EFL & *ART*

Learning
English
with all our
Senses

XXXV FAAPI CONFERENCE

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EFL and Art: Learning English with all our senses.

Selected papers from the XXXV FAAPI Conference.

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As teachers, we need to self-reflect in a critical manner about the social processes that are currently shaping us, and become socially active participants and agents of change. We need to understand the shift from the clearly territorialized space of Modernity to the more chaotic spatial and temporal dimensions of globalization and Liquid Modernity (Bauman 2002). As citizens of a world where that which is small and portable means progress, and where traveling light is synonymous with power and value; we need to work our hardest to get back some of the stability Modernity offered us. We need to find ways of intervening and impinging upon the social sphere we belong to, so that we can recover some kind of certainty, security and predictability. Only then shall we be able to recover the value of education and define our role as teachers more accurately.

Once again FAAPI holds its annual meeting with the aim of fostering better working relationships and more updated and academically informed professional practices. In a broad sense, this XXXV FAAPI Conference – national and international landmark of academic excellence - is one more step towards further-enhancing the status of foreign languages in our national curricula, updating our ideas of good quality teaching and giving FAAPI´s associates a greater amount of conceptual, discursive and applied knowledge so they can fit in and interact with this new social environment in ways that are conceptually, discursively and strategically enriched.

This year's Conference has focused on an updated and challenging issue: *EFL and Art: Learning English With All Our Senses*, a most fertile and fascinating topic that motivated many teachers to contribute their expertise to this publication. All the selected papers included in these proceedings link, in one way or another, art to procedures and strategies that explore multisensory approaches to foreign language learning and cultural awareness. They also touch upon differentiated teaching, diverse contexts and multimodal language acquisition. The relationship between art, learning and teaching has been explored profusely in the field of L1, L2 and foreign language acquisition in contexts of instruction, and there is plenty of empirical support to argue in favour of the inclusion of

multimodal paths to foreign language teaching. Multisensory Language Teaching models, Ecological Theory of Language Acquisition (ETLA), amongst others, give sound support to it. As Cohen and Gainer *(1995)*, who consider art a most effective way of achieving educational goals and learning quality, put it "*children relish art, not only for its symbolic value, but also for the aesthetic pleasure derived from the use of materials.*"

Two major issues guided the selection of the papers we are publishing: (a) their close relationship to the central theme of our conference, and (b) their authors' adjusting to the requirements of academic writing as put forward in the call for papers. We thought of the Conference Proceedings as a contribution to teacher education and professional development from two different angles: (a) content specificity, and (b) the adequate grammaticalisation of knowledge and experience.

In Liquid Modernity our biggest challenge is to reinvigorate the passion we felt when we first embraced our profession. Those of us who have been walking this path for a long time, once felt enthusiasm and an urge to share the joy and promise education gave us when we decided to become EFL teachers. To students, I say: be passionate. For my colleagues, I pick up Paulo Freire's words: "*Education should have as one of its main tasks to invite people to believe in themselves. It should invite people to believe that they have knowledge*". As teachers in this period of Liquid Modernity, we need to be emancipated, independent, unlimited, involved, committed, open-minded, responsible, internationally and inter-culturally competent, TICs literate, responsive to otherness and diversity. Our teaching practices must be linguistically supported, pedagogically critical and strategically communicative. Above all, we need to become relevant. May we all make this FAAPI Conference a space for professional growth and find in these Conference Proceedings a reservoir of innovative ideas and rich food for thought.

Dr. Daniel J. Fernández

FAAPI President

Editors' introduction

The following volume gathers some of the Plenary and Semiplenary presentations as well as a selection of papers submitted for publication.

After the papers from the Plenary and Semiplenary Sessions by Alan Maley, MaryAnn Christison and Ana Marina Suárez Gianello, the papers following up have been divided into three chapters reflecting the main strands of this year's conference topic *EFL and Art: Learning English with all our senses*: EFL and art: classroom applications and theoretical underpinnings, the presentations of the English-speaking Literature teachers' group *A Room of One's Own*, and two papers from the Teacher Development and Teacher Education strand.

The strand "EFL and art: classroom applications and theoretical underpinnings" includes papers dealing with varied aspects of the use of artistic expressions in the EFL class and their effects on the learners' acquisition. Literature, music, films and the visual arts function as triggers for self-expression in speech and writing. Experiments in creative writing, the visual representation of literary texts, and the integration of culture and literature are explored in several of the papers. Examples of activities involving the use of artistic expressions, and linking activities and learning styles are also considered with, as well as the use of technology in blended learning experiences. While most of the experiences reported belong to higher education, secondary education and extracurricular TEFL, one contribution refers to the use of storytelling with young learners. Two papers address the subject of multilingualism and the novel concept of intercomprehension.

The papers of *A Room of One's Own* deal with perspectives on Postcolonial Literature and aspects of the teaching of Literature in the training of EFL teachers.

The Teacher Development and Teacher Education strand includes two papers: one reporting an empirical research into telecollaboration and its impact on motivation and one by colleagues from neighbouring Chile describing the situation of EFL in the Andean nation.

All in all, the contributions provide a panorama of the beneficial impact of including artistic expressions in foreign language learning and teaching and provide food for thought on this till now not previously considered conference topic. We hope it makes interesting and thought-provoking reading.

Last but not least, we would like to express our indebtedness to the US Embassy for funding the Conference Proceedings.

The editors

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Plenary and Semiplenary Presentations

The Art and Artistry of ELT

Alan Maley 💬

Visiting Professor, Leeds Metropolitan University

Abstract:

I am uneasily aware that we live in a world which is dedicated to measurement and counting. This sits comfortably with the prevailing ethos, which prefers 'having' to 'being'. In this paper, I wish to raise a few doubts about the worship of numbers. To quote (I believe) Einstein,

   'Not everything that counts can be counted,

   And not everything that can be counted counts.'

I shall try to show that the pursuit of a 'standard' in language, still less in language learning, is a chimera. Further that the initially well-intentioned wish to assess language learning is neither possible, nor desirable. I shall try to take us back to the 1960's and 1970's, when education was being rocked by revolutionary, commonsensical ideas which have since fallen out of favour.

I shall, in other words, be challenging the current obsession with objectives-focussed, competency-based approaches to learning, which fly in the face of what we know about the nature of learning, and which derive from and support a consumerist global system over which we have little apparent control.

In the second part of the article, I shall suggest ways in which an aesthetic approach might be applied, through the Matter (content), the Method (activities) and the Manner (atmosphere and flow). I conclude with a plea for enlarging the outcomes from language learning to include educational and psycho-social outcomes.

Introduction:
I shall start by offering you a poem which encapsulates part of
the message I am trying to convey.

The Minister for Exams

When I was a child I sat an exam.
The test was so simple
There was no way I could fail.

Q1. Describe the taste of the moon.

It tastes like creation, I wrote,
it has the flavour of starlight.

Q2. What colour is Love?

Love is the colour of water a man
lost in the desert finds, I wrote.

Q3. Why do snowflakes melt?

I wrote, they melt because they fall
onto the warm tongue of God.

There were other questions.
They were as simple.

I described the grief of Adam when he was expelled from Eden.
I wrote down the exact weight of an elephant's dream.

Yet today, many years later,
For my living I sweep the streets
or clean out the toilets of the fat hotels.

Why? Because I consistently failed my exams.
Why? Well, let me set a test.
Q1. How large is a child's imagination?
Q2. How shallow is the soul of the Minister for Exams?

Brian Patten from 'Armada' 1996.

I would contend that the following list of terms characterises the world we inhabit in this 21st century.

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assessment   *measurement* scrutinise   *FAIL*

exams   *quiz*   *judgement* **Accountability**   *results*

guidelines   score   *benchmarks*   *standards*   *check*

i

nspect   *TESTING*   **evaluation**   **pass**   *objectives*

targets   **Quality control** *regulation*   GRADE

We live in a culture of measurement. We stand against the yardstick and are sanctioned or found wanting. Witness the commercial and ideological success of ETS Princeton, of UCLES in Cambridge, the ubiquity of TOEFL, TOIEC, IELTS, etc. etc. Not to speak of the stranglehold which tests and exams have over the state educational apparatus.

This is, of course, only one aspect of the wider world of targets (the UK Health Service, Child Benefits scheme, Education Service, etc. are all suffocated by a plethora of often-changing regulation which no human organisation is capable of handling), of benchmarks, of regulation, of assessment, of standards, etc. (see the ISO website for an idea of the complexity which characterises the whole area of quality control, for a ready example).

Some dominant processes:

Among the most important processes which underpin this view of the world are **Reification, Quantification** and **Commodification**:

~ Reification is the process by which we come to transform complex areas of human activity into 'things'. However convenient it may be for the purposes of academic study or for administrative tidiness to reify language, a language is not a thing. Yet English in particular has been reified.

~ One of the dubious consequences of reification is that 'things' can be counted and measured: hence Quantification. This approach to education was admirably described by Dickens in his novel Hard Times.

'Thomas Gradgrind, sir. A man of realities. A man of facts and calculations. A man who proceeds upon the principle that two and two are four, and nothing over, and who is not to be talked into allowing for anything over. ...With a rule and a pair of scales, and the multiplication table always in his pocket, sir, ready to weigh, and measure any parcel of human nature and tell you exactly what it comes to. It is a mere question of figures, a case of simple arithmetic....' (Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*, 1854.)

It is perhaps no accident that schools as public institutions came into being alongside industrial mass production in the 19th century. It is also relevant to remind ourselves that 'technologies' in the wider sense of that word, profoundly influence the way we perceive the world.

'To a man (sic) with a pencil, everything looks like a list. To a man with a camera, everything looks like an image. To a man with a computer, everything looks like data.' (Postman, 1992:14.)

And, one might add, to a man with a test, everything looks like a result.

~ Things which can be counted and measured can, of course, be sold. Hence Commodification. The English teaching business

worldwide entails enormous financial stakes in cornering 'the market' in tests, in textbooks, in course provision by schools and universities (especially in the Metropolitan countries of 'the West').

Implications of viewing language as a 'thing':

Language as a 'Thing' implies a utility focus, where it is regarded as something practical and useful rather than as a source of linguistic and cultural delight. The 'English thing' is learned in the expectation that it will be of commercial value in career development and job promotion: a vehicle of opportunity, rather than as itself an opportunity for personal development.

One consequence is that the language is presented as a set of anonymous, de-personalised items. The individual is sacrificed to the general. The focus is on the final product, viewed in terms of a grade, a score or a level, rather than on the learner's development as an individual, with an internal sense of value. As Timothy Gallwey remarks in perhaps one of the wisest books on learning ever published,

*...it doesn't really make sense to measure ourselves in comparison with other immeasurable beings. In fact, we are what we are; we are not how well we happen to perform at a given moment. The grade on a report card may measure an ability in arithmetic (*or grammar!), *but it doesn't measure the person's value.* (Gallwey 1974:100)

Language viewed as a thing, measurable and with a market value implies a deficit view of learning. '*We know what you do not have. We know that you lack it. We will supply it to you – at a price.'* This places learners in a seriously subordinate position, and generates large numbers of failures as well as some successes.

An alternative view of learning would be a developmental perspective, giving respect to the learner's own unfolding development. This is a more modest, but ultimately more rewarding approach.

'Let us see how we can help guide your development.'

The Prevailing Ethos:

What, then, are the key features of the current paradigm? The prevailing ethos:

- *defines Expectations (objectives) and does not create Expectancy.*
- *breeds Dependency:*
  does not stimulate Independence.

- *seeks Predictability:*
  does not exploit Unpredictability.

- *values Security over Risk*
- *promotes Conformity:*
  does not relish Diversity.

- *pre-empts 'Wonder':*
  does not stimulate Curiosity/Inquiry.

- *focusses on what is Taught:*
  not on what is Learnt.

- *seeks to Control:*
  does not seek to Liberate.

- *is more concerned with Testing,*
  than it is with Teaching / Learning.

Most of these distinctions need no further explanation but I need to gloss at least some of them.

The distinction between Expectations and Expectancy, is for me an important one. A pedagogy of expectations offers predictable routines and outcomes. Everyone knows what to expect and what is expected of them. This hardly fosters the excitement and involvement in learning which comes from being in a state of expectancy, where teachers and learners alike are in discovery mode, and where unpredictability is embraced rather than avoided.

The exclusive focus on results, without consideration of how they are attained, leads inevitably to the suppression of wonder at the expense of inquiry and curiosity. To quote from Hard Times again:

...Louisa had been overheard to begin a conversation with her brother one day, by saying, 'Tom, I wonder...' – upon which Mr Gradgrind, who was the person overhearing, stepped forth into the light, and said, 'Louisa, never wonder!'

Herein lay the spring of the mechanical art and mystery of educating the reason without stopping to the cultivation of the sentiments and affections. Never wonder. By means of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, settle everything somehow, never wonder.' (Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*)

The combination of these, for me at least, negative characteristics (Expectations, Dependency, Predictability, Security) leads to a culture of conformity which gives the illusion of control over the learning process. There is an unvalidated equation made between what is taught and what is learnt. This is a culture where testing has taken over from teaching concerned with genuine learning.

Teaching / Testing.

It is to this Teaching /Testing distinction that I now turn. By way of introduction let me offer a quotation, the author of which will be revealed in due course.

The worst canker in our school system is the examinations. Everything is arranged with a view to examinations; the parents, the children, and unfortunately also a number of the teachers care for nothing but the results attained in the examinations...poor pay and long hours, too naturally lead to a teacher's looking merely to examination results.

