetry will serve a two-fold purpose: it will surely provoke ample opportunities for discussion and interaction among the students, and it might help them lose their fear of freely expressing their creativity in an environment of tolerance. As Maley and Duff (1989: 70) clearly state,

"we do not ask the student to *explain* the poem but rather to work with it. In the process, the students will comment on the poem in their own time and in their own way. A poem contains many thoughts, many suggestions, not all of which can be 'grasped' at once. Understanding comes gradually. And often we understand best when we are not making a deliberate effort to understand. "

Although seemingly simple and short at first glance, poems contain complex ideas and have the power to engender genuine discussion by challenging students to share their personal visions of the world. In this sense, teachers should be flexible and tolerant enough so as to accept all their students' views of the poem, which may even include a negative or indifferent response. In his book, *Teacher Man*, Frank McCourt, describes a lesson in which a poem is read out and different students' comments are accepted. This writer explains his attitude towards the use of poetry in a foreign language class:

"We're not analyzing. We're just responding. If you go to a movie you come out talking about it, don't you?

Sometimes, but this is a poem and you know what English teachers do to poems. Analyze, analyze, analyze. Dig for the deeper meaning. That's what turned me against poetry. Someone should dig a grave and bury the deeper meaning.

I asked you only what happened when you read the poem. If nothing happened it's not a crime. When I hear heavy metal, the eyes glaze. Some of you could probably explain it to me and I'd try to listen to that music with some understanding, but I just don't care. You don't have to respond to every stimulus." (McCourt 2005: 223)

There are numerous non-conventional activities used to encourage students' personal responses to poems. Unusual types of matching exercises can be

mentioned, such as matching the poem to the most relevant themes; to the feelings aroused by the poem; or to the most representative image, including paintings, photographs, figures or abstract pictures. Other items with which the poem can be matched after reading it are songs, music or sounds; realia; and other types of texts such as stories, notes or other poems. To express their understanding of the poem, students can also read or listen to it and do certain follow-up activities like drawing, acting, colouring or making an object. Indirect questions can also be applied. These involve unfamiliar questions, for example asking about the 'happy' or 'angry' words that appear in the poem or which line or phrase could be used as a book title. Finally, associations can also be established between the poem and their life experiences or immediate reactions.

### **On working away from the poem**

Writing poetry is an ideal task for students to learn a wide range of language skills and, at the same time, it provides space for experimentation with the second language. A crucial advantage of this type of activity is that it gives students the chance to express complex thoughts in a compact way, in spite of the limitations of their language repertoire in the L2.

Poems can either follow patterns or 'closed forms' (Johnson 1990:26), or adopt their own patterns as "a reflection of the content" (ibid.), i.e. 'open forms'. Pattern poems offer many benefits for both teachers and students. From the students' perspective, patterns provide the possibility to concentrate on the content and expression of ideas without having to worry much about form. This gives students a sense of safety, confidence and fulfilment since they will be able to see the final outcome of their own production fairly fast. One of the advantages pattern poems offer teachers is that they can be easily adapted to different ages and levels of proficiency. Furthermore, these closed forms of poetry are an ideal vehicle for students to practise different grammar patterns. However, this initial aim is often overshadowed by a number of other purposes which naturally emerge during the application of the activity. These include the practice of the four language skills, vocabulary, language awareness, literary appreciation and critical thinking. Finally, because of its power of memorability and motivation, the creation of pattern poems is a highly recommendable reinforcement activity.

Among the different types of pattern poems, the diamond poem clearly exemplifies how the creation of a work of literature can be approached in the foreign language class. The fact that the entire production of this poem can be achieved in just one lesson gives the students instant gratification and makes it a highly rewarding and challenging task.

The following procedure shows an enjoyable way of involving the whole class in the creative writing of a diamond poem. Firstly, through the reading of some sample diamond poems, the class discusses their meaning and form. The teacher highlights the pattern and how this contributes to create a mirror image where opposite concepts are described. Once this is achieved, the students proceed to name the parts of speech in each line and identify how many of each appear in the line. They should notice that the opposite concepts meet in the middle line. This means that the middle line contains some elements related to one concept and some to its opposite. This introduces students to the idea that diamond poems could be read and written in a nonlinear sequence starting from the top and bottom and finishing in the middle. Before students write their own productions, they engage in the creation of a sample poem as a cooperative activity. This whole

group process adds a sense of unity and group satisfaction. To start with this group production, the teacher proceeds to elicit pairs of nouns that are opposites, such as SCHOOL and HOLIDAYS, and then asks them to think of opposing adjectives that relate to each noun. The teacher follows the same brainstorming technique to elicit present participles for lines 3 (related to SCHOOL for instance, such as `studying´) and 5 (related to HOLIDAYS for example, such as `relaxing´) of the poem. The final product is then read out to check meaning and enjoy the pleasure of sharing their whole-group accomplishment. As a final step in this writing away from the poem, the teacher encourages individual production of diamond poems following a given template.

```

              (NOUN A)
            -----
          (ADJECTIVE A) (ADJECTIVE A)
        -----
      (GERUND A) (GERUND A) (GERUND A)
    -----
(NOUN A) (NOUN A) (NOUN B) (NOUN B)
-----
  (GERUND B ) (GERUND B) (GERUND B)
    -----
      (ADJECTIVE B) (ADJECTIVE B)
    -----
              (NOUN B)
            -----
  
```

Here is an example produced by an upper-intermediate group:

```

      Granny
    Old , stiff
  Knitting, talking, rocking
Fragility , tears , diapers , milk
  Screaming, sleeping, smiling
    Cute , soft
      Baby
  
```

## Conclusion

Creativity is one of the capacities that define and distinguish human beings. As such, it should have prime of place in any class but especially so in a language class since language is the creative tool par excellence. Poetry is one of the arts that ideally lights the creative spark in students due to its unique features of universality, compactness, and vividness of imagery, which evoke both an emotional and a cognitive response in the learners.