Teaching	Testing
success	failure
strengths	weaknesses
error	terror
humour	solemnity
sharing	cheating
cooperation	competition
rapport	isolation
positive attitudes	negative attitudes
wholes	fragments
'Flow'	'blocks'
mother/other culture	culture-bound
achievement	marks
infection	injection

Based on Prodromou *(2006)*

The above table attempts to capture the essential differences between a classroom dedicated to real teaching and learning and one overshadowed by tests and examinations. The examination-dominated classroom tends to spread a culture of failure, or fear of failure. It concentrates on eliminating perceived weaknesses rather than on building on learners' strengths. It breeds negative attitudes to what is being learned and, through excess of competitive spirit, to others in the group. Learning is assessed by marks rather than by genuine achievement. It is assumed that

'knowledge' can be 'injected' into the learners in fragments, in contradistinction to a class where knowledge is seamlessly infectious, and where 'Flow' (Csikszentmihalyi 1990) – the experience of being carried along through 'effortless effort'- is a characteristic feature of the learning experience. Over-emphasis on assessment and testing is certainly inimical to the good-humoured, relaxed, playful atmosphere (Cook 2000, Huizinga 1938, Nachmanovitch 1990) of a class dedicated to cooperative learning.

I am not suggesting that we never need to assess progress among our students. But I am contesting the value of a system where the examination is the be-all and end-all of everything. In short, we need to ensure that the testing tail does not wag the learning dog. What testing and examinations do best is to confirm the power of teachers, administrators and others over those who are the passive recipients of teaching: the learners.

A Parenthesis on Standards:

When challenged, many of those who emphasise the role of measurement will cite the need to uphold 'standards' in the English language. It is, in fact, a fallacy that there is a single 'standard' in language. Language is characterised by change and variety. (Aitchison 2001, Crystal 2004).

In the era of EIL, where English is being deployed by a greater variety of people in a greater variety of circumstances, where the notion of the Native Speaker norm has been undermined, it is an even greater chimera. In a period of rapid linguistic change (Ayto 1999) and complex hybridity, it makes little sense to insist on some mythical 'standard' language. The emphasis must shift from standard to comprehensibility. (Graddol 2006, Canagarajah 2006)

There is too an illusion of 'standards' in human matters. Those in authority like to feel that people can be packaged like uniform, interchangeable units in a lego set. I would like to suggest that there is another powerful counter-current in human affairs, characterised by the items in the right-hand column below. For much of the time people are diverse, various, resistant to

conformity and show independence. To insist on standardising them is tempting for it gives the illusion of stability, whereas the reality is constant change. It is to cling to a notion of a stultifying security, eschewing the possibilities of development.

Uniformity – Diversity.

Standardisation – Variety.

Conformity – Difference.

Control – Independence.

Stability – Change.

Security - Development

I should also like simply to remind us of some of the deeply flawed assumptions underpinning the testing paradigm.

As Goleman (1996) among others has shown, there is no proven correlation between exam success and life success.

'...*people with high IQs can be stunningly poor pilots of their private lives.' (Goleman 1996: 34)*

'Yet even though a high IQ is no guarantee of prosperity, prestige, or happiness in life, our schools and our culture fixate on academic abilities, ignoring emotional intelligence – some might call it character – that also matters immensely for our personal destiny.' (Goleman 1996: 36)*

'...*we subject everyone to an education where, if you succeed, you will be best suited to be a college professor. And we evaluate everyone along the way according to whether they meet that narrow standard of success. We should spend less time ranking children and more time helping them to identify their natural competencies and gifts, and cultivate those.' (Goleman 1996:37)*

And, as Gardner (1985) has reminded us, tests and examinations tend to favour kids with traditional logical-mathematical or linguistic types of intelligence.

My main point here is not simply to show that standards are a chimera and testing a deeply flawed way of measuring people. The more important point is that we have been 'naturalised' into thinking that this is the only way to go, and believing that it is somehow 'natural'.

The same could be said for the notion that schools and classes are both natural and beneficial. We appear to have forgotten some of the seminal work done in the 1960's and 70's by Everett Reimer: *School is Dead* (1972), Ivan Illich: *De-schooling Society* (1973), Paulo Freire: *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), Paul Goodman: *Compulsory Mis-education* (1966), John Holt: *How Children Fail* (1964) and *The Underachieving School* (2005) and Charles Weingartner and Neil Postman: *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* (1976).

These books expound views now regarded by many as impossibly eccentric and impractical. Yet doubts about the suitability of schools for the promotion of learning obstinately linger. It may well be true that schools are less a place to learn and more a rite of passage, or what Paul Goodman calls 'a mass superstition', a mode of manipulation of society to keep it under control during its formative years- to socialize its members into the belief that schools are natural, beneficial and neutral institutions. Education, the inculcation of knowledge and skills, is widely acknowledged to be only a small part of what schools function to provide. Much more important are their functions as providers of custodial care, of indoctrination into conformity with the norms of society and as social role selectors – deciding where children belong in the pecking-order of society.

And it is increasingly acknowledged too that in the post-modern world (and maybe well before that) most learning takes place outside school – at home, between peers and through publicly available sources such as TV and the Internet.(Fulghum 1986) What is certain is that the teaching of foreign languages in schools is not the only way to learn them, and in all probability not the most effective way either.

So What? Why Not?

So why should we be concerned about the current strait-jacket of objectives, targets, tests and all the rest outlined in my introduction?

The major reason is that this nexus of factors is profoundly anti-educational for the following reasons:

● It implies an Engineering metaphor for learning. The assumption is that, if all the parts are properly tooled and calibrated, learning will take place smoothly rather like a well-oiled machine. It is however, widely agreed that learning does not happen like this: it is untidy, largely unpredictable and resembles plant growth rather than mechanical precision. A horticultural metaphor would be more appropriate.

● It assumes that an atomistic reduction of the key elements to be learned in the teaching stage will lead to an ability to recombine them at the using stage. But in complex systems such as language, the whole is more than the mere sum of the parts. A more holistic approach is more desirable therefore.

● It usually has an exclusively intellect-focus, with scant attention paid to the affective dimension. This ultimately has deleterious results on the future development of students, who emerge from the process emotionally diminished.

● It is typical of what Paulo Freire (1970) terms a 'Banking' concept of education. Students work to earn grades, credits of knowledge and skills, which they put in their knowledge bank ready to cash in at the test or the examination. This tends to lead to shallow rather than deep processing. (Craik and Lockhart 1972)

● It assumes that it is possible to predict (in the case of foreign language learning) which items of grammar and lexis, which socio-pragmatic contexts, and what content it will be useful for learners to acquire. Yet most syllabus and materials designers are well aware that this is virtually impossible to determine.

● Even if it were possible to predict in this way, it is unwarranted to assume that teaching Input = learning Intake. In this view, it is axiomatic that what is taught is what is learnt. Yet SLA research over the past 20 years or more conclusively shows that this is not the case.

● It assumes that everyone in a learning group will progress at roughly the same rate; hence a 'Lockstep' approach to teaching is maintained, whereas learner differences are the rule not the exception, and need to be acknowledged.

● It breeds a culture of failure and waste. The winners (in terms of the prevailing ethos) succeed and are rewarded; the rest are consigned to the waste-bin of society, with little or no consideration of the benefits they could confer given the opportunity.

● It embodies a top-down philosophy, where one group of people decides unilaterally what is 'good for' another group. The focus is on 'delivery systems' and results rather than on long-term integrated learning.

● Above all, it is administratively convenient. In an age of cost-benefit analysis, efficiency, speed and accountability, this should come as no surprise. It is convenient for educational authorities to opt for an approach which offers instant measures of progress, and which has the appearance of rigour and discipline, however flawed it may be in fact.

How might it be done?

In this second part of the article, I shall explore some possible ways of implementing an aesthetically-oriented approach to teaching.

Many years ago, Colin Mortimer wrote this in an undated publication of CIEFL, Hyderabad, India,

It is sometimes salutary for those of us who write materials for language learning purposes to try to regard the restrictions under which we work … rather in the way that a poet would regard the narrow confines of sonnet form, or the composer the

rigid constraints of fugue form – that is, more as a stimulus and challenge to creative endeavour than as a justification for trite work.

He went on,

…there are lessons that poets, dramatists and novelists can teach us about how to put words together which… will not only enhance the appeal of our materials , but will also contribute greatly to their learnability…

This is perhaps a fitting introduction to the 'how' of an aesthetic approach. Although his remarks were directed to materials writing only, the direction of his thoughts is clear.

I want to suggest that there are four main aspects of such an aesthetic approach. These would be its possible content (the Matter), the procedures it might deploy (the Methods), the psychological feel and atmosphere of how it is applied (the Manner), and the possible results (Outcomes).

The Matter:

Here I am referring to the inputs to the learning process. In an aesthetic approach, I would anticipate that there would be a far bigger proportion of the following types of artistic input:

- Visual images in the form of genuine art.
These might include classical 'high' art, as well as contemporary more exploratory forms, and images in general, including advertising images. An early attempt to draw on visual resources in an imaginative way can be found in The Mind's Eye (Maley and Duff 1980). More recently, these have been explored in greater range and depth in Jamie Keddie's book *Images* (Keddie 2009). There are also useful collections of paintings paired with poems, which offer highly suggestive types of input. (Abse 1986, Benton 1990)

- Music of all kinds, not simply the use of pop songs.
Music can serve as an indirect as well as a direct stimulus to learning. Indeed it is a central component of innovative approaches such as Suggestopoedia. The use of music as a way of establishing mental preparedness for learning, and for general well-being is well-attested. (Blair 1975, Rose 1987,

Gardner 1993) The importance of music as a fundamental rhythmic form allied to language has also, of course, been greatly promoted through the work of Carolyn Graham (2007). Ben Russell (2009: 209-10) has also worked extensively on techniques for harnessing music to the learning of the language. This has included using musical extracts to stimulate the making of a connected story over the course of a term's work.

- A wide range of non-referential, imaginative texts.

Such texts, typically with a high proportion of figurative language, would require personal, representational interpretation. This would be literature in its broadest sense, including stories both for telling and for reading. The seminal work of Andrew Wright is noteworthy in this context, (Wright 2008, Wright and Hill 2009). Reading materials would range from authentic graded readers to classics and everything in between. And poetry, including the exploration of the poetic in everyday language, would be a regular feature from the earliest stages.

There is now plenty of material for teachers to draw upon, including material for the writing of creative texts as well as for their consumption (Maley and Duff 2007, Maley and Mukundan 2010 forthcoming, Spiro 2004, 2006). The power of creative writing to enhance self-esteem and motivation is now well-recognized and would find an important place in 'aesthetically' oriented materials.

Theatre and drama, in all its aspects: voice (Maley 2000), movement, scenery, etc. would play an important role. Drama is a uniquely powerful way of integrating all aspects of language (including non-verbal language) and of taking account of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1985) and sensory learning preferences (Maley and Duff 2005, Wilson 2009).

- Moving images in the form of film, DVD and video.

These too would form an important part of the input. The work of Barry Tomalin has shown how this might be done (Stempleski and Tomalin, 2001). The abundance of material available on the Internet makes access relatively easy even in less well-resourced contexts. Access to such resources can also

be had outside the classroom, thus facilitating independent, autonomous exposure and learning.

- Student-made inputs.

These would form an integral part of the input: imaginative texts created by one group of students for use with another, in the form of artwork and storybooks, photographs taken in the community, student videos, websites of poems, haibun, jokes etc., blogs, both personal and group-oriented. Such materials have the advantage of relating more closely to the world of the students than do many published materials.

The imaginative use of living authors working with schools has been implemented in Portugal and beyond through the work of Fitch O'Connell and the British Council's BritLit project (http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/try/britlit/about-britlit-project). The Children's Own Stories published by Universiti Sains Malaysia in Penang are another excellent example of what can be done in publishing children's own work for use by their peers.

What emerges from this consideration of the inputs to learning in an aesthetic approach is that they are relatively independent of published materials in the accepted sense. Although it is possible to conceive of published course materials incorporating elements of art, music, literature, including drama, the moving image and student-made materials, this would require a major shift in publishers' perceptions of what materials should look like, and a move away from the cloning model currently deployed by many if not most major publishers. In the immediate term, it is far more likely that teachers would experiment with incorporating such inputs into their work with published course materials by addition, replacement or extension.

The Methods:

Here I am not referring to the concept of 'method' as a rigid set of procedures to be rigorously applied but rather to generic types of activity.

- Project work.

The engagement of students in projects, however modest, would be a major form of activity. (Fried-Booth, 2005, Burwood, Dunford and Phillips, 1999). Importantly, projects place much of the responsibility for the process in the hands of the learners, and encourage or require them to work independently – and outside the classroom for much of the time.

- Ensemble work.

Here I am referring to the shared commitment to a production of some kind – from the 'orchestration' of a poem or text by small groups (as in Reader's Theatre) (Maley 1999), to rehearsed sketches, performed stories and even full-length plays. The degree of personal and linguistic investment by students in such work is widely attested, as are the benefits of the formation of a learning community, documented in great detail in Lutzker's recent volume.(2007)

- Autonomous engagement.

Personal reflection, research, writing and reading (including massive quantities of Extensive Reading) would be an essential methodological tool (Krashen, 2004, Day and Bamford 1998). The keeping of journals both for personal reflection and the recording of language has been shown to promote independent learning and a deeper engagement with the learning process (Maley 2009). We know that most useful learning takes place outside the classroom, not in, so finding ways to enable learners to engage in this way becomes an essential ingredient. This kind of work would also be capitalizing on notions of 'deep processing'. (Craik and Lockhart. 1972)

- Multi-dimensional activities.

Activities involving not just language skills and thinking but also movement, physical engagement through the eyes, the nose, the taste buds, hearing and touch, and tapping into memory, visualization and dreams would form an important component (Tomlinson 1998: 265-278). Such activities, which draw on the visual, auditory and tactile channels, are a natural concomitant to the kinds of material inputs discussed in the previous section (The Matter)

- Problem-solving.

The aim would be to make much of the learning discovery-centred rather than telling-centred. This also links with the 'deep processing' idea mentioned above (Fisher 2001, Unrau 2008). Such work could be focused on grammar (using concordance data, etc.), on vocabulary extension work (through the use of thesauruses, dictionaries of collocations, and concordances) and the use of computational programmes to discover colligational patterns (Hoey 2005), and on more general research activities such as web and library searches.

- Playfulness.

Activities would always be designed with a playful element, not simply because that makes them more enjoyable but also because play is a major factor in learning anything (Carter 2004, Cook 2000, Crystal 1998, Nachmanovitch 1990). Language play, in the form of traditional L1 word games, the playful stretching of language rules in creative writing activities, and exposure to humour and jokes (Medgyes 2002) would all be key components of this aspect of the approach. But playfulness is a central characteristic of literary texts, of various public genres - such as advertisements, shop signs, newspaper headlines and book titles -, of drama activity, and of visual and musical expression, so it chimes perfectly with the kinds of input discussed above (The Matter)

The Manner:

In describing below what I feel to be essential qualities of the way in which teachers demonstrate their artistry, I am aware of the dangers of seemingly naïve and 'woolly' self-indulgence. Yet, as those of us know who have the experience of entering other teachers' classrooms, the tone or atmosphere of the class is immediately palpable. There is a 'something in the air', even - or perhaps especially - if it is silence, which tells us about the quality of what is going on. For me, it is a central task for the teacher to create that enabling atmosphere, without which no enduring learning takes place.

- Atmosphere and Flow.

I referred earlier to Csikszentmihalyi's work on 'flow'. Flow experiences are characterized by a kind of timeless quality – where the participants are so absorbed in the activity of the moment that they lose all sense of the passage of time, of themselves, of anything outside it. They are lost in the action, just as we can become lost in a good book. In an aesthetic view of learning, it is the teacher's prime task to set up an atmosphere which facilitates flow. Clearly, just how this is done will vary greatly from teacher to teacher and from class to class (See Hadfield 1992, for a thoughtful and stimulating set of suggestions). The teacher's voice, body language and attitude will be one of the keys. Important too will be the spatial organization of the teaching / learning arena, and the way it is decorated and furnished. Background music may also contribute something to the establishment of a facilitative learning group. The evolution of class routines and rituals, for example always starting with a very short story or poem (Tomlinson 2010); or encouraging students to forge a network of class narratives unique to the group – a storied class (Wajnryb 2003) – can also be powerful stimuli for the growth of a learning community.

- Openness, experiment and risk.

Also key to the manner is the establishment of an attitude of openness: to the language, to the learning process itself, to others in the group and to oneself. (See below: The Outcomes) In such a psychological environment, there is encouragement of experimentation and risk-taking, in the confidence that there will be mutual support, whatever the outcome. Lutzker has insightfully compared the state of unknowingness of the clown with that of the teacher in this kind of classroom:

It is the clown's complete lack of knowledge of what will happen, coupled with his complete openness and receptivity to what is occurring on stage, which exemplifies that state of attentiveness upon which creative and fluid response in a classroom are also based. (Lutzker. 2007:184).

This is similar to the state described by Underhill (2008),

Working with what comes requires continually learning my way into each present moment as it cascades in.

But it is important that learners too are acculturated to a context which encourages and supports risk-taking with good-humoured acceptance (though not indulgence) and the willingness to 'have a go'.

- Choice.

The opportunity to make choices also contributes to the overall quality of the learning. This is not to say that learners do just what they like, when they like. Choice implies responsibility and discipline but this is best established voluntarily, from within, rather than imposed from without. Students might decide on a particular project, and on how to go about it, on the understanding that the outcomes and consequences are their responsibility. The important thing is to offer choice whenever it is possible to do so: choice of texts, of activity-type and level, of evaluation. Offering choice reinforces the learners' belief that that they are actively involved in their own learning process.

- Mutual trust and support.

Errors or perceived lack of success are not tarred with the brush of blame. The manner in which the class operates ensures that people support each other, recognising that everyone needs other people at some time. The ecology of the class group, including the teacher is akin to a spider's web: touch it at any point and the whole structure vibrates. It is as important for teachers as well as learners to feel confident that they will be forgiven for occasional lapses, for the bad patches that we are all prone to at one time or another.

The Outcomes.

It may be useful here to re-visit Widdowson's distinction between Objectives and Aims in relation to possible outcomes: 'By objectives I mean the pedagogic intentions of a particular course of study to be achieved within the period of that course and in principle measurable by some assessment device at the end of the course. By aims I mean the purposes to which learning will be put after the end of the course.' (Widdowson 1993:6-7). Objectives, then will be short-term, definable and

measurable. Aims, by contrast, will be rather general and less easy to define, longer-term, and more difficult to measure. Given that the critique in Part 1 of this article focussed on objectives-centred teaching, it will come as no surprise that the kinds of materials and procedures I am recommending here will have outcomes which go beyond narrow objectives and which relate to more educational and psycho-social outcomes.

I have divided Outcomes into four main types. The first two - Material Outcomes and Pedagogical Outcomes - relate to Objectives (Maley 2003).

Typically, Material outcomes refer to exercises, guided writing, essays and task products. In an aesthetic approach, I would suggest that these could be extended to include visual displays (posters, wall newspapers, etc.), individual and group websites, publishing of student creative writing, student journals and portfolios, student-made grammar and vocabulary reference materials, oral performances (orchestrated choral readings, reader's theatre, plays and skits, simulated chat shows, musical performances, etc.).

Pedagogical outcomes are normally framed in terms of 'objective' evidence of learning, such as test / examination results, marks for continuous assessment, the ability to tackle longer and more demanding reading texts, etc. Again, I would suggest that these outcomes could be extended to include: informal evidence of gains in oral fluency (through, for example, conferencing), evidence of increased extensive reading fluency, the ability of students to manage their own learning, evidence of greater reflection on and awareness of their own learning process (for example, through journals), indications of greater meta-competence (the ability to talk about language and learning), and the ability to give and receive criticism and feedback. Such pedagogical outcomes are more difficult to evaluate, for sure, but all the more valuable for all that.

The second two types of outcomes relate to Aims. In doing so they are more concerned with the overall education and personal development of the students, rather than the achievement of more immediate, narrowly-defined pedagogical objectives.

Educational outcomes would include, for example, increasing learners' awareness of other people and of cultural difference, encouraging critical thinking and questioning, promoting creative approaches to problem-solving and developing greater learner independence.

Psycho-social outcomes would focus on the degree of development of increased self-esteem (and consequent enhanced motivation), self-awareness, confidence, the ability to cooperate with others without loss of individuality, the building of group solidarity (Hadfield 1992), growth of responsibility, the building of positive attitudes toward learning and a critical appreciation of the place of the target language within the global community of languages.

Both educational and psycho-social outcomes relate to qualities that learners will find valuable long after the specific course of study is over. Clearly, they are less easy to assess in a cut and dried, qualitative manner. That is a potential weakness. However, an awareness of their importance can permeate the learning on a continuous basis, and can be built in to classroom activities in a formative manner, rather than made the subject of a final summative evaluation. That is their very real strength.

Concluding remarks.

I am aware that what I am proposing here may sound fanciful and unworkable in a world governed by measurement, graded objectives and the like. However, I persist in the belief, based on over 45 years of experience, that it is the quality of the learning experience that ultimately counts, not the technicity. And that a texture of learning permeated by the art of its inputs and methods and by the artistry of its teachers is best calculated to offer that quality. With McRae, I contend that, 'In future years, the absence of imaginative content in language teaching will be considered to have marked a primitive stage of the discipline.' (McRae 1991: vii)

It can often seem futile to criticise the 'status quo' in the way I have been doing in this paper. After all, this is the way things are. What can we do about it? You cannot swim against the tide... I believe however that it is possible to do something to

remedy the sad state of affairs in education which I have been critiquing. To accept things as they are, in the belief that they are immutable, should not be an option, and there are countless examples of cases where the apparently unchangeable has changed or been changed. The fall of the Berlin Wall is not a bad example! The success of Mahatma Gandhi in ending British rule in India is another. The emancipation of women (still unfinished) is another. The release of Nelson Mandela yet another. It is possible to raise awareness of the insane direction education (and society at large) is taking. And it is possible, in however small a way, to practice an aesthetic approach to what we do. We are not powerless. We can effect change.

> *All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men (sic) to do nothing*. (Edmund Burke)

> *Let me conclude with a quote from Otto Jespersen, one of the founding fathers of language education.*

'Teach in the right way, then there will be life and love in it all, and when the examination comes your pupils will know more than if your teaching from the very beginning had been fettered by examination requirements.' (Jespersen, 1904:9)

And with another poem, which says it all!

The teacher said.

The teacher said:
A noun is a naming word.
What is the naming word
In the sentence,
'He named the ship Lusitania?'
'Named' said George.
'WRONG. It's ship.'

The teacher said:
A verb is a doing word.
What is the doing word
In the sentence:
'I like doing homework'?
'Doing' said George.
'WRONG ~ it's like.'

The teacher said:
An adjective is a describing word.
What is a describing word
In the sentence
'Describing sunsets is boring'?
'Describing' said George.
'WRONG ~ it's boring.'
'I know it is,' said George.

Michael Rosen

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Working with Learning Styles in ELT

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There is widespread recognition among English language teachers today that students learn differently, and the study of individual differences has attracted considerable attention in second and foreign language teaching and research. Researchers have identified a number of variables that influence individual learning outcomes, such as age, aptitude, learning styles, motivation, and personality. Second and foreign language teachers have shown an interest in how these variables apply to instructional planning. Unfortunately, this recognition has not always been accompanied by the development of adequate teacher knowledge and skills for dealing with individual differences in classroom settings. It is often difficult for teachers to apply the concepts to instructional design because in some cases it is not clear what each variable is referring to.

This paper attempts to provide clarity on one of these variables-- the concept of learning styles in the classroom—and attempts to provide the following the following: a) a working definition for learning styles, b) a useful instructional taxonomy for organizing learning styles, c) guidelines for using learning styles in the classroom, and d) sample tools for exploring and assessing learning styles in English language teaching.

The Concept of Learning Styles

A learning style refers to " ... an individual's natural, habitual, and preferred ways of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills" (Kinsella, 1995, p. 171). These styles seem to persist regardless of the content area one is trying to master

(e.g., learning to play golf vs. learning another language) or the method of instruction one is given (e.g., traditional language teaching activities, such as lecture, answering comprehension questions, manipulation drills, and memorizing vocabulary lists vs. solving problems in small groups). All individuals have preferred ways of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills (Christison, 2003).

Learning styles are both individually and culturally motivated (Kachru, 1988; Nelson, 1995). A learner's culture, family background, and socioeconomic status can affect learning. The context in which one is born and lives has an impact on how one learns. For example, within a given culture, we can sometimes see certain learning style preferences among individuals surfacing. This is not to say that everyone within the culture has the same preferences, but, rather, that culture does play a role in the development of our preferences (Christison, 2003). An excellent example of the role of culture in learning styles can be seen in how sailors or fishermen or people who have grown in rural or remote mountainous or desert regions in the world navigate their environments. In these environments, navigation (i.e., finding your way around) is accomplished by paying attention to one's surroundings. For example, during a storm a sailor navigates by paying attention to how the ship feels poised on the crest of a wave as opposed to how it feels when it plunges into a trough and tons of water thunder along the deck before the ship hopefully rises to a crest again. Even slight changes in the pitch are noticed and are indicators about the status of the storm (i.e., whether it is subsiding or strengthening). People who grow up or work in cultural settings such as this one above must pay attention to their environment, so they often prefer global methods of navigation to the specific ones associated with the use of technical tools, such as a map, a compass, or a Global Positioning System (GPS), even when such tools are available. English language teachers must recognize that there are cultural and well as individual differences among learners in their classrooms and that learners react differently to instruction (Ortiz and Garcia, 1988; Oxford and Anderson, 1995). When teachers place an emphasis on uniformity, it is a serious disadvantage for students whose culture teaches them behaviors and beliefs that are not the same as the majority culture.

Students who come from families and cultures that are collaborative and sharing are told when they get to school that they must be independent. Students whose culture may value spontaneity are told to sit quietly and exercise self-control. When teachers build different ways perceiving and process information into their lesson plans, they encourage learning and learners to participate in learning to the best of their abilities.

The major research base for much of the current work on learning styles began in the first quarter of the 20th Century with the work of noted psychologist, Carl Jung, and his six distinct psychological types (eventually published in 1976). Piaget continued the work of Jung by folding Jung's concept of learning styles in his own work (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969). In the years that followed, other educational researchers continued Jung's work and have attempted to refine his early broad categories (Dunn and Dunn, 1978; Dunn, Dunn, and Price, 1975, 1979, 1989; Dunn and Griggs, 1988; McCarthy, 1980, 1987). In English language teaching (ELT) there has been much interest in learning styles as demonstrated by the works of Christison (2003), Kinsella (1995), Oxford (1990), Oxford and Anderson (1995), and Reid (1987, 1995, & 1997). Learning styles in the second language classroom has become an important component in many second language teacher education programs.

Organizing Learning Styles

In order to develop the skills and attitudes to address student diversity in second language classrooms, teachers must learn to integrate and use learning styles appropriately. In order to do this, it is important to understand the range of possible learning styles and to know something about each one. Many English language teachers know about the perceptual styles—visual, auditory, bodily-kinesthetic—but few understand that perceptual learning styles are only one piece of a much larger learning style framework. In order to help teachers organize learning styles, this paper focuses on a taxonomy for learning styles organized in three areas—cognitive, sensory, and personality (Christison,

2003; Reid, 1987). It is important to see different learning styles as connected because learners will have more than one learning style, and, in addition, different tasks may be approached in different ways, making more than one learning style significant in a given task.

The terminology and labels used for identifying learning styles vary greatly. The taxonomy that I will use in this chapter (see Figure 1) identifies features of learning styles that are critical for second language learners and teachers. The taxonomy is not meant to be exhaustive, but, rather, to present a system that is easy and manageable for teachers. I will also explore types of behaviors associated with each of the learning styles presented in the taxonomy. The ultimate goal in applying this taxonomy to instructional planning and design is to create second language classroom environments that assist different students in learning languages most efficiently and effectively.