The creativity teachers display in the design of the activities they propose for their students to approximate, interpret, and eventually write poems is proportional to the creativity they wish to foster in their classes. When approximating the poem, what teachers should bear in mind is the importance of treating each student's response as valuable thus respecting individuality. This will turn the EFL classroom into a rich, varied and safe environment in which a creative art like poetry has its space. Such an environment will gradually build up students' confidence to cross the bridge from interpreting and appreciating the poems of others to attempting their own poetic creations. The writing of poems in a second language helps turn the language learning experience in a creative and adventurous challenge which may ultimately become "the starting point... of a useful and exciting exploration of language. An exploration which, fortunately, can never end." (Maley and Duff 1989: 16)

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## Posters

# **“Responding to literary narrative texts with visual reformulations: A look at the cultural dimension of EFL reading”**

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CONICET

## **Abstract**

The research reported here is part of a broader study which addressed the issue of the role of cultural factors in foreign/second language (hereafter L2) reading. The specific aim of this report is to describe how L2 readers approached the cultural content of narrative texts through visual reformulations. A visual reformulation can be defined as the visual representation of textual content including the combination of words, phrases, and/or sentences with visual information in different formats such as charts, tables, drawings, etc.

## **Research question**

How do L2 readers approach the cultural content of (narrative) texts through visual reformulations?

## **Evidence Base**

This study is grounded in a socio-cultural conception of reading in general and cultural perspectives in L2 reading in particular (Berg, 2003; Bernhardt, 2003;

Byram and Grundy, 2003; Byram and Morgan, 1994; Byram, Nichols, and Stevens, 2001; Fitzgerald, 2003; Kramsch, 1993, 1998; Mountford and Wadham-Smith, 2000). To capture the cultural aspects in a text, it is essential to have attitudes of curiosity, openness, and willingness to suspend disbelief and value judgments with regard to other people's beliefs and behaviors. It also considers theories of narrative comprehension in L1 and L2 reading (Paris and Paris, 2003; Paris, 2005; Singer and Donlan, 1994; Strömqvist and Day, 1993).

## **Methodology**

Experimental observational research.

**Population:** 180 advanced EFL learners (Caucasian, middle class, Spanish-speaking, 19-21 years old) in Argentina in 2005. These learners are proficient readers in English as they have reached CAE level (Cambridge Certificate of Advanced English).

**Materials:** Two texts (one culturally familiar; one culturally marked) on a common theme (Christmas celebration).

Text with familiar cultural content: in Spanish; selection of *Mi planta de naranja-lima* (de Vasconcelos, 1971: 39-43) describing a Christmas celebration in Brazil. Presents a view of Christmas applicable to the Latin American context (avoiding complete textual accessibility and total cultural familiarity).

Culturally marked text: in English; selection of *Desert Wife* (Faunce, 1961: 173-181) describing the Christmas celebration of the Navajo Indians of the US. The narrator (an outsider) describes, explains and interprets culturally novel information (softening the impact of the cultural load).

## **Motivation for the use of Spanish**

The text in Spanish and the possibility to use Spanish in the completion of the visual reformulations for both texts allowed for the observation of the interaction between the L1 and the L2 in this setting (Droop and Verhoeven, 2003).

**Data sources:** 180 visual reformulations for each text. Total: 360.

## **Motivation for the inclusion of the visual reformulation**

One of the reasons for the inclusion of the visual reformulation as a written task in this study was its simplicity and power of representation (Derrida, 1994) as well as its usefulness to justify emotional responses in reading – an area in which the theories of schemata have weaknesses (Sadoski and Paivio, 1994). To put oneself in someone else's shoes requires imagination, and the visual reformulation aimed to offer a forum for its manifestation. The idea was that students reacted visually with the purpose of accessing their non-verbal, imaginative systems (Arizpe, 2001; Pope Edwards and Mayo Willis, 2000; Sadoski and Paivio, 1994).

Another reason resided in the power of images as a strategy to recall textual information (Sadoski and Paivio, 1994). The integration of textual information in visual format is related with the comprehension, integration, and appreciation of reading material (Pope Edwards and Mayo Willis, 2000; Sadoski and Paivio, 1994). Finally, the visual reformulation aimed at stimulating the cognitive through the affective in order to satisfy the perceived need to unify the cognitive sphere and the affective domain (Millard and Marsh, 2001; Sanders Bustle, 2004), specially acute in countries like Argentina where many times the educational environment limits the development of this imaginative dimension.

### **Implementation: some considerations**

The learners read each text and produced a visual reformulation based on each one. There was no time limit to read each text and learners were allowed to take notes. They were free to choose the length as well as the language to be used in the visual reformulation (L1, L2, or a combination).

### **Data analysis**

The following aspects were observed in the 360 visual reformulations:

1) the holistic evaluation of each visual reformulation using a scale 1 – 5 (adapted from Penningroth and Rosenberg, 1995) where 1 amounted to an inadequate text in which it was hard to decipher what the writer was trying to say, with little or no coherence at all, and 5 referred to an excellent and completely coherent production. Determining the coherence of the visual reformulations with this scale helped differentiate between comprehension problems related with language issues (language ability, writing skill, reading skill, etc.) and those related with the perception/ apprehension of the cultural aspects in the texts.

Variations in the assignment of this global coherence depended on the presence (or absence) of the following aspects:

- a) an easily identifiable plot (one can confidently say what is happening) by means of a clear sequence of events (temporal and events sequences);
- b) a clear story development (plot and relevant details) where the writer remains on task/topic/focus, without digressions, and good organization;
- c) a context of situation by means of which the writer orients the reader;
- d) vivid and powerful vocabulary;
- e) cultural details; and
- f) details (cultural and others) organized following a discernible plan.

The impact of mechanical errors (punctuation, grammar, lexis, etc.) on the coherence of the productions was considered only when they interfered with communication.



On the basis of the foregoing, the resultant scale was the following, depending on the presence of one or several of the aspects mentioned below:

- level 1 *inadequate*: a) text plagued by errors; b) without many errors but only the learner's interpretation, not motivated or justified by textual content; c) with obstacles, i.e. a facilitating condition of an imminent action is missing; d) with distractions, i.e. with unexpected actions or events which create new aims for the reader, carrying him/her temporarily or permanently outside the Christmas schema in this cultural context; e) dis-functional text, with the gathering of isolated and/or erratic events from the story without a conceptual framework behind their recovery, with problems in the order of information, and/or more or less adequate details but which reflect the absence of the schema;
- level 2 *partially adequate*: a) an adequate main idea but without detailed events or episodes; b) adequate (cultural) details but with a main idea with errors;
- level 3 *adequate*: an adequate main idea with a general description of events and episodes;
- level 4 *good*: an adequate main idea with a specific description of events and episodes;
- level 5 *very good*: an adequate main idea with a specific description of events and episodes, with rich cultural details and/or culturally authentic dialogues and/or vivid and powerful vocabulary; and/or the use of narrative resources, etc.