Figure 1

Learning Style Taxonomy for the L2 Classroom

Learning Style Taxonomy for the ELT Classroom		
Type 1: Cognitive Styles	Type 2: Sensory Styles	Type 3: Personality Styles
Field Dependent/ Field Independent	Perceptual: Visual, auditory, tactile, kinesthetic	Tolerance of Ambiguity
Analytic/Global	Environmental: physical, sociological	Right and Left Hemisphere Dominance
Reflective/Impulsive		

(adapted from Christison (2003)

It is likely that students will demonstrate multiple learning styles—cognitive, sensory, and personality. In order to use the information presented in Figure 1 English language teachers must gain a working knowledge of the general categories of learning styles so they can 1) recognize different styles in themselves and their learners and 2) create lesson plans and classroom activities that address the varied styles.

Cognitive Learning Styles

Numerous cognitive learning styles have been proposed in the research. In this short paper, I will limit the discussion to three—field-independent/field dependent, analytic/global, and reflective/impulsive. Although these styles are presented in a dichotomous framework, they are actually on a continuum and present in learners in degrees rather than completely or not at all.

Field-independent/field-dependent. Field-independent students learn best from step-by-step or sequential instruction. They also like to look at the details before they see the big picture. As language learners they generally like working with grammar rules and learning specific vocabulary. They are frequently quite accurate language learners. However, they are sometimes so focused on details that they miss overall governing principles. Field-dependent students need to have information presented in context and need a holistic approach to the language classroom. They are often what we call intuitive learners who respond to the target language globally, without taking time to analyze their language. They are generally good communicators and are more fluent language learner than field-independent learners.

Analytic/global. Another cognitive learning style that is useful in English language teaching is the analytic/global learning style. Analytic learners often work more effectively alone than by working with other people. They like to set their own goals and

work at their own pace. In the language classroom, analytic learners prefer to work with problems or questions alone, so they are often resistant to working in groups with other students. Global learners prefer to work with other people and learn best through interacting. The presentation of the material is not as important as opportunities to process the material with others. In addressing analytic/global learning styles, English language teachers must provide learners with opportunities to work alone and in groups with others.

Reflective/impulsive.   Another important learning style for English language teachers is the reflective/impulsive learning style. This style refers to the amount of time that learners needs to process information. Students with the reflective learning style, learn most effectively when they have time to consider new material before they have to respond while students with the impulsive learning style can often respond quickly. English language teachers will want to be cognizant of these styles by giving learners adequate time to process new information when asking questions or giving assignments. Reflective language learners take time to consider new information before responding, so they are often quite accurate language learners. Impulsive learners are able to respond immediately; consequently, they are often more fluent language learners than reflective learners. Using open-ended and opinion-generating questions are useful in creating an optimal learning environment for these learners.

Sensory Learning Styles

Perceptual.   By far the most popular of the learning styles among English language teachers and other educators are the perceptual learning styles—auditory, visual, tactile, and kinesthetic. This is evidenced by the number of presentations at conferences devoted to classroom activities for auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learners and the amount of material for classroom use available for download on the Internet. The

perceptual learning styles have sparked unprecedented creativity among language teachers. The reference to perceptual learning styles is made because hearing, seeing, touching, and whole-body movement are channels or modalities through which perception occurs. Learners who have a strong auditory modality process information most efficiently and effectively by listening to information, such as tapes and lectures. Visual learners absorb information most effectively when there is a visual stimulus or reinforcement with language input, such as films, pictures, images, charts, handouts, etc. Tactile learners benefit from an opportunity to use their hands to manipulate resources, such as writing on the blackboard, drawing pictures, building something, or using manipulatives as they acquire English. Kinesthetic learners learn effectively and efficiently when they participate in activities that encourage total physical involvement, such as going on field trips, conducting interviews, creating pantomime, playing a game of charades, or doing a mix and mingle activity with their classmates such as "Find Your Partner" or "Strip Story" (Bassano and Christison, 1995).

Environmental. Another type of sensory learning style is environmental. The two different ends of the environment continuum are physical and sociological. Physical learners are very sensitive to their physical environment. They learn most effectively when physical comforts such as temperature, light, food, time, classroom arrangement, and mobility are taken into consideration. They notice when items in class have been moved or classroom temperature increases or decreases. They are also sensitive to hunger and thirst and have a hard time concentrating if their needs are not met. Sociological learners pay attention to other kinds of factors in their environment. They are very sensitive to relationships among individuals so they notice how individuals are grouped in the classroom and what their relationship is in with the teacher and other learners. English language teachers who want to create an optimal learning environment for sociological learners should make purposeful choices about classroom grouping and teacher/student control.

Personality Learning Styles

The two most common personality-type learning styles for English language teachers are tolerance of ambiguity and right and left hemisphere differences.

Tolerance of ambiguity. Tolerance of ambiguity refers to how comfortable a learner is with the presence of uncertainty—either global uncertainty in the environment and interaction or language uncertainty as it relates to learning English. Learners who have a high tolerance for ambiguity in language learning, do well in situations wherein there are several possible answers. English language teachers who give their learners opportunities to experiment with the target language are meeting the needs of their students with high tolerance of ambiguity. Of course, students who have a low tolerance for ambiguity in language learning prefer to have information presented in a direct manner with one obvious, correct answer. Because teachers will have both types of learners in their classes, they should use both approaches to processing information with their learners.

Right and left-hemisphere dominance. Recent information from neuroscience provides language teachers with the beginnings of a biological basis for the choices they make about structuring learning in their classrooms and helps teachers understand more about the roles and responsibilities of each hemisphere of the human brain. Some learners have strong left or right brain hemisphere dominance—their brains process information in certain and predictable ways. For example, left-brained hemisphere dominant learners tend to be visual, analytical, reflective, and self-reliant. Right-brain dominant learners tend to be auditory, global, impulsive, and have a preference for interactive learning. While it is true that no one learner will be purely one or the other dominance, it is important for language teachers to consider these qualities in their learners and vary classroom activity in order to accommodate the broadest range in student behavior.

Guidelines for Teaching Learning Styles in the Classroom

English language teachers who are new to using learning styles in instructional planning are sometimes confused about how to apply the ideas in their lesson plans. The following guidelines are offered not as hard and fast rules but as ways to think about their application.

Vary Activities and Materials

It is likely that there are no classes of learners who will perform exactly alike. The class of learners you have in one session may have very different learning styles from students you have in the next session. When teachers begin working with learning styles they often mistakenly believe that the best way to apply the concepts is to determine the learning styles of the students in each class and plan lessons to match the determined styles. If it is true that each class of learners will be different, then teachers who use this approach to incorporating learning styles in their lesson planning will constantly be creating new lessons and materials with each new set of learners they have. A simpler and more logical approach for addressing learning styles is to think of them in a global sense. Rather than create tasks and activities for a specific group of students, varying the activities and tasks within each lesson you create in order to include a broad range of learning styles within each lesson. Over a period of time, many different learning styles can be included and many different styles of learning can be addressed.

Audit Your Teaching.

Before you begin making changes in your approach to teaching by including a new concept such as learning styles in your

planning, you should always make certain that you have a very clear understanding of your current practice. Conduct an audit of your teaching for one or two weeks before making any changes. During this time, categorize your learning tasks as they relate to the learning styles you wish to incorporate in your teaching. Once you understand what you routinely do, you will be able to make changes in your teaching in order to broaden the repertoire of learning tasks you offer. Make changes little by little so that both you and your students have time to adjust to changes.

Encourage Students to Stretch Their Learning Styles

Rather than think of each learning style as very separate and unique think of learning styles on a continuum. Students are positioned somewhere along a continuum for each style. By thinking of learning styles on a continuum, you can see more clearly what styles students are using in the classroom and can get a clearer picture of how to help them stretch their learning styles—particularly for students at the extremes of the continuum. For example, the impulsive/reflective style can be seen on a continuum with the impulsive learning style at one end and the reflective at the other end. When you see students who prefer using the impulsive learning style (e.g., completing work quickly in class), you can acknowledge the strengths of this style because these are generally the students who do get their work finished and in on time. When teachers learn to expect certain behaviors based on learning styles, they can make adjustments in their teaching appropriately. In the example given above with the impulsive learning style students, teachers can plan additional tasks or have them work on a multi-step project on their own, a project that requires careful consideration at each step.

Sample Tools for Exploring and Assessing Learning Styles

Providing a complete list of classroom activities as they relate to learning styles is beyond the scope of this short article, but I would like to share two tools with you that I believe have broad appeal—an inventory and a interview rubric. These tools are also representative of an important general principle that I believe is an essential consideration in classroom activities --using learner input to create meaningful materials for learning.

Creating Inventories

Language learners enjoy knowing more about themselves and how they learn. Inventories provide an excellent way of helping learners develop their language skills at the same time they are learning more about their individual process of learning. There are a number of useful inventories already on the market (Reid 1995; Kinsella, 1995; Dunn, Dunn, and Price, 1975, 1979, 1989) that can provide you and your students with useful and quite reliable information about learning styles. I also believe there is great value in "homemade" inventories because they can be very useful as springboards for important discussion in the classroom, and they can be used to discuss both on the results obtained from the inventories and on the process of creating the inventories.

As you recall, the perceptual learning styles are visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic. Collectively, my students and I identified some typical activities (e.g., listening to music, riding a bike, doing homework with a friend) beliefs about self (e.g., I am a good reader, I cannot respond quickly to questions) and preferences (e.g., I prefer to work by myself, I like to talk with peers to solve problems). As a class, we identified about 20 different activities, 30 different beliefs, and about 12 preferences, and the students wrote them on the board. I then asked the students to select an activity from the list. They chose driving a car. I then asked them to think of different things they do when

driving a car. Many students said that they always turn on the radio or listen to a CD. Another student said that she always adjusted the rear view and side mirrors and consistently checked the mirrors while she was driving. Another person said that he had to get comfortable--adjust the seat and put a pillow behind him. Although many suggestions were given, we selected the three activities given above because they were representative of the auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learning styles. I then divided the students into small groups and asked each group to select three items in total from our original lists of activities, preferences, and beliefs and to think of an auditory, visual, and kinesthetic response for each. After the groups finished, they turned in their work to me. I compiled the short perceptual learning style inventory from the results and gave it to the students the following day. The inventory appears in Figure 2. My students took the inventory and discussed the results in depth. Both the creation and use of the inventory allowed my students to use different learning styles (e.g., bodily-kinesthetic in the use of board work for generating ideas and reflective and analytic in the generation of lists). Creating inventories are just one example of a useful and creative classroom activity that can result from a learning style focus.

Figure 2

Perceptual Style Inventory for Language Learners

Directions: Choose the one answer that best describes you.

1. A person can tell what you are feeling by. . . .

a) the way your face looks

b) the way your voice sounds

c) the way you stand, move, and hold your body

2. If I need to talk to someone about something very important, I prefer to. . . .

a) meet face-to-face

b) talk on the telephone

c) talk while I am doing something else

3. When I am driving or riding in a car for long distances, I frequently . . . .

a) check the rearview and side mirrors and watch out for other cars.

a) turn on the radio or listen to a cassette or CD

c) move about in my seat trying to get comfortable and make frequent stops

4. When I am angry at someone, I . . . .

a) give them the silent treatment

b) tell others immediately

c) clench my fist and storm off

5. When I attend a meeting, I . . . .

a. prepare notes, agendas, overheads, etc. in advance

b. enjoy discussing and hearing others ideas

d. doodle and daydream

6. When it comes to the clothes I wear, I pay most attention to

a. how I feel in them

b. how I look

c. what others say

7. The best form of discipline is . . . . .

a. to take away something of value

b. to discuss the problem

c. to refuse to speak or interact

8. When I have a little free time, I like to . . . .

a. participate in some sport or physical activity

b. watch TV or movies

c. listen to the radio or my favorite music

9. I try to keep up with what's going on in the world by . . .

a. catching a few minutes of the evening news on TV while I'm doing other things

b. reading the newspaper or news magazine

c. listening to the radio or watching the evening news

10. I think the most effective way to reward someone (including me) is . . . . .

a. a pat on the back, a handshake, or a hug (whichever is appropriate)

b. oral praise in front of peers

c. letters, notes, or stickers with positive comments

Answer key

Total the points for each a), b), and c) checks. Numbers 1 -5 a) visual, b) auditory, c) kinesthetic; Numbers 6-10 a) kinesthetic, b) auditory, c) visual. The area with the most points will be your dominate learning style. It is quite common to have equal points in two areas. This means that you have a bi-modality profile.

Interview Rubric

Rubrics are tools for classifying products or behaviors into categories. The categories can be of the yes/no variety or they can vary along a continuum. Rubrics can be used to classify virtually any product or behavior, such as essays, research reports, portfolios, oral presentations, or the product or outcome of group work. Most frequently rubrics are used to provide formative feedback to students, but they can also be used by teachers in order to give grades or by students as self-assessments. The "Interview Rubric" in Figure 3 can be used by students to collect information about other students. The purpose of the interview rubric is to choose a partner or select members for a group based on criteria associated with selecting effective and responsible partners. The criteria were suggested by the students as part of a previous activity. For example, many students believed they were well organized and completed their work ahead of time. Other students preferred to complete their work nearer to the time it was due. Consequently, determining the timeframe in which students preferred to complete their assignments was important in choosing a partner. Other criteria in selecting partners were associated with such behaviors as how much they liked to talk, whether they liked to work alone or with others, and whether they were high or low energy.

Students conducted interviews with three to five people whom they considered to be potential partners and selected a final partner based on mutual agreement and on how individuals had answered the questions. Once they had chosen a partner, they returned to the "Interview Rubric." With each of the matched criterion, they asked questions to determine where on the continuum, from weak to strong, they resided.

Figure 3

Look Before You Leap

Directions: Work together with a potential partner. Answer the questions and then compare your answers.

	My response	My partner's response
1. Do you get things done ahead of time or nearer the time they are due?		
2. Can you always be counted on to keep your agreements?		
3. Do you consider yourself well organized?		
4. Do you tend to be highly focused and linear in your thinking or more circular and discursive?		
5. Do you like to talk a lot or a little?		
6. Do you prefer to do most of your work alone or in the company or someone else?		
7. Do you mix play and work, or are you all work and business?		

8. Are you detail oriented or do you like to think globally and get the big picture?		
9. Do you tend to complete your work very carefully or do you tend to it quickly without much attention to detail?		
10. How important is this course and project to you? very? moderately? not particularly important?		
11. Are you tolerant of others' mistakes or do others' mistakes really bother you?		
12. Are you easy going or driven?		
13. Are you quite serious or do you tend to be a light-hearted with most things?		
14. Are you easy or hard to get a hold of?		
15. If someone lets you down, do you tend to take it hard or be very forgiving?		
16. Do you tend to do more than your share, just your share, or less than your share?		
17. Do you tend to be a leader or a follower?		
18. Do you like to be the center or attention or are you rather self-contained?		
19. Are you high energy or low energy?		

20. Does your energy level tend to be rather even or quite variable?		
21. Are you people oriented or task oriented?		
22. Is accurate writing one of your strengths?		
23. Does your strength lie in creativity or working through other's ideas?		

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The interview rubric and the activity described above, provide learners with an opportunity to use many different learning styles, such as field dependent/independent, visual, reflective, analytic, and auditory.

Conclusion

There are many advantages to using learning styles in lesson planning and curriculum develop. The classroom certainly becomes a more varied and interesting environment when learning styles become an integral part of learning. By integrating learning styles into one's teaching, learners not only gain a new language, but they also learn more about themselves and how they learn. Using learning styles spawns creativity in the development and use of techniques for learning, and it one concept I highly recommend for both new and experienced teachers.

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On Interaction: Art Matters

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El arte fue el puerto definitivo donde colmé mi ansia de nave sedienta y a la deriva.

Ernesto Sábato

Introduction

Our communicative competence is frequently measured according to our ability to produce accurate linguistic forms and discourse but also by how efficiently we negotiate meaning, communicate our experience of the world and interact with others. The teacher of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) can help learners develop the strategies that will take them beyond their own world by using art as a source of material. This paper poses that art offers the teacher thematic content for the learning tasks and also helps to create new contexts for interaction. The works of art are used to bridge the gap between the EFL class and the rich world outside. The first part of the paper deals with the rationale behind the use of art in the EFL class and is mainly based on insights from the field of Social Constructivism. Starting with Piaget, we will see how Vygotskian theory finds its place in a classroom where art is used to mediate knowledge. In the second part I will mention how art can be used in learning tasks.

On Constructivism and Social Interactionism

From a Social Constructivist perspective, language develops when learners interact with others and make sense of and re-create the content presented to them; the teacher acts as a mediator between the learners and the knowledge of language by designing tasks which are relevant to the learners needs; the tasks, in turn, serve as an interface between teacher and

learners. All shape the learning process that takes place within a context that includes the classroom, the interactions within it and also the social and cultural environments. (Williams and Burden, 1997)

Jean Piaget is probably the most important representative of Cognitive Developmental psychology. One interesting aspect of his work is related to the constructive nature of the learning process – since we were born we have been interacting with the world around us and constructing meaning from this experience. Piaget also suggests that "we come to know" things as a direct result of our personal experiences and he sees cognitive development as a process that combines maturation and interaction: the mind is constantly seeking a balance between what is known and what is being experienced. Social Interactionists agree with this idea and with the Behaviourist view that adults are responsible for shaping children's learning – the mediating adult selects content that is relevant to the learner, sets up an environment that is conducive to learning and provides feedback and support when necessary. Being born into a social world, we learn through interaction with other people; it would be natural to conclude then, that the material selected for interaction is of great importance as is the influence of the teacher in designing tasks that foster interaction. Lev Vygotsky and Reuven Feuerstein are usually identified within Social Interactionism because of their theoretical developments in the field, as both emphasise the role and importance of social factors, namely the *significant others*, for the construction of knowledge.

Lev Vygotsky coined the term *Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD) to explain how we develop cognitively. We do so by moving up the ZPD, which refers to the distance between our current level of knowledge, where we can work and solve problems independently, and the next or proximal level of development which is defined by what we can do with the help of the expert – this expert may be the teacher or a more proficient peer. The role of this significant other is to help us go beyond our current level of development. How do we do that? What is the message of Social Interactionism for the EFL teacher? Well, this theory is usually completed with the concept of

mediation which was developed by Feuerstein to refer to the part played by other significant people in the learners' lives. The mediating adults enhance learning and help learners in a variety of ways – by selecting appropriate content, by making sure that what is being presented to the learners transcends the here and now of the class, by monitoring progress and providing feedback that informs learners of their development, by shaping the learning experiences presented to the learners so that they suit their needs. What mediation theory tells the EFL teacher is that her/his role is to design learning tasks and promote interactions that will help learners develop their knowledge of English.

According to Feuerstein, we have to remember three key features of mediation when developing materials and designing tasks: learners should be aware of the value of the learning task, the learning experience should produce learning which goes beyond the here and now and there should be a *shared intention* – the teacher should state clearly why the task has been set and the learners should understand exactly what is required of them. It is also important to see the learner as an active participant who *reciprocates* our intention, that is to say he/she is ready and willing to carry out the task presented because there's an agreement as to what should be done and why. Basically, the secret of effective learning lies in the social interaction between two or more people with different levels of skill and knowledge and where the role of the one with most knowledge, i.e. the role of the mediator, is to find ways of helping the other to learn. (Williams and Burden, 1997)

Social Interactionism emphasises the dynamic relationship that is established between teachers, learners and tasks and, since learning never takes place in isolation but needs a context for development, it also recognises the importance of the learning environment within which learning tasks and interactions are set. Williams and Burden (1997) propose a Social Constructivist framework for the four main variables which influence the learning process – the teachers, the learners, the tasks and the context. From this perspective, the teachers select content and design tasks which reflect their beliefs about teaching and learning; learners deal with the tasks in ways that reflect their own personal beliefs; the task is the connection between teacher

and learners and sets up the interaction and there is also the context in which learning takes place. The context, which includes the physical and emotional environment of the classroom, the whole school and the wider social and cultural settings, will play an important part in shaping what happens within it. Art may cater for the need of relevant content; it may be the interface between teachers and learners and it may be used to establish an appropriate context for learning.

Art matters

Art can be the input we need for the negotiation of meaning. The teacher selects material which is relevant to the task at hand and provides the mediation necessary to carry it on by offering a "scaffold" if necessary, by guiding the interaction, by helping the learner to discover meaning, by showing that this discovery is a process that includes his/her individual competence, a joint activity and the knowledge shared by the members of the same group. We can ease the process by helping them realise that underlying any of these works of art there is a single person and society interacting and communicating with each other. Art conveys content that is rich in connotations and meanings and it also creates an appropriate context for learning where learners feel free to communicate with one another and with the teacher. The materials we choose and the tasks we design are of fundamental importance, particularly in our classes where English has a FL status. Beyond the class, the learners feel no need to communicate in English, which is why the materials and tasks presented to them should be powerful enough to become the context where they will want to explore and develop their knowledge of English. The works of art could be used as the starting point of a process by which the learners feel confident to take part in and risk a contribution to the interaction.

The interactions that take place during a lesson are to be triggered by carefully designed tasks. The teacher of EFL needs to create a context for learning where the gap between the learners' private world and the world outside is bridged – and the works of art can be used for that purpose. Art creates its own context, making it possible for the learners to negotiate, extract

and construct meaning and to develop a communicative and cultural competence that will lead to a more informed view of the world around them. Pictures like *Las Meninas* by Diego Velázquez, *Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez* by Picasso or *Fritos y Pasteles* by Cesáreo Bernaldo de Quirós, Fasola's photos or Ciruelo's dragons can be used to trigger interaction, which in turn helps develop the learners' communicative competence in English. Some works of art can also help raise awareness of values and beliefs across cultures. Art has a powerful impact on the learners, it does not wither with time – such is the power of colour and light – and is so "flexible" that it can be used for any level of proficiency: *Juanito remontando un barrilete* by Antonio Berni can be used to trigger physical descriptions in a pre-intermediate course, a past tense revision in an intermediate course or a narrative at more advanced levels. Photographs can be used in a similar fashion: *Los Niños de Paillet,* photographed by Fernando Paillet at the end of the 19th century coupled with the poems of María Guadalupe Allasia and the digital versions of Fasola can be used to speculate about what life was like back then, in the small city of Esperanza, to explore feelings or to discuss the value of protecting the photographic patrimony of a region …

Art lends itself easily to the task of promoting interaction in the EFL class. The question arises of what form and work of art to bring in? Whatever the material, be it your favourite Impressionist or a digital photograph, make sure it is significant and relevant to the learners and to you as a person. There are very few alternatives at hand which are more contagious or will carry your group further than your own enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is not enough, of course, professionalism and expertise are essential if we want to help other people to go beyond the class and visit ideas and thoughts they would not have considered otherwise. Pierre Bourdieu (2004) once wrote that the students who benefit the most from education are those who have "inherited" habits and attitudes that are considered the "proper" ones; the cultural knowledge and the good taste of their social class have been handed down to them, i.e. they enjoy the cultural wealth that comes with the social class they belong to. These students frequently go to the cinema and theatre, to museums and concerts; they have internet at home and books

on their night tables. Going places and visiting new cities are part of their holiday routines. Regardless of whether you are thinking of the theatre, music, painting, films, technology or travels, the higher the social origin, the richer and more extended the cultural knowledge. These students will probably contribute a lot to the interaction. In contrast, there is also the group of students who are less affluent and for whom education remains the only access to culture, education is their only access to cultural wealth.

Perhaps one of the most important objectives of education is precisely to expand the personal framework of reference, incorporating varied knowledge which would enable the subject to understand our complex cultural reality. We are educators who have specialised in English. How can we help learners to cope with that complexity? I believe that a first step is to bring the world outside into our class and this is when art would become useful.

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Papers

1. EFL and art:

Classroom Applications and Theoretical Underpinnings

'A Poem is like a Picture'

Creative Writing through Paintings

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Teaching creative writing

We all teachers and trainers now and then find it rewarding to be reading a riveting story or musical poem written by our own students or future teachers. It is not an easy task, especially when it comes to introducing the writing process and how motivation and inspiration could be awaken so as to let our students see their minds and transfer their imagining to black and white.

Initially, we need to come to terms with the writing process and how this can be organised pedagogically speaking. Hyland (2002: 6-33) proposes three types of approaches: text-oriented, writer-oriented, and reader-oriented. Perhaps, we may agree on the assumption that creative writing could be better connected to the second approach since it attempts to analyse what good writers do with a writing task. In the writer-oriented approach, writing could be seen as a personal expression where the process is as important as the product itself. This process does not need to be seen as linear for there is constant dialogue between the writer and the writing or among all the variables that play a role in the creative process of literature. This dialogue, from a writing-as-a-situated-act position, is influenced by the personal attitudes and social experiences the writer brings to writing. In sum, it is within this approach that we can place the voices that a writer can hear when involved in a close encounter with a painting to look for inspiration.

In the literature it may be widely found that one way to inspire our students is by introducing literary works of art as reading

matter which will prompt their own writing initiative. Belcher & Hirvela (2000: 7-9) believe that the use of literature has been recognised as a powerful tool to develop communicative competence, therefore being useful for the development of writing skills, creative writing even. This belief that literary texts could be used as examples of writing in composition classes may be enhanced if ekphrasis is introduced in such a way that students are not only exposed to literature based on paintings but also on paintings themselves for students to write about.

What is Ekphrasis?

According to Verdonk (2005:231), ekphrasis refers to 'a sub-genre of poetry addressing existent or imaginary works of art' and its etymology takes us to the Greek word 'description'. It goes without saying then that this sub-genre is anything but new as it originates in classical rhetoric, the technique of describing visual art in a literary work – with all the demands of vividness which that involves (Grogan, 2009: 167).

However, Heffernan (1991: 297- 298) points out that although the term *ekphrasis,* which he defines as 'the verbal representation of graphic representation' (ibid: 299), has been known since the Greek both in creative writing and rhetoric, it is new in the literary academe even though scholars have been doing and writing about ekphrasis without using such a word. For example, Wellek and Warren (1963: 125-135) devote a whole chapter to 'Literature and the Other Arts' making reference to the relationship between painters and writers without the use of our key term in this paper.

We can discuss and create ekphrasis from two different senses (Verdonk 2005: 233). On the one hand, we can create ekphrasis in a wider sense through the detailed description of any real or imagined object, scene or abstraction. On the other hand, in a narrow sense, we can see it in the creation of poetry addressing not only paintings but also architectural art, 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' by John Keats for instance as well as artefacts such as weapons, or even food, for example 'Oda a las papas fritas' by Pablo Neruda. It follows that ekphrasis as a literary figure covers both actual, that is real, as well as notional, i.e. fictional, objects.

Ekphrasis seems to be the solely realm of poetry. Nonetheless, it should not be limited to a mere poetic spatial account of a painting, but rather a narrative account, a storytelling representation, of a visual account (Heffernan 1991:302). Perhaps such a view may be inviting us to explore the creation of short stories or other narrative structures therefore introducing ekphrastic narration.

Whether we talk about ekphrastic poetry or narration, we still need to look further and see how such a connection, poetry-paintings, can be fruitful, that is, what benefits these two artistic expression can offer in our teaching practices.

Firstly, painting and poem constitute new realities or alternate spaces in which the relationships between such phenomena exist and signify on formal, structural levels (Wyman, 2010: 41). This means that we will be looking not only at time in writing and space in painting, a traditional view, but also at how these two dimensions can be encountered simultaneously in both life representations. These encounters could be further exploited if we consider that, as Wyman (ibid: 44) asserts, the word and the picture, that is, word-making and form-building are one and the same as both function as self-regulated language systems. It is therefore our task to introduce our students to these interrelated systems, how they operate and how they can be combined in the creative writing process of poetry.