This evaluation at the level of the whole text constituted one relevant and significant unit of analysis, a holistic measure of comprehension.

2) The inclusion in the visual reformulations of the cultural elements mentioned in the texts (previously identified as part of their analysis). Here the omission of cultural aspects was as significant as their inclusion.

As way of example, for the culturally marked text, the cultural elements identified and codified in the visual reformulations were the following: *desert landscape; Navajo dressed in their best clothes; a community celebration; fires; dances and music; handmade musical instruments; wrestling and racing; families eat together; eating and eating; bread making; Native Americans stroll with raw beefsteaks; stew preparation; coffee preparation; happiness and fun; and food in general* –among others.

3) The presence of the following elements in the visual reformulations:

- a) elaborations: information from an appropriate schema; culturally appropriate extensions from the text (with more or less precision);
- b) distortions of the target culture or C2: culturally inappropriate information; culturally inappropriate textual modifications;
- c) evident errors: an action leads to an unexpected or inappropriate result; explicit errors without an identifiable cultural base; alien or strange details, not motivated or justified by textual content or the Christmas schema;
- d) intrusions from the native culture or C1: from the learners' own ideas and culture;
- e) inferences from the text, mentioned explicitly in the reformulation;

- f) wrong inferences or inferences not motivated or justified by textual content;
- g) irrelevant information: information (about events, places, characters, thoughts and feelings of certain characters, etc.), not necessarily referring to cultural aspects, which have no place in the flow of the key events in the story; the result of a local reading and of assigning the same value or importance to all the text, with the focus on information which was not intended to be focal;
- h) rationalizations: link among details and presentation of such details as apparently coherent. Of two types, depending on whether one text detail is linked to another not present in the text itself (inventions) or whether two text details are related (with the use of cohesion to relate elements which should not have been connected);
- i) reductions/simplifications: process of summary of two or more sentences, with fewer words and details than the original text; use of general vocabulary; presence of general propositions, i.e. with terms which summarize the most basic actions of the Christmas schema in the text;
- j) generalizations: a more significant reduction in which general words replace specific nouns; presence of general propositions, of a more topical nature than reductions;
- k) evaluative comments from the learners; inclusion of an opinion or attitude from the learners about an idea in the text (not the mere copying of the opinions of the characters or the opinions of the writer of the text);
- l) adequate morale/ interpretation from the learners, based on textual information;
- m) inadequate or wrong morale/ interpretation from the learners, not motivated or justified by textual content or the Christmas schema;
- n) explicit inclusion of the feelings and motivations of the characters, inferred in the text;
- o) explicit inclusion of the feelings and motivations of the characters wrongly inferred from the text or not motivated or justified by its textual content; and
- p) culturally adequate details.

4) The following additional elements were observed and codified:

- a) reference to the central theme: reference to the Christmas celebration, either through the use of words and phrases or through its visual representation;
- b) the narrative episodes: without specific episodes; with a unique episode; or with multiple episodes, i.e. with the synthesis of information from narrative episodes from various paragraphs in the text;
- c) the images both at the level of the paragraph and the whole text;
- d) the stereotypes from the native culture or C1, that is, the learners' own culture;
- e) the stereotypes from the target culture or C2, that is, the Native American culture; and
- f) a narrative frame with a context of situation for the story.

Data were triangulated with the help of two research assistants, who worked as external readers/ coders/analysts of all data sources. A consistency rate (agreement) of 95% or more among researcher and research assistants in the different stages of coding and analysis was reached, representing acceptable inter-rater reliability.

## **Main result**

The learners' prevalent superficial and stereotypical approach to the cultural content of the texts used in this study, both familiar and unfamiliar, revealed a threshold of cultural awareness of others (and possibly of oneself) beyond which what was different or unfamiliar remained inaccessible, irrespective of the possibility of using the mother tongue (Spanish) as well as the foreign language (English) in the completion of the task. The textual opacity of the texts used was unapproachable, irrespective of their language (Spanish, English), the cultural load (familiar, unfamiliar), and the type of cultural content they included (explicit, implicit). This result points to the difficulty to capture what is different not only in relation to a different culture but also with respect to a subculture within a national culture. The appreciation of the significance and importance of certain cultural aspects presupposes the capacity for abstraction and analysis (Byram and Grundy, 2003) – which only those learners with a high cognitive and moral development may reach. A significant aspect of this research is that stereotypes emerged in the visual reformulations. Stereotypes about the learners' own culture focused on the Christmas food, the housing, the outfits for the celebration, the Christmas presents, fireworks, etc. Stereotyped references about the Navajo included their portrayal as dark Indians with feathers, hair bands, dressed in tiny cloths, with their chests uncovered, living in huts, in a deserted landscape with cactuses and some hills, and yelling like pirates (sometimes on their horses).

## **Research significance**

This study has immediate relevance in the field of language education. The description of the approach of the cultural content of (narrative) texts through visual reformulations has immediate applications in different L2 contexts in Argentina and Latin America as well as in the education of English language learners (ELLs) and struggling readers in the US. Results will impact on the following areas: a) the selection of reading material in L1 (mother tongue) and L2 contexts, considering cultural load; b) instructional techniques in working with (struggling) readers in L1 and L2 literacy education (e.g. awareness-raising strategies about the cultural aspects in a text; techniques/strategies contributing to the perception, apprehension, interpretation, etc. of cultural information); c) teacher education: this study has implications in relation to the qualifications, knowledge, skills, attitudes, etc. which will be required from classroom teachers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the framework of globalisation and increasingly multilingual, multiethnic, and multicultural educational contexts around the world.

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## **“When we speak our mind,do we always communicate effectively?”**

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### **Abstract**

How can we organize our ideas and speak our mind so as to get the good communication we need for students to learn quickly and well? Let's look for an answer, analyzing some basic beliefs as regards communication at school (especially in the classroom), studying the theory behind the words, discussing new ways of helping the learner get an effective approach to communication, using proved resources and techniques, and working out some pieces of communication to demonstrate that clarity of language is essential for the success of any classroom project.

### **Communication: Word Power, Voice Tone and Body Language**

Communication is the most basic and vital of human needs, after the survival one. Even to feed themselves, since ancient times, men and women have needed to understand one another and to be cooperative by means of interpersonal communication. What we think - the dialogue we have with ourselves - is not enough to achieve a good communication. In order not to let knowledge be at the bottom of our mind, what really matters is the capacity of transmitting our messages, thoughts and feelings. Parents who feel a great love for their children but do not know how to express it are, most of the times, considered bad parents by their children. In the same way, teachers who have a lot of knowledge but do not get to transmit what they know to their students or what they want from them

to the children's parents, are not good teachers. This happens simply because they do not know how to communicate effectively and, consequently, they do not get good results.

*Knowledge is a potential power: it becomes a reality only when it is communicated to the Universe and transformed into action (Gabor, 1994:13)*

Communication is not only established through words. In fact, *words* represent a little seven per cent (7%) of the capacity of influencing others. As astonishing as this seems to be, we always concentrate only on this percentage to teach our students. It is not to be said that words are not important. However, to communicate correctly you need, before saying any word, to shape a structure which makes your communication more powerful and efficient. According to some neurolinguistic research, *voice tone* and *body language* – that is, the posture and attitude of the speaker – represent the thirty-eight per cent (38%) and the fifty-five per cent (55%) of your communication act, respectively.

All in all, the use of such ingredients is simple. They have always formed part of the human being's interpersonal intelligence. But, throughout time, men and women have been exaggerating the importance of words over the other two aspects. Voice tone and body language act in us in our daily conversations and classes, but we are not aware of their presence.

Which is the secret of true communicators? Is it a natural and special talent? Every human being has all the necessary conditions to develop that capacity because communication is an art and a science. Therefore, it can be studied and trained. The new neurolinguistic studies put in our hands some techniques which can make any person become a good communicator. Besides increasing the power to influence others, these techniques enhance our intelligence, not only in the interpersonal aspect, but in all the others as well.

## **Speaking your Mind Properly**

To speak is easy, to speak well is important, but to speak our mind making the others understand what we want to say is a difficult task.

As words do not have a fixed meaning, but they mean what we think they mean, there is constant misleading as regards communication. We interpret key words and act according to this interpretation, instead of asking the person who said those words their real meaning. The consequences can be very serious. We must ask questions which help us make the meaning of each act of communication clear. When we speak, we need to use clear word meaning and message intention to be able to transmit what must be done, what the task is, exactly. A teacher needs to break a complex task up into basic units to be performed or studied. Every project has to be fragmented. As it happens with the Chinese Boxes, the complete project hides small projects inside.



Words are not tasks and, in themselves, words can be tricky. We read and listen to words; we interpret and transmit this interpretation through written or oral expressions. However, two problems may come up:

- 1-It can happen that we interpret the original words wrongly and start the action from *our* interpretation, instead of doing it from its true meaning.
- 2-It can happen that the others interpret our words wrongly and start the action from *their* interpretation, instead of doing it from what we wanted to express.

The result may be something similar to the *Nonsense Game or Chinese Whispering*, in which the project can be completely badly interpreted when it comes to the end of the chain, being - the total summing up of the parts - something very different from the original idea. Words have lots of possible interpretations, that is why clarity of language is the first fundamental step in the success of any project.

## Crucial Points

Words do not automatically take the desired meaning. The person who listens to, acts according to the meaning that he / she understands, which does not necessarily fits the meaning that the speaker wants to transmit. To avoid any possible ambiguity, there is something that could be used, which NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming) calls *the Metamodel*. This was developed by Richard Bandler and John Grinder(1975) and was published in their first book, called *The Structure of Magic* (1975). It consists of a series of questions which clarify the language we use. When we express an idea through language, three things can happen: first, we *generalize from a concrete object* (representing all the possibilities); second, we *suppress or ignore facts* (not to judge them); and third, we *distort the situation* (giving the descriptive words a meaning which is not the proper one). These processes are not bad in themselves. Distortion, for example, is a source of creativity that lets us perceive new meanings in known facts. We learn by generalizing from examples, and most of the times we give examples inviting others to generalize out of them.

Within the Metamodel there are a series of questions designed to analyze and clarify language and avoid misinterpretation – for the speaker and for the listener – making the former to fill in important *information holes*, reconverting the language when this is inadequate and connecting the generalizations with specific examples.

**Who, exactly?** Suppose that the director tells you: "We need this project finished by next month, so go to see the involved people and find out what must be done." No one is mentioned in this example and you wonder *who the involved people* are. The director assumes that you know it, but his/her idea can be very different from yours. Then, it is advisable to be very careful with the use of some words such as *people, person, personal* or the everlasting *they*. More than that, when the passive voice is used, we do not even mention the person. For example, "*The report has been completed*" or "*The order was mistaken*", are voices which do not mention the doer of the action. This kind of sentences could be used to avoid responsibilities, because it mentions the action without mentioning who did that action. With the question "*Who, exactly?*" the Metamodel helps to be specific in the logic level of identity.

**What, Which, exactly?** We have to be specific not only with *who* has to do each thing, but with *what* has to be done as well. For example "*We have to take action to be assured that this misleading isn't produced again*" is not clear enough. Perhaps in a previous meeting everything had been cleared up, but, all in all, it is



not a waste of time to ask: *Which steps? / Which situation? / What actions, exactly?*

**How, exactly?** This is an important question for a teacher preparing a class or a director planning a meeting or a team of teachers articulating subjects. How to implement a methodology and strategies which work well for students to learn is a complex task and it needs to be fragmented in a series of steps.

Class language can be very abstract sometimes. We mean something and the students understand a different thing. So when you plan a class, plan your speech, too. Ask yourself which verbs you have to use, what your students have to understand and do, how they must do it and how you may instruct them about your objective. Moreover, train your students in the use of some words which express concepts, such as "compare", "analyze", "discuss", etc. In this way you are clear enough to be understood.

### **Last but not least: iParents!**

No matter how good they are, parents are always a challenge for us. But do not worry, Teachers, we need only one tool to face them: *tact*.

What is tact? It is the capacity to recognize the delicacy of a situation and to say the most appropriate words. It is the talent to face difficult circumstances or people. To be tactful might be a complicated challenge, even more if we have to talk to parents about the people whom they love best: their children. However, there exists a simple way to learn the basic elements of tact.