This interrelationship may be better understood if we bring two other terms into the picture: *enargeia* and *empathy*.

By *enargeia*, we mean 'the commitment to creating intensely vivid images in the mind's eye of the reader' (Grogan, 2009: 168). Such a view entails that the creative writing process our students will be exploring needs to be visual through words, allowing the reader of their poems, to imagine unique paintings. Grogan (ibid: 170) adds that *enargeia* can take a reflective turn inward, merging seen and imagined elements in ambiguous phrasing. The confusion between the material object, its referent and the writer's imagination and craft puts the reader at a loss to know what exactly is being described. This is exactly what our students should be encouraged to pursue, this word-image game in which boundaries are pushed to limits where the reader, and

even the writer, does not know whether he or she is writing/reading or painting/viewing.

Such a game leads us to the term *empathy*. Amir (2009: 234) views this term as an affect which often accompanies ekphrasis, which has a subjective as well as an intersubjective dimension. Empathy in ekphrasis, Amir adds (ibid: 242), accounts for the dialogical relationship established between writer/reader/painter/viewer where each actor here is searching for something: identity. This is a key issue in creative writing as we teachers need to invite our students to look for their own identity in their productions, to create a persona that will be the result of their own imaginings and cultural background.

Examples of ekphrastic poetry

Perhaps, Pieter Brueghel's paintings could be regarded as iconic in the field of ekphrastic poetry as his works have inspired poets such as William Carlos Williams and his 'The Dance', Walter de la Mare, Sylvia Plath's 'Two Views of a Cadaver Room', or W.H. Auden's 'Musée des Beaux Arts' (Verdonk, 2005: 233-234).

Following this sub-genre, Quilter (2009: 209) offers some examples of writers such as Ashbery being influenced by the works of art of painter Winkfield. She shows that collaborative projects between writers and painters could challenge the idea of their individualism. Furthermore, we can also find strong connections between painting and poetry in the work of W.S. Graham and Roger Hilton where the former's poems resemble the lines, figures and colours of the latter's abstractions (Maber, 2009: 263-264).

Closer in time, Banita (2009: 1) explains, for example, that Margaret Atwood's ekphrastic poem 'Quattrocento' does not depict a particular painting but Quattrocento, that is, an entire school of Italian painting.

All in all, we can see that the relationship has been fruitful thus offering us plenty of examples to share with our students so that they begin their writing explorations of ekphrastic poetry.

Applying ekphrasis in our classes

It may be agreed that if we are to introduce the creative process of poetry in our composition classes, we need to understand first how we can explore the meanings behind words. One way to scaffold this exploration is by resorting to Poetics. For Hall (2005: 90-99), Poetics is concerned with how literary meaning is made, which, with the help of Hermeneutics, can shed light on the principles for creating and interpreting a text and what it means.

Poetics and stylistics in general, in fact, are useful tools for the teaching of reading and writing poetry. If we are to inspire our students by bringing into the classroom poems for analysis of how they have been created, Parkinson & Reid Thomas (2000), suggest that *regularities* and *patterns* are two features that could be pedagogically exploited. Regularities or parallelism, which can be found in 'The Dance' (Verdonk, 2005: 238), could be explored at lexical, phonological, and syntactic levels and contrasted with deviant language that, in a way, highlights regularities as well as overall creational patterns, inviting readers and writers to play with figure and ground in the creative writing of poetry. It is my belief that such a feature of poetry could be taught or shown through paintings that display both regularities and deviant elements, such as Grant Wood's 'American Gothic'. In so doing we will be beginning to link poetry and painting. In other words, ekphrasis at an exploratory stage will be unfolding.

Spiro (2004: 88-89) suggests the lower-intermediate to advanced students can create poetry through ekphrasis. She offers a lesson plan in which students are first asked to describe an ancient monument, such as the Taj Mahal or the Pyramids. Then, students have to think about what these monuments have heard, seen and known and write a poem using lines that may begin like *You have seen...You have heard....* In this case, the writing of ekphrastic poems is based on buildings rather than on paintings, but the essence remains, the literary representation of another representation.

What has been suggested above may be seen as the materialisation of an ekphrastic process in which students first describe what they see and later on they move on to create

bonds between them and the object of their poetry whether it belongs to the wider or narrow sense of ekphrasis. What is more, we may explore this process more successfully if we allow our students to initiate their journey by the description of actual objects before dealing with notional objects. What is important, as Spiro proposes, is to empathise with the painting, since empathy will lead to enargeia, causing readers to visualise in their minds the object in itself and how it has affected the writer.

For example, in my most recent experience, I introduced ekphrasis for creative writing to my 3rd year Polimodal students, whose level of English is B1 (CEFR), by showing them paintings by the Impressionists. They had to describe everything they saw and later describe again as if they were one of the characters in the painting of their choice. After that, they were asked to associate colours and textures in the painting with adjectives, verbs, feelings and emotions. Last, they wrote a poem not only describing the painting but also adding vividness by, in a way, telling how the character might have ended up being painted.

It was later that we moved on to create vivid images of abstractions through poetry. They wrote ekphrastic poems about childhood, adolescence, first love, missing a friend, loneliness, joy, purity, and friendship, among others. It is worth saying that some students felt tempted to actually make figures with their words, i.e, concrete poetry, but I reminded them that our aim was to let readers imagine through our words only. These poems also showed us all how different our descriptions and memories could be and how valid and worth respecting all of them are.

Conclusion

It was the great Horace (65-8 BC) who said 'Ut pictura poesis', a poem is like a picture. This simile could not better explain the intimate relationship that writers can create between a word and an image. By introducing this relationship in our creative writing classes our students will see that writing is anything but linear, anything but a top-down task. It goes in every direction; it goes up and down, backwards and forward. We may say that

there is no way to separate human expressions in compartments, as all of them seek beauty and truth, which in turn, inspire and motivate us all.

This paper was based on ekphrastic poetry. It would be valuable to further explore and research ekphrastic short stories or other narrative forms.

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Weaving Paintings and Language in the EFL Kindergarten Classroom

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Life is a great big canvas, and you should throw all the paint you can on it.

Danny Kaye (American Comedian, Musician and Entertainer, 1913-1987)

Background bibliography to the Painting-Literature interaction

The seeds of the current presentation stemmed from a casual finding at a book fair in Rosario some years ago. I came across two samples, which I purchased without hesitation for our school library. I was not deterred by the fact that both titles were in Spanish, for having worked with young learners for some time has taught me to turn *anything* into teachable material. My students' illiteracy was a suitable alibi to apply these new findings in the EFL classroom. Paul Cézanne's *The Bathers* inspired James Mayhew to write, in 2004, *Carlota and the Bathers.* It tells the story of a child who seeks refuge in an art gallery on a sweltering summer afternoon and frees herself from the company of a dozing grandmother in order to interact with the characters in the paintings she encounters. Jane Johnson also recreates a fictional background for Velazquez' *Las Meninas* in her book for children "The Princess and the Painter" (2005). In this case, the story paves the way for the final scene: the family portrait while narrating background anecdotes and feelings that lead to this well-known image. I found both texts an ingenious way of adapting Art to meet children's understanding.

Later I discovered a similar resourceful attempt to deal with paintings: for the past two years Cambridge University

suggested Tracy Chevalier's novel *Girl with a pearl earring* as a set book for Part Two in the Writing Paper section of the Certificate of Proficiency in English exam (CPE). This work, published in 1999, tells the story behind the famous homonymous painting by the Dutch painter Vermeer.

The last finding to boost the idea of merging Art and Literature resulted from a review I read on the Cuban novelist Zoé Valdés, whose work "*Una Novelista en el Museo del Louvre*" actually paid homage to the Argentine writer Manuel Mujica Lainez, who in 1984, published a collection of short stories entitled "*Un Novelista en el Museo del Prado*". Both texts narrate the nocturnal adventures of the respective authors, who interact with painters and characters from the most representative works of art exhibited in these museums. Thus, Mujica Láinez gossips with Velázquez and El Greco, while Valdés argues with the Mona Lisa and pampers Goya's dog while helping lovers abandon their home-paintings in order to meet secretly.

These examples share the same objective, with varying degrees of verisimilitude and different target audiences: they all prove to be a literary attempt to present idiosyncratic perceptions and interpretations of art through the creative flow of narrative. The fact that this literary experimentation has been aimed at children and adults indistinctively confirms Bruner's belief that the foundations of any subject can be presented to anyone at any moment with the proper tuning.

This subject matter of this year's FAAPI Conference offered me the chance to follow the path of the above mentioned authors by producing my own "unusual" interpretation of a work of art. The choice was Arcimboldo's *Spring*.

What follows is the result of much thinking to achieve this goal.

Working with young learners

As a first step in the theoretical support of the current discussion, it is fundamental to characterize the main qualities of the selected target learner.

The conception that children are blank slates onto which teachers carve the necessary knowledge has long ago lost validity. It is now assumed that they are already well-equipped for the intake of information by the time they engage in academic learning. Among the traits that constitute their way of processing the world we can mention:

- their capacity to interpret meaning holistically;
- their tendency for indirect learning;
- their unlimited creativity with limited resources (language included);
- their wide imagination (Halliwell, 1992, 3-7).

The first two traits are context-bound. The child needs clues upon which to rely to facilitate the understanding of new material. In the case of language acquisition meaning will be reinforced by icons, gestures and prosody. Bruner (1984, 15) includes these contextual tools in his definition of the enactive and iconic stages, which will pave the way for the emergence of symbolization, and consequently of language.

The last two characteristics – applied to the purpose of this paper - indirectly lead us to discuss the literary notion of defamiliarisation coined by the Russian Viktor Shklovsky. This technique forces the audience – in this case, children – to see common things in a strange way in order to foster perception of the familiar. As the theorist stated

The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar,' to make forms difficult to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged (Shklovsky, 1998: 17).

The child is recurrently exposed to a distorted reality by interacting with the characters in the everyday input they receive – animated objects, talking animals, among others. Thus, it is natural that they will feel attracted to this mutation and will either make up their own changes or perceive the ones produced by adults as natural to their fantasy world.

Children, Thinking and Learning

As Robert Fisher (1995) states

If not encouraged at an early age children will stop speculating and playing with ideas. They need to learn to think creatively to prepare themselves for a fast-changing world […] Creativity consists largely of rearranging what we know in order to find out what we do not know…Hence to think creatively we must be able to look at what we usually take for granted (11).

Alongside this perspective lies the great effort which this kind of thinking presupposes. It is safer to rely on what we have already automatised than to dig beyond the surface. Any activity which expands the boundaries of the ordinary and which involves imagination and originality can be labeled as creative. In this sense Art provides a suitable environment for imagination, reason and emotional involvement. It is through this means that both teachers and students engage in the quest for knowledge and broaden their minds by exploring unconventional areas. Children are all born with a creative ability but it is up to educators to provide a supportive climate to allow this gift to develop.

Children and Art

Annette Karmiloff-Smith (1992) defines the child as a *notator*, equipped with the exclusively human capacity to produce external prints, which for her constitute "cultural tools that leave a volitional printed trace of human communicative and cognitive acts." (173) This product can be iconic or not, as in the case of drawings and the writing system respectively. However, both fulfill a semiotic function; the image represents an idea, to

which it is inherently attached. This post-Piagetian author bases her conception of human development upon the theory of Representational Redescription (RR model), which states that implicit automatized information is gradually transformed into explicit knowledge. According to her during infancy children build procedures to draw stereotyped images, such as those of a house, a human being or a car.

Around the age of four or five they can efficiently and quickly produce these drawings out of their culturally-imposed knowledge. But if they are requested to draw a non-existent house or a crazy car they will be forced to operate on their internal representations and beliefs rather than on the environment. This procedure intends to break with formulaic pictures in an attempt to foster brain plasticity.

Pilot experience

The following lesson plan illustrates the amalgamation of English and Art in the context of an EFL kindergarten classroom at Saint Patrick's Bilingual school in Rosario with 5-year-old children. It is worth highlighting that there is a weekly moment – usually on Fridays - which is devoted to what we call "Arts and Crafts". During this session we intend to resort to freer graphic activities as a follow-up for the class.

THEMATIC UNIT "FOOD"	
VOCABULARY	*Vegetables* (carrot, lettuce, tomato)
	Fruit (apple, pear, orange)
	Flower, tree, ground, scarecrow
	Parts of the face (head, hair, nose, mouth, eyes)
	Miscellaneous language (ruler, bread, milk, pencil-case, chicken)

FUNCTIONAL LANGUAGE	I like…	I'm sleepy.
	I'm hungry.	Please.
	I'm angry.	Thank you.
WARM-UP	The teacher whistles different tunes and encourages students to try doing so. She asks them to guess the songs. The focus will be on Old Mc Donald's. Once guessed it is sung and students are asked to pay attention to the drawing on the board (a farm)	A.V.A / Voice: Revision of known songs – Old Mc Donald's Farm
LEAD-IN	Students are asked to discover what the problem is with the drawn farm (Clue: misplaced objects) and are asked to reorganize the setting (e.g. The ruler is on the tree; carrots don't grow in trees; bread and milk are not cultivated, etc) Once the mistakes are identified, students' attention is drawn to the image of the scarecrow, who is one of the protagonists in the story to come.	A.V.A / Board and flashcards
READING	The story includes two antagonists: the scarecrow, guardian of the crops, and Arcimboldo, a lazy wanderer. When Arcimboldo feels hungry he decides to steal, day by day, vegetables from the farm. However, on the morning after each theft he realizes that his face changes, adopting the shape of the stolen item. This happens gradually until his whole face is made up of vegetables. The last image students get of this character is the well-known painting *Spring.* The moral lies in the need to ask for	A.V.A / Flap book and painting

	permission and thank what others give us.	
FOLLOW-UP	<u>Arts and Crafts</u>: Students are encouraged to make their own "Salad Man" with realia. This activity enhances a cross-curricular extension: the discussion of healthy habits such as the importance of washing food and hands before cooking and eating, the fact that food is meant to be eaten not wasted – for this purpose parents have been previously informed in the communication notebook about the activity and the importance of sharing these ingredients at home in a family meal.	Plastic plates, cherry tomatoes, lettuce, sliced and grated carrots.