### **Communication with tact**

Some of the following strategies will help you to deal with parents: 1) Listen carefully. 2) Make the other person talk first. 3) Think before speaking. 4) Say "Sorry" as quickly as possible when you say or do something inconvenient. 5) Talk, do not compete. 6) Choose the right moment for your comments. 7) Concentrate on the speaking, not on the personality. 8) Find out hidden feelings. 9) Be aware of reactions. 10) Interpret body language. Let's see them in detail:

- 1. Listen Carefully:** A listener who shows interest makes the speaker feel appreciated, sure and satisfied with himself/herself. Lack of attention may cause foolish comments that may provoke personal and / or professional conflicts. Here are some suggestions to listen efficiently: 1) Eliminate external and internal distractions. 2) Observe body language. 3) Avoid unnecessary interruptions. 4) Be attentive to key words. 5) Listen in a reflexive mood. 6) Ask the necessary questions to make implicit ideas clear. 7) Admit the speaker's point of view.
- 2. Make the other person talk first:** There are three reasons to make other people talk before you in a conversation: In the first place, listening shows kindness and the desire to consider the other person's point of view objectively. This makes the conversation flow smoothly. In the second place, it reduces the competitive tone of a dialogue, focusing on the main ideas, thus creating an open atmosphere where free exchange of opinions can take place. And, in the third place, it lets you identify conformity zones before exposing your own.

3. **Think before Speaking:** When you want to speak, think what you want to say, why you would like to say it and how you are going to say it, in order to avoid some inconvenient comments. Then, breathe in deeply and simply stand in the other person's shoes. You can use your own feelings as general criteria to rearrange your thoughts before speaking your mind.
4. **Say "Sorry" as soon as you say or do something inconvenient:** Every one of us has sometimes said something out of context or something inconvenient. The trick consists in realizing that one has done it and try to excuse oneself as soon as possible. It is useful to be attentive to your listener's verbal or non verbal reactions to act consequently. Then try to lead the conversation to a different or more animated point.
5. **Talk, do not compete:** Competitive talkers tend to be aggressive and boring because they see dialogues as a dispute to see who is right and who is wrong, instead of taking it as a healthy mental exchange of information, ideas and opinions. To communicate tactfully, you should substitute the competitive mode by a less aggressive and transcendental conversational one, softening the general atmosphere.
6. **Choose the right moment for your comments:** Before speaking, be sure that the other person is ready to listen to you. If not, you will be wasting your time and the opportunity to express your point of view. Perfect moments to speak are rarely produced, but some of them are definitely better or worse than others. Whenever possible, avoid discussing important or personal problems in uncomfortable or embarrassing situations.
7. **Concentrate on the speaking, not on the personality:** Do you have difficult parents, mates, colleagues or heads to talk to? Whatever the case, the advice is: speak clearly and openly, trying to identify the bothering behavior instead of focusing on the personality. Remember that it is easier for a person to change specific actions than to alter his / her way of being.
8. **Find out hidden feelings:** To say delicate things tactfully is easier if first you try to find out and understand the other person's feelings. Once you put the real reasons, needs and feelings on the spot, you can act accordingly.
9. **Be aware of reactions:** If you talk and listen paying attention to the other person's reactions, you will know if he / she understand what you want to transmit and detect what worries him / her or if he / she is receptive of your own opinions.
10. **Interpret body language:** When you speak, all your body speaks. Eyes are considered to be the mirror of the soul. Therefore, it is very important to watch them carefully. For instance, smelling and tasting sensations are produced when our eyes look at the centre of our nose and downwards. Visual, smelling and tasting activities are called "kinesthetic" ones.

Finally, I can say that all of us can be good communicators. We only have to learn to use and study not only the meaning of words but the ways these words can be said as well. And remember:

***"Life (words in our case) is like an echo. If you do not like what you get, pay attention to what you give"*** (Ribeiro, 1996: 141, own translation)

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## **Special Presentations**

## **"A Room of One's Own"**

### **Panel: Perspectives on the Teaching of Literature**

"A Room of One's Own" is devoted to discussions on literary theory, literature teaching at different levels of instruction, and the promotion of literary reading. Its online work can be found at <http://roomown.wordpress.com> and <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/roomown/>. Launched in the 2008 FAAP Conference, it aims to become a permanent feature of this annual event. The panel organized this year focused on the teaching and reading of Literature, analyzing current trends in different contexts and reflecting on the future of the field.

*Teaching Narrative, Narrating Teaching* (Olga Liberti) addressed the introduction of literary theory (mainly narratology) by relying on the students' own knowledge of narrativity drawn from popular genres such as sitcoms, soap operas, and adventure films.

*Reading Groups. A Reflection* (Susana Gullco Groisman) discussed the setting up of Reading Groups not only as an educational issue but also as a social one, pointing out the basic theoretical aspects in the dynamics of small groups, and illustrating with past and present cases.

*Literature in Teacher Education – a riches-to-rags story?* (Mariel Amez) is presented in full below as a springboard for discussion and reflection within and among Higher Education institutions.

## **"Literature in Teacher Education – a riches-to-rags story?"**

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### **Abstract**

In the late 1990's all Teacher Education Programmes in the country were revised to conform to the Federal Law of Education and the regulations issued by the CFCyE. With the passing of the Law of National Education, new curricula are to be designed, and new directives should be followed. This paper examines the changes in the literary curriculum and their underlying assumptions as implemented in the province of Santa Fe, with special reference to IES "O. Cossettini" (Rosario). It comments on strengths and weaknesses and pose some questions on possible paths to follow.

### **Literature in Teacher Education – a riches-to-rags story?**

Most national colleges offered broadly the same curriculum for Teacher Training Programmes from the 1960's to the 1990's. Since this curriculum consisted solely of a list of subjects and teaching periods, there was ample room for updating, while the structure remained the same. The emphasis in this model lay on linguistic development, and the actual practicum was taught only in the final year. Literature enjoyed pride of place, as it did in the foreign language classroom in the days of the Grammar-Translation method: "The assumption was that if the students were continually exposed to the best uses of the English language, it would in some sense "rub off" on their own performance in the language." (Short & Candlin, 1986, p. 91) Following Risager (1998), we can say Literature teaching was underpinned by a foreign-cultural approach, whose aim is to develop native speaker communicative and cultural competence. It is based on the concept of a single culture which is to be admired, associated with a specific people, language, and territory, and which enhances positive stereotypes but does not deal with the relations between the target country and the learners' own.

At IES "O. Cossettini" (Rosario) in particular, Literature was taught in four different subjects for a total of 16 weekly periods from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> year. Three of them dealt with English Literature and one with American Literature. The approach was diachronic and quite static, except for Contemporary Literature, in which the latest developments were addressed. In all cases, as no statutory contents were defined, lecturers were free to make their own choices and adaptations, within the framework of the literary periods assigned to each course.

In the late 1990's all Programmes in the country were revised to conform to the Federal Law of Education and the regulations issued by the Consejo Federal de Cultura y Educación. These regulations established two different degrees for teachers of English "*Profesor de Inglés para la Educación Inicial y el primero y el segundo ciclos de la Educación General Básica*" (three and a half years long) and "*Profesor de Inglés para el tercer ciclo de la Educación General Básica y la Educación Polimodal*" (four years long). In addition, they indicated the percentage of the curriculum to be assigned to each field, a maximum of subjects to be taught per year, statutory contents and outcomes for areas of study, etc. Some provinces required institutions to develop their curriculum based on these requirements, others, including Santa Fe, decided on a unified curricular structure for all institutions.

The emphasis in this case was placed on the teachers-to-be professional rather than linguistic development – a paradigm shift from Teacher Training to Teacher Education, it might be claimed. Teaching Workshops started to be taught every year from 1<sup>st</sup> year, and subjects devoted to the study of language acquisition, didactics, action research and ancillary methodological issues were introduced.

The characterisation of Literature in the statutory contents (CBC) reads:

*Los contenidos que se presentan a continuación tienen por objeto rescatar los aportes de la literatura canónica y alternativa como ventana a la cultura de la lengua en cuestión. Se trata de que los futuros docentes profundicen el aprendizaje y adquisición de la lengua extranjera seleccionada a través de la interpretación del discurso literario. El texto literario retrata situaciones contextualizadas que revelan los códigos y valores de los hablantes de las lenguas en cuestión. Esto implica aceptar como diferentes otras concepciones y visiones del mundo, la cultura y la sociedad. El texto literario contribuye en forma armónica al desarrollo de una única función estética o poética del lenguaje, y por ende, el desarrollo de una competencia intercultural. (Contenidos Básicos Comunes Formación Docente de Lenguas Extranjeras, p. 30)*

The topics to be incorporated ranged from typical genres in canonical and non-canonical literature from English-speaking countries, contributions from literary theory and alternative literary formats, to children's and young adults' literature, cultural diversity through literature and criteria for the use of literature in the EFL classroom. What is more, the aims involved the development of both critical literacy and aesthetic enjoyment. This ambitious programme, however, was to be put into practice with a considerable reduction of the teaching periods available, given the percentages for different areas determined in the regulations.

Turning back to Risager (1998), we can discern in this model components of the transcultural approach to foreign language teaching, which aims to develop mediators with intercultural and communicative competence to use language in situations of cultural and linguistic complexity. Literature involves not only traditional target countries but other countries, areas or cultural contexts and is based on the concept of the interwoven character of cultures as a common condition for the whole world.

The revised curriculum was put into practice in Santa Fe in 2001. The name of the area was changed to "Literature in English" and the number of subjects was reduced to three (11 periods) for Polimodal Teachers, and two (7 periods) for EGB

Teachers. In addition, IES "O. Cossettini" allotted one of the "institutionally determined subjects" (Espacio de Definición Institucional) to Literary Research, only for Polimodal Teachers in 4<sup>th</sup> year. It was an advantage that provincial mandatory contents were restricted to general guidelines but no authors or texts were prescribed, which meant we were quite free in the implementation. Working as a team, Literature teachers agreed that the decrease in the teaching load barred a diachronic approach, so at first we opted for an organisation based on genres that tried to offer a glimpse of main canonical works together with the other topics to be addressed. It was clear that more autonomy in the learners was crucial, so that research needed to be encouraged.

The corpus of texts was modified to incorporate postcolonial authors alongside British and American ones in the three subjects. During 2002, for example, 2<sup>nd</sup> year (which had traditionally included Old English, Medieval and Renaissance literature) covered authors such as Toni Morrison, Jane Austen, Poe and Shakespeare among others.

We soon found that it was extremely taxing for students to become "time-travellers" without any temporal framework, even more so since 1<sup>st</sup> year Social Studies dealt exclusively with contemporary history. We decided therefore, without transforming the subject into a "History of Literature", to start in 2<sup>nd</sup> year with 20<sup>th</sup> century short stories, and then incorporate some characterisation and extracts from Old and Middle English literature, ending with lyrical poetry and a Shakespearean play. Postcolonial literature, originally included in all three years, was eventually abandoned in 2<sup>nd</sup> year to make way for an American novel.

The main tenets from several schools of literary criticism started to be dealt with in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year, and exemplified through the analysis of certain works from such perspectives. As regards the use of Literature in EFL, it is addressed theoretically only in the final year, though some practical experience of exploitation of material is required from students from 2<sup>nd</sup> year so that they will gain experiential knowledge and deepen their aesthetic experience.

With the passing of the Law of National Education, new curricula are to be designed, and new directives should be followed which, at present, are not known. It has been established that once again only one degree will be available, catering for all levels of instruction. It can hence be envisaged that certain subjects will have to be shortened to allow for the introduction of necessary practicum opportunities.

Which role is Literature to play in the new curriculum for Teacher Education? Will we privilege the study of literature or the use of literature as a resource? If the latter, will it be a resource for language, cultural or personal growth (Carter & Long, 1991) or a tool for the classroom? Those are central issues that should underlie the selection of both declarative and procedural contents, and beg the question of whether all aims can coexist in one class. Even though text selection is essential in the realization of the curriculum, in my view it is the goals that should be analysed first.

What lessons have we learnt from the current model? The broadening of the canon and the selection of texts that are engaging and meaningful to students are clear strengths, and so is the introduction of critical theory beyond the historical dimension. Prioritising the development of literary competence over the teaching of particular classics is also essential in the education of autonomous, reflexive and critical professionals who are empowered for lifelong-learning. Finally, if a diachronic approach is not followed, coordinated efforts are essential to avoid overlapping and reduce omission.