Art as a visual Aid and Language development

Art has been tackled from two different perspectives: as a graphic source of expression and as visual input for storytelling and story-building. While focusing on the linguistic content of the syllabus (parts of the face and fruits and vegetables) within the context of a story tailor-made for the purpose, students were peripherally exposed to a real work of Art. Another significant factor is the choice of the antagonist's name: the use of the painter's real surname for the character fosters effective storage both of the image and its author. Students are not simply observing a work of art, the work of art has become part of their imaginary world. In addition, the portrayed man is no longer anonymous but familiar to them: the funny thief of vegetables who becomes a mixture of vegetables himself!

There is a psycholinguistic perspective which supports this particular use of Art according to the decoding and encoding of information. As David Lodge (1984) states in one of his novels through the voice of his character Morris Zapp "Every decoding is another encoding." This implies that our perception of input is

somehow filtered by our background knowledge and consequently affected by it, in which case the information that is actually taken in shows an idiosyncratic shape. Gass (1988) distinguishes four kinds of perception of input depending on the degree of attention and understanding devoted to them. Thus, apperceived input is "the first step of acquisition – a passing through of the initial data. It consists of 'noticing' features in the input as a result of saliency of the features and of the learner's existing […] knowledge." (Ellis, 1994:349) According to Gass not all apperceived input is comprehended and similarly not all comprehended input becomes intake, understood as "the process which mediates between […] input and the learner's internalized set of rules." (*op. cit.*, 349) Finally input will be part of the learner's knowledge once it has been 'integrated.' It can be concluded that this integration is the result of a thorough and unconscious process of relating known and new information in a meaningful way.

Transferred to the classroom experience depicted in this paper, it could be explained as follows:

1. In the first place the painting has been re-encoded into the child's language of play and imagination, no longer an abstraction but a tangible realization within the context of a story. The main features of the painting have been made salient by being gradually displayed throughout the narration.
2. The outline of the story provides the necessary cognitive and linguistic pegs for learners to build new meaning: vocabulary is known to them and the recreated situation sounds plausible.
3. Both Art and Language are presented in context, which fosters comprehension of the narrative conflict. Storytelling is used since it is – together with symbolic play – one of the most recurrent activities in childhood.

Conclusion

Visual stimulation plays a fundamental role in early stages of development. As Gregory (1966) states

The retina is a specialised part of the surface of the brain that has emerged and is sensitive to light. [...] The eyes send the brain codified information and this consequently responds by selecting and organizing information depending on the maturation, experience and expectations of the subject. What he/she perceives is partly the result either of what they expect to perceive or what they are used to perceiving (Kellogg, 1975:20)."

Taking into account that creativity is understood as the capacity to see reality with new eyes it is necessary to enhance emotional freedom by fostering creative transgression. Doing away with stereotypes will result in a wider scope of reference.

The primary objective of school is to teach children different symbolic systems: Language, Maths and Art, among others. The last proves a suitable context for the intended shift of paradigms: "it poses the introduction of a different visual world to the daily one. New meaning is assigned to how other people and cultures see the world." (Nun de Negro, 1995:17)

The classroom should provide instances of controlled and systematic work interwoven with moments of spontaneous expression. It is through this unrestrained production that the child will manage to reconcile perception, thinking and feeling – equally represented in the creative process. However, the child can only creatively reproduce that with which he has established a dynamic relation, i.e a sensitive, emotive, affective bond. The classroom proposal that this paper has outlined intended to give shape to these theoretical precepts.

As Language teachers and Language users we have recurrently faced the challenge of trying to express or convey the ineffable. When facing this linguistic breakdown, Art proves a suitable bridge. As Georgia O'Keeffe accurately expressed, "I found I could say things with color and shapes that I couldn't say any other way - things I had no words for."

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Taking a Cue from the Artist in the ELT Context

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Art plays a fundamental role in our lives, since "our physical existence, our spiritual identity, and our history, are inseparable from our artistic activities and achievements" (Bredin and Santoro-Brienza, 2000:11). It is very difficult to conceive of human existence as being denuded of the aesthetic or symbolic dimension of artistic content. Indeed, art punctuates virtually every human action or gesture, small or great, through which we seek to express harmony and transcendence. Throughout history, poets have persistently indulged in the creation of compelling narratives about the value of art. Yet, when as ESL teachers we embark on the arduous but exciting task of syllabus design, art does not figure prominently. When a content unit dedicated to the arts does find a place for itself among the topics of a syllabus, it tends to occupy one of the last places in the sequential order of such topics, as if art were, at best, included without conviction, only mandated by absurd requirements of certain international exams, or, at worst, relegated and treated as a necessary evil. Teachers and students alike tend to offer tentative excuses about "not knowing much about art" in typical introductions to discussions centering on art.

The group of professors who belong to the Chair of English Language III at the School of Languages decided to accept the challenge of demystifying this stultifying notion of art and designed a content unit with the purpose of awakening among our post-intermediate level students a genuine interest in art in general. Additionally, we have employed this unit not only to develop and enhance students' lexical competence specifically related to the thematic areas of painting and music, but also to provide them with a context for the integrated practice of the macro-linguistic abilities, and to contribute to the development of learner autonomy through a blended learning component to the class materials. It would completely exceed the scope of this paper to account for all the theoretical and methodological foundations which frame the project. This paper, however, will

explore some crucial aspects and guiding principles of the theory which supports each of the areas which have just been mentioned: the integrated practice of the language skills, including the development of lexical competence, the promotion of learner autonomy, and the application of a blended learning approach.

Elaborating on the notion of communicative competence as a tightly woven interaction of personal characteristics and a multiplicity of external influences, Scarcella and Oxford (1992) develop their Tapestry Approach, in which "the teacher immerses learners in meaningful, communicative situations, involving natural input and requiring use of this input" (10). Among the main theoretical principles on which the tapestry approach rests is the concept that language instruction cannot and should not be dissected into skill compartments or broken up into a number of separate habits and rigidly sequential stages. According to Scarcella and Oxford, "this view of teaching [i.e., skill segregation] is reminiscent of the factory model of schooling in which students are seen as passive recipients of language, empty vessels ready to be filled, incapable of learning more than one aspect of the language at a time" (10). Along with an emphasis on meaning, exposure to naturally occurring authentic language, the opportunity for the expression of personal ideas, the promotion of peer feedback and various forms of cooperative learning, the tapestry approach underscores the need to link communicative competence to the integration of the four main language skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing) as well as the subsidiary language skills, such as grammar, study skills, punctuation, pronunciation, and vocabulary. The tapestry approach advocated by Scarcella and Oxford has a number of important advantages, among which the following could be stressed: learners gain a complete picture of the richness and complexity of language; the main skills and the subsidiary skills all grow through mutual support; and the use of authentic language promotes real interaction aside from improving students' motivation (88).

Above all, what the authors emphasize about the role of skill integration is the fact that it facilitates the provision of extensive practice in real-life communication. The authors also describe two successful models of skill integration, which are **content-based instruction** and **task-based instruction**. On the one hand, in content-based instruction, students practice all the language skills in an integrated manner while they develop activities that focus on content areas such as science or social

studies. **Theme-based** instruction, in which the skills are integrated in the study of a major theme, is perhaps the best known category of content-based approaches. On the other hand, in task-based instruction, students learn through activities that, following Nunan's definition, "require comprehending, producing, manipulating, or interacting in authentic language while attention is principally oriented to meaning rather than form" (Cited in Scarcella and Oxford, 90). The tapestry approach endorses the combination of theme-based and task-based instruction as the model that best unites the language skills to promote the goal of natural communication.

In the course materials specifically designed to work with post-intermediate level ESL students, *The Arts: Painting and Music* (González de Gatti, Orta, Schander, Tomasini, & Aiassa, 2010), care was taken to combine a theme-based approach to instruction with a task-based approach, through the creation of activities in which one skill supports the development of other skills. Additionally, the authors undertook the task of designing activities to provide practice in one skill, preceded and followed by warming-up or post-task activities which actually constitute practice in other skills. Thus, for example, students are asked to access an Internet website to listen to a radio program broadcast by NPR (National Public Radio): "Dada on Display at the National Gallery of Art", which contains an interview with a museum curator on the subject of Dadaism.[1] As a preliminary activity, the students first respond to a series of visual and verbal prompts oriented to anticipate the content of the interview as well as retrieve and activate relevant knowledge about the Dadaist movement and French artist Marcel Duchamp. Then, they have to answer questions about the overall thematic organization of the program, as well as purpose and audience. Learners subsequently have to listen for specific details, completing gaps in the audio script, thus enhancing their lexical and collocational competence. The students practice their reading and writing skills in the process of completing the task. Furthermore, learners then have the chance to use the newly acquired vocabulary and recycle known lexical items in the post-listening speaking activity that follows. To complete the latter, learners first watch a report by *Guardian* and art critic Jonathan Jones in his attempt to intellectualize art in general and Duchamp's famous work *Fountain*, in particular, about which the students have learned in the course of the radio program. This video material is juxtaposed with another type of video material

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[1] NPR program available from *http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5191892*

through which they are exposed to a *Guardian* report on the extraordinary story of British Surrealist artist Leonora Carrington's life. In this case, an artist raises objections to efforts to intellectualize art. Hence, the students have the opportunity to contrast a critic's and an artist's conflicting views on the same issue, raised by the opening listening activity before they express their own.[2] In a while-watching problem-solving activity, the students have to arrange logically a series of sentences which have been jumbled out of order and which must be reassembled with coherence and cohesion to reconstruct the artist's life story. Finally, the task is completed when students have a further opportunity to learn about the subject matter of Dadaist art and practice and review content-specific vocabulary by reading a *Time* article on Dadaist artist Kurt Schwitters and answering in the form of paragraphs questions about both subject matter and language.[3]

Thus, the carefully selected authentic materials available on the web become stimulating tools for the integrated practice of all the skills. While the materials subscribe to the view that vocabulary acquisition, in particular, occurs in both incidental and intentional ways, there is a special emphasis on explicit instruction, based on the view of current research, which suggests, according to Schmitt and McCarthy (1997), that "explicit vocabulary instruction may also have an effect on students' overall interest and motivation in learning words" (239). The content unit intersperses a series of vocabulary exercises with the integrated practice and offers an additional consolidation section at the back of the set, which provides students with the opportunity to develop and enhance their lexical competence. In the selection and design of activities for vocabulary acquisition, the authors have followed the five-stage cycle model proposed by Brown and Payne, by which all strategies fall into five essential steps: "(1) having sources for encountering new words, (2) getting a clear image, either visual or auditory or both, for the forms of the new words, (3) learning the meaning of the new words, (4) making a strong memory connection between the forms and meanings of the words, and (5) using the words" (Cited in Hatch and Brown, 1995:373).

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[2] Video material available from
http://www.guardian.co.uk/arts/video/2008/feb/20/fountain.duchamp.tate and
http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/video/2010/jun/18/surrealism-leonora-carrington

[3] The *Time* articles mentioned are : Hughes, R. (1985). Art: The Urban Poet. *Time*. September 9, 1985, available http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,959792-2,00.html, and Hughes, R. Art: Out of the Midden Heap. *Time*, available from
http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,878932-2,00.html

Scarcella and Oxford (1992) break down the concept of "tapestry" into its two main components: the "warp" and the "weft" of the tapestry. The warp represents the vertical yarns which create the background of the tapestry. The warp is a metaphor for the immediate linguistic context in which language develops and it is constituted by input, output and interaction. In the context of this approach, neither input nor output alone is a sufficient condition for language development to occur, because what facilitates language development is "language-promoting interaction." This type of interaction is aided by various types of "language assistance, [which] encourages learners to stretch their linguistic abilities just when they need to" (30). *The Arts: Music and Painting* (2010) adequately makes provisions for the instructor's use of a combination of various types of assistance, such as encouragement, information, learning strategies, specific lexical items and grammatical structures. The weft of the tapestry is constituted by the varied, multi-colored strands which are horizontally woven over, under and/or around the vertical warp. The weft, which eventually captivates the eye by giving shape to the design, is formed by the students' individual characteristics, among which the authors mention "motivation, attitude, anxiety, self-esteem, tolerance of ambiguity, risk-taking, cooperation, competition, learning styles, and learning strategies" (51). As an illustration of one of these aspects, the material contemplates students' different learning styles, according to Scarcella and Oxford's taxonomy: "Analytic-Global," "Sensory Preferences, Intuitive/random and Sensory/Sequential learning," and "Orientation to Closure" (60). Different activities highlight different sensory preferences: visual, auditory, kinesthetic or movement –oriented, and tactile or touch-oriented. Visual students benefit significantly from an activity in which language descriptive of artists' styles and techniques have to be matched to reproductions of real works of art; auditory students will enjoy the radio lectures and programs proposed; hands-on students, by contrast, will be enthralled by an activity in which specific words describing texture have to be illustrated by real-life fabrics and materials, as well as the closure activity in which the participants take part in the collective creation of an acrylic painting on classroom canvas by carrying out written instructions integrating knowledge about colors, shades, brushwork, technique, and the like. In this way, the arts provide a suitable context for the integration of the major language skills and sub-skills. Language-promoting interaction, which thrives on learners' varied learning styles and preferences, is expected to be conducive to the overall improvement of students' performance in all the areas of language acquisition.

Equally important expectations are based on the use of the subject matter of art to develop learner autonomy through a blended learning component to the course. The intrinsic worth of autonomy is valued highly in many areas of life. In the field of language teaching pedagogy and research, the importance of the concept of autonomy has grown steadily in the last few decades. In his book, *Teaching and Researching: Autonomy in Language Learning*, Benson (2001) traces the development of the concept and argues that the idea of autonomy is not out of harmony with such paradigm shifts as the trend away from behaviorism and the growth of communicative approaches to teaching (p.18). Autonomy is defined by Benson as " the capacity to take charge of, or responsibility for, one's own learning" and adds that "it is accepted that autonomy is a multidimensional capacity that will take different forms for different individuals, and even for the same individual in different contexts or at different times" (p. 47). Little (1991) (cited by Benson, 2001) explains that "autonomy is a *capacity*—for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action," which rests on the assumption that "the learner will develop a particular kind of psychological relation to the process and content of his learning" (p. 49). Most importantly, autonomy will show not only in the way learners learn but also in the way they transfer what they learn to wider contexts. While there surely exist different ways of understanding autonomy, there seems to be some general consensus that autonomy is a desirable trait, which can and should be fostered by teachers and developed by learners themselves. Practices said to promote learner autonomy also vary a great deal. Benson proposes his own taxonomy of approaches, which he subdivides into six categories: **resource-based, technology-based, learner-based, classroom-based, curriculum-based,** and **teacher-based** approaches (p. 111). These approaches are, of course, interdependent, and they are often combined in eclectic ways, since everyday classroom practice requires that different aspects of learner autonomy be emphasized at different times.

The Arts: Music and Painting has been enriched by the inclusion of a blended learning component in order to foster the development of learner autonomy, especially of the first three kinds. In this report, we will focus on how the materials aspire to promote the so-called technology-based approach. Sharma and Barrett (2007) define blended learning as "a language course which combines a face-to-face (F2F) classroom component with an appropriate use of technology" (p.7). The in-class and out-of-

class English Language III pack includes self-study components, mostly web-based authentic material, which is not considered an optional, technological add-on, but is made an integral part of the course components through pre-computer tasks and post-computer tasks. Thus, students are expected to profit from a variety of resources available on the web, mostly PBS official website, a series of TED talks available from TED's official website, and a variety of radio and television programs available from NPR's and the *Guardian*'s websites, to mention just a few. Students are expected to watch programs about various aspects of the arts and, among other activities, focus on the specific language of the medium of painting, listen for gist and for specific details when exposed to lectures, talks and interviews about a variety of arts-related subjects; assess their own background knowledge about the history of art and such famous artists as Turner, van Gogh, and Rembrandt; and doing research on specific topics, such as light painting. For instance, at the beginning of the unit, students are asked to evaluate themselves in terms of their background knowledge about painting by accessing the following website: http://www.pbs.org/wnet/powerofart/view.php?page=eclassroom.

Online, they will be able to play a game, "Masterpiece Match," in which they have to match well-known masterpieces and famous artists from different historical periods. As the students explore the masterpieces displayed on the computer screen, key art-related terms appear on the screen and disappear. The player has to click on these terms if they consider them relevant to the painting under exploration. When the task is completed, the students can score themselves and can then read about each of the works of arts and artists represented in the game. From the same website, teachers will find a variety of additional resources, such as multimedia lesson plans, videos, links to additional articles, and winning essays from previous contests about art-related topics. With regard to the notion of autonomy, as Harmer (2001) has aptly warned, however, students sometimes cannot follow their teachers' counsel about continuing learning outside and beyond the classroom because the advice may be too "big or "amorphous." Therefore, teachers need "to offer specific guidance which will allow them to focus on exactly what suits them best" (p. 407). The blended learning components of the student's pack clearly signpost the students' way through the pre-selected hypertext, giving directions about the possible itinerary to be followed, describing the activities to be performed, and creating meaningful contexts for the students to recognize the validity of learning. It is thus expected that

students will learn that autonomy is not only desirable but also achievable.

In a disconcerting but perhaps realistic comment, Lewis (2001) challenges the simple notion that our students learn what teachers teach them: "Teaching is, on the whole, organized, linear and systematic, but it is a mistake to think that learning is the same. Learning is complex and non-linear … We cannot control what students learn" (p. 11). As teachers, we must realistically assume that much of our students' learning is beyond our control, which might after all become a liberating realization, especially if we remember Hedge's definition of self-directed learners as students who "don't think the teacher is a god who can give them ability to master the language" (2000, p. 76). This realization, nevertheless, should not serve to waive teachers' enormous responsibilities for contributing to their learners' success. Artist and educator Benjamin Zander (American conductor, music director of the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra) is well known not only for his masterful job as a conductor but also for his profoundly insightful pre-concert lectures on music, which he employs, among other things, to demystify classical music and bring art to the public. In an utterly illuminating TED talk (which English Language III students watch as part of an in-class activity), Zander recounts a story which teachers might just as well read as a metaphor for their wondrous role, and which we have chosen for our closing remarks because they have been an inspiring force for us:

I was 45 years old, I'd been conducting for 20 years, and I suddenly had a realization. The conductor of an orchestra doesn't make a sound. My picture appears on the front of the CD but the conductor doesn't make a sound.... I realized my job was to awaken possibility in other people. And of course, I wanted to know whether I was doing that. And you know how you find out? You look at their eyes. If their eyes are shining, you know you're doing it.... If the eyes are not shining, you get to ask a question. And this is the question: Who am I being that my players' eyes are not shining? We can do that with our children too. Who am I being that my children's eyes are not shining? … I have a definition of success. For me it's very simple. It's not about wealth and fame and power. It's about how many shining eyes I have around me.[4]

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[4] Benjamin Zander's talk is available from
http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/benjamin_zander_on_music_and_passion.html

Taking our cue from a superb artist and employing an art-based unit, we have developed materials which are expected to fulfill a variety of teaching roles in the areas of the communicative integration of the skills, the development of lexical competence, and the promotion of learner autonomy through a blended learning dimension.

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Analysis of Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants"- Discourse in Its Textual, Psychological and Sociological Dimensions.

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Introduction

This presentation aims at reproducing what is actually being done in the language classroom at the Instituto de Educación Superior "Olga Cossettini" in Rosario. Why have we chosen "Hills Like White Elephants" as the core of our discussion? It is our conviction that teaching language entails helping our students appreciate it in all its facets. As Candlin and Widdowson state: "Teachers should aim at the critical appraisal of ideas and the informed application of these ideas in the language classroom." For this reason we have decided to focus on a short story written by Hemingway as we consider it both an artistic expression and a clear example of language in use. By employing Discourse Analysis we seek to examine "Hills" in its "full textual, social and psychological context" so that it becomes "meaningful and unified" for language learners. (Candlin and Widdowson in Cook, 1989, Introduction to "Discourse").

According to Stubbs, "Discourse analysis attempts to study the organization of language above the sentence or above the clause, and therefore to study larger linguistic units, such as conversational exchanges or written texts" (1983). It also enables us to go through the surface structures of the text as well as to explore the sociological context so that the students may get a deeper understanding of the psychological conflicts developed in the story under scrutiny. To this end, we will follow Halliday and Hasan (1976) in their suggested analysis of cohesive ties that will prove to be a powerful means of immersing us in the underlying meaning of the tale. Subsequently, attention will be paid to

Hemingway's *Iceberg Technique*, characterised by the use of succinct words, deeply implied expressions and symbolism.

"Discourse Analysis is also concerned with language in use in social contexts" (Stubbs, 1983). Thus, as the story relies heavily on dialogue between the characters, we will attempt to see if the conversational principles are adhered. We will follow Paul Grice's Cooperative Principle and show how its maxims are flouted. Even though we acknowledge that such principle has lately been criticised, we believe that seeing it in operation in the language classroom is highly enriching to interpret how language users are skilful enough to understand one another despite its maxims' violations. In addition, Lakoff's maxims of the politeness principle will be analysed since they will help us approach the story from a sociolinguistic perspective seeing how gender configuration is constructed and male dominance is exerted through dialogue (1973).

Audiobook

Listening: *Hills like White Elephants*.

Analysis

You have just listened to the story. How many words or expressions do you think you will have to look up? Probably none. And this is purposefully done by this writer to achieve his characteristic style. As David Lodge points out: "Hemingway rejected traditional rhetoric, for reasons that were partly literary and partly philosophical. He thought that "fine writing" falsified experience. Therefore, he strove to "put down what really happened in action by using simple denotative language purged of stylistic decoration" (Lodge, 1992, p. 90).

It is our interest to help learners read the story in depth to enjoy it in all its splendour. However, the cohesive devices that are at the surface of the text should also be analysed since they play a vital role in helping learners get to the core of the story and extract the juice of it. According to Halliday and Hassan, cohesion is "the means whereby elements that are structurally unrelated to one another are linked together, through the dependence of one on the other for its interpretation" (1976:27).

Instances of grammatical reference, ellipsis and substitution abound, but the analysis of the pronoun "it" and its referential function is particularly relevant. At the beginning of the story, the pronoun "it" refers to the alcoholic drink that is permanently diverting the characters' attention from their unsympathetic reality. As a member of the Lost Generation, Hemingway, like the American and the girl, was left disjointed and alienated from a world that had stifled all his dreams. These pleasure-seekers cling to alcohol in an attempt to dodge facing the painful topic of abortion and this first part of the story evinces how much dependent on alcohol the main characters seem to be.

Nevertheless, later on in the text and rather unexpectedly, the American deliberately changes the topic of conversation and moves from the beer to the operation thus flouting the maxim of relevance according to Grice's Cooperative Principle. It is here that for the first time "it" acquires a different meaning and becomes "the operation", which is acting as if it were a euphemism for abortion. "I know you wouldn't mind it", he says "It's really anything", he emphasizes.

Surprisingly, the word "abortion" is hinted at on several occasions but it is never uttered either by the American or the girl. This is so because the referring expression "it" is used time and time again so as not to name what the characters do not dare bring to the fore. "It's really an awfully simple operation, Jig" the man said. "It's not really an operation at all." Following Shklovsky (1917, in Jefferson & Robey, 1986), the abortion is defamilarised. In other words, not using the word "abortion" diminishes the impact that the assertion might otherwise have had. The abortion is therefore made unfamiliar by the excessive use of the referring expression "it".

At this point, it is quite moving to sense the girl's feelings through the narrator's descriptions: "The girl looked at the ground the table legs rested on", "The girl did not say anything". These two instances clearly signal how power in the couple is assigned. Although the American pretends that he does not want to impose his will on the girl, he deploys highly manipulative techniques geared to persuading the female character to undergo the surgery. Following Lakoff (1973, cf. Wolfson, 1989), men's language tends to be assertive and direct.

As seen, although the American uses the seemingly vague referring expression "it" to allude to the abortion, he keeps plaguing the girl to submit herself to do it. Such insistence is made clear when he naturalises how simple such procedure is: "It's perfectly natural" or "I know lots of people that have done it", "it's perfectly simple".

In the realm of the unsaid ellipsis plays a preferential role: "I know we will." or better still: "If you don't want to, you don't have to. I wouldn't have you do "it" if you didn't want to. The clause "I wouldn't have you do it" is particularly tragic because of the male dominance it betrays. The dialogue between the two characters makes evident the so called male/female differences in speech. Hudson acknowledges that when women speak, they "concentrate on building and maintaining the social bonds that hold communities together" while men give priority to power and the struggle for independence (Hudson, 1996:142). She also adds that "these differences put males at a disadvantage in the family and other important places where relationships are at premium" (143). Accordingly, the American in the story clearly shows in his speech that his wandering life and his precious freedom are what he cherishes the most. Therefore, for him, a baby is just a burden, a "white elephant" with all the negativity that the idiom connotes.

The girl's language, in turn, is non-assertive and indirect: "If I do it, you won't ever worry", in which the girl painfully expresses that she will do "the thing" for him. All these cases can be considered instances of anaphoric endophoric pronominal references to the operation. However, there is another shift "That's the only thing that bothers us." "It's the only thing that's made us unhappy". Both the demonstrative pronoun "that" and the personal "it" do not refer to the operation here, but to the baby, which is exophoric.

As far as the politeness principle is concerned, Lakoff has stated that speakers should "not impose, give options and make receivers feel good". However, it seems that the American is neither "making his receiver feel good" nor "giving her options", and he is certainly trying to impose his point of view on her. As for the girl, she is respecting the maxims. All she wants to do is

to please him and to overcome the obstacles that are in the way to their former bliss.

Let us now move on to discuss the *Theory of the Unsaid* which in Hemingway acquires central importance. Although this classicist writer is well known for his realistic style and what seems to be rather simplistic diction, it is often what he leaves unsaid that has the largest impact. In this story, Hemingway builds up tension throughout, but conceals the cause of the conflict between the characters so that the reader does not really know what happens. There are just hints, but it is for the reader to discover what is beyond the surface.

In fact, what is "not said" makes "Hills Like White Elephants" a very good example of Hemingway's *Iceberg Theory*. According to this American author, "If a writer of prose knows enough about what he is writing, he may omit things that he knows, and the reader will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them." (Oliver, 1999: 322)

Not surprisingly, Van Dijk (2008) utilizes a very similar terminology when talking about analysing discourse in news reports. He affirms that a text is a "semantic iceberg" of which only the "tip" is actually expressed and it is only our shared social knowledge that provides the numerous missing links between the concepts and propositions of a text. In Hemingway's words "The dignity of movement of an iceberg is due to only one eighth of it being above the water". Therefore, it is the learner who has to uncover what is underneath- the remaining 7/8.

At this point we will focus on the story and the title, trying to help our students interpret the various symbols used by Hemingway and showing the learners how the writer manipulates the language to convey meaning resorting to simple, straightforward vocabulary and syntax. According to Lodge, symbolism exerted considerable influence on English writing in the twentieth century and it was characterized by "a shimmering surface of suggested meanings" (Lodge, 1992:139).

From the very title Hemingway employs a figure of speech, a simile that is loaded with meaning and symbolism for the white elephants are considered something unique