In terms of issues not addressed so far, it should be analysed whether it is advisable to introduce elements of national culture so that, through comparison, teachers-to-be can 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, 1998, pp. 6-7). Whether such contents should be the province of Language or Literature is open for discussion as well. A further aspect to consider concerns the characteristics of learners today: their background, learning styles, expectations and abilities, which must be taken into account in the Literature class.

Regardless of the choices that are made, two issues remain crucial. First, there should be a correlation between the aims of the area, the contents to be covered and the allocation of teaching periods. Second, allowances should be made for the diversity of institutions in the country to make specific, contextualised choices conducive to effective learning and flexible realisations of the curriculum. Otherwise, any reform is doomed to failure.

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## **“Teaching and learning English in Cuba”**

CHIAPPY, ADITA

IRIZAR, TONY

### **Abstract**

English language teaching has a long tradition in Cuba. This language has been taught in the country since the beginning of the last century. Dramatic changes were made after 1959, and very tense relations were created between Cuba and US, but Cuba never prohibited or limited the teaching of English..

The emergence of Communicative Language Teaching was incorporated to the Cuban experience and a comprehensive interpretation of the new paradigms began to be part of the Cuban ELT context. ESP has also spread widely in the past years.

The presenters will give a historical overview, *an assessment of the present situation and the perspectives for the future.*

### **Introduction**

English language teaching has a long tradition in Cuba, as the language has been taught in the country since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. It all started about one hundred years ago when the teaching of English was introduced in Cuba as a result of the first United States intervention there, between 1898 and 1902, after the Spanish-American War. All through the first part of the century, the teaching of English underwent many changes paralleling those in the organization of Cuban public education. Some highlights in this process of development may illustrate this.

- Leonardo Sorzano Jorin, the most influential personality in English language teaching in Cuba in the first part of the 20th Century, established the basis for professionalizing the teaching of English.
- There was steady growth in the number of teachers of English—only a few at the beginning of the century, 104 in 1943, and 991 in 1952.
- Special English Centres (night schools for adults) were established in 1929 and enrolment grew to 14,022 in 1938
- The Audio-lingual movement was very influential in Cuba
- Several private bilingual schools opened in Havana..
- Correspondence English courses were offered by the National School, an institution in Los Angeles, California, with an office in Cuba at that time.

## After 1959

In 1959 we had dramatic changes in all aspects of Cuban society, especially in education (see Table 1) due to the triumph of the Revolution. At the same time, the U.S. government's diplomatic break with Cuba in the early 1960s and the establishment of a blockade, which is still in effect today, creates very tense relationship between the two countries. However, contrary to what some people might have expected this did not cause a decrease in the teaching of English in Cuba, due to the distinction made by the people of Cuba between the government and the people of the United States, and the importance of English for the transfer of information, particularly in science and technology.

**Table 1**

### Education in Cuba Before and After the Revolution

	<b>1958-1959</b>	<b>1998-1999</b>
Total enrollment (thousands)	811.3	2,,376.5
Daycare centers	(no data)	151.2
Primary school	625.7	1,016.7
Media*		

- Secondary School	26.3	448.5
- Preuniversity	37.2	107.4
Technical / Professional	15.6	224.1
- Oficios	(no data)	109.7
Higher education	2.1**	120.3
Special Education	(no data)	57.3
Adults	(no data)	109.7

\* "Media" is one of the levels of general education in Cuba;

It includes high school, pre-university, technical and professional education.

\*\* Private universities (state universities were closed)

(Source: Cuba Ministry of Education, 1999)

A brief look at some of the most important measures taken by the Revolution shows that the teaching of English in Cuba was developed, extended and consolidated as the most important foreign language in the country.

- 1961 Language schools for adults were set up nationwide. .
- 1962 The University Reform Act established foreign languages, primarily English, as compulsory subjects in all university majors.
- 1968 Nation-wide English language teaching TV programs were established..
- Training courses for teachers of English and other foreign languages were instituted in the early 1960's.
- The School of Modern Languages at the University of Havana was created in the academic year 1972-1973.
- The Foreign Language Across the Curricula Program was implemented in all university majors between 1985 and 1989.

- The Group of English Language Specialists (GELI) a professional association with more than 500 active members was founded in 1989..

Although the blockade did not halt the expansion of English language teaching, it did create an information gap, and limited the availability of equipment such as tape recorders, overhead projectors, videos, etc.

At the same time, most of the teachers who were native speakers of English, mainly from the U.S. left the country, as well as some of the most experienced Cuban teachers, and English classes were overcrowded due to the lack of teachers. Bilingual schools closed down; newspapers, magazines and books in English were not available any more, and it became more and more difficult for students and teachers to go abroad for training.

### **Facing the difficulties**

Initially, Cuba faced the situation, not by prohibiting or limiting the teaching of English, but by having domestic materials for use in schools produced by Cuban specialists and by looking for information from other English-speaking countries. The effort relied mostly on the experience, creativity and dedicated work of Cuban teachers and on some help from abroad.

Here are some relevant issues in this process:

- Emergency courses to train teachers of English were organized with people who already knew the language. They were given short remedial methodological courses, and started teaching while majoring in ELT at the same time. In a few years, there were more teachers of English than before and most of them were university graduate. (See table 2)

**Table 2**

#### **The teaching of English in Cuba**

**Academic Year 1998 – 1999)**

<b>Type / Level of Education</b>	<b>Enrollment (English taught at all levels)</b>	<b>English Teachers</b>
Primary (Elementary school)	125.057	986
Secondary	410.256	2,993
Pre-university	87,501	691

Language Schools	21,064	553
Technical and Professional	164,712	712
Pedagogical Universities	2,815	500
Higher Education	37,345	648
Ministries and other institutions	4,012	266
<b>Totals</b>	<b>852,762</b>	<b>7,349</b>

(Figures estimated by the author)

- At the beginning, some domestic texts were written by Cuban specialists to respond to the lack of foreign texts, and were used at all levels for English classes. Later on, some course books from other English speaking countries were brought into the country such as: Alexander's New Concept English from the UK, and Lado English series from Canada.
- A movement was organized to repair old equipment such as tape recorders, overhead projectors, videos and television sets, not coming into the country, in those initial years. Some of them are still working today..
- The Group of English Language Specialists (GELI) has played an important role in spreading new ideas and techniques in the teaching of English and fostering exchange and cooperation in the field of teaching, research and the cultural study of English-speaking countries.

A key factor in this process of striving against the difficulties has been the fact that in Cuban society, information coming into the country, scientific, technical or cultural, is shared and cascaded down so as to make it accessible to all professionals in the field by means of courses, seminars, workshops and professional meetings, instead of being limited to individual persons and institutions.

### **English for Specific Purposes**

An important factor in the development of English language teaching in Cuba in the period from 1960 to 2000 was the introduction of English for specific purposes (ESP). This initial movement gained momentum and produced a host of ESP courses at ministries other than the Ministry of Education, which started conducting their own English courses with their own teachers to meet the needs

and interests of the workers in those institutions. The Ministry of Public Health and the Ministry of Tourism organized two large projects for the teaching of English for specific purposes.

In the field of medical sciences, apart from the teaching of English during the five years of the major, a nationwide program was organized for the training of their teachers of English. This project is still in progress.

At the end of the 1980s, the tourism industry became a significant factor in the Cuban economy, and a project was designed in 1988 to teach English to more than 10,000 workers over the subsequent five years to meet the demands of tourism development. The project also created opportunities of access and exchange with speakers of English for students and teachers as well.

### **International support**

At first, the most important source of international support came from Canada. A group of teachers came through a project sponsored by an international agency. Later on, Professor Neil Naiman, from York University spent his sabbatical year working together with the creating a basis for a lasting cooperation between Cuban and Canadian teachers that has been very productive and still exists nowadays.

Since the early eighties The British Council has played an important role in ELT in Cuba bringing specialists from UK ,and supporting the work of GELI. IATEFL) has also opened a window to experiences and development all over the world, and Cambridge University Press, has been operating in Cuba since 1996 providing access to a wide variety of first class ELT materials..

### **At the Beginning of a New Century**

As the new century gets underway, the teaching of English reaches all levels, English has established itself as an important field of education in Cuba, and is by far the most important and extended foreign language in the country.

At the same time, the teachers of English in our country, who are all Cubans, have developed expertise in using and teaching the language, as well as in applying the most advanced and up-to-date methodological ideas. Some English speaking specialists have collaborated in teacher training and development.

However, in these difficult years of struggling for efficiency with very limited resources, we have learned that Cuban teachers of English provide the balance factor that sometimes is missing if you rely too much on foreign teachers just because they are native speakers of English.

On the other hand, the emergence of Communicative Language Teaching in the early seventies, came into the country some years later at the beginning of the eighties, but was widely accepted and incorporated to the experience accumulated for so many years by the Cuban teachers, and contributed significantly to increase the efficiency in the teaching and learning of English in the country.

A comprehensive interpretation of the new ideas brought about by the "communicative revolution" (Irizar 2001) began to be part of ELT in the Cuban context. A tentative list of those 'paradigms' would include the following:

### **Paradigms of Language Teaching**

- The main function of language is to serve as a means of communication among human beings, and this fact must be relevant in any approach to teaching and learning a foreign language.
- Teaching and learning are closely associated and not different activities carried out by different people i.e.: the-teacher-teaches-and-the-learner-learns attitude, characteristic of the structural. era.
- A language class is a social phenomenon, where learners interact: among themselves, with the teacher, and with the learning materials. Students can profit from their own participation in the class as well as from the participation of others.
- Students have their own strategies for learning a language, and these must be taken into account in any teaching-learning process. This even includes the possibility (and necessity) of 'negotiation' with the students prior to the beginning of a course.
- There are several ways to develop a syllabus: according to structures, functions, themes, tasks, etc. (The structural view considered just one: the basic structures of the language.)
- Textbooks are merely a point of departure and can be very useful in teaching/learning a language, but they are certainly not the only valuable resource, nor the kind of bible that must be followed word for word.
- The teacher is no longer the possessor of eternal truth and knowledge that is bestowed upon the students by paternalistic behaviour. The role of the teacher is mostly to facilitate learning by exposing the student to real and continuous communicative experiences in the use of the language in real situations, and with a purpose.
- Students must be active in their learning. They cannot only be lectured or told what to say, when and how to say it. They must initiate interaction as much as react to the initiation of others. 'Others' may be the teacher, other students, or a text that is visual, written or recorded.



- Errors are part of the learning process, and must be treated as such. There is a place for correction, but over-correction or interruption of students' expression in order to correct can prevent the development of fluency.
- If students are going to learn to communicate with the language, they must practice "communication" from the very beginning of their courses; they should be encouraged and led to produce creative language, not only patterns or structures.
- New ideas should be subjected to a process of pedagogical mediation through appraisal, interpretation and evaluation. They must then be 'accommodated' and not just 'assimilated'.

These paradigms of what we have called a 'current view of language teaching', briefly described above, are not (and cannot be) pure in communicative terms, or in terms of any other current of thought. They represent a balanced view of old and new ideas that can be traced back to old and new methods, approaches, and authors, all of which are found in the literature.

However, the greatest change in the status of English since the beginning of the last century is that English is now seen, not as a language for communication with the United States exclusively, but as an international means of communication with people in many parts of the world. This is the current status of English, spoken by more non-native than native speakers.

A host of concurrent factors, new and old, give an optimistic view of the future growth and development of English language teaching in Cuba.

1. English maintains its position as a compulsory subject at all levels of education.
2. There are more than 7,000 teachers of English in the country
3. Tourism has become an important element in Cuba's economy: there is a growing number of English speaking tourists, and increasing contact with the English-speaking Caribbean as well as with people who use English as a second or foreign language in Europe, Africa and Asia.
4. Many important international meetings are held in Cuba every year; English is always one of the official languages.
5. Cuba is expanding its economic relationships with other countries, and there is an increasing number of joint ventures between Cuban and foreign companies.
6. There is an official representative of The British Council in Havana providing substantial support for the teaching of English
7. The presence of Cambridge University Press in the Cuban market since 1996 has provided access to the most updated literature on English language teaching
8. The sustained efforts of GELI have been aimed at the professional development of teachers and have helped to improve the quality of the teaching and learning of English in Cuba.

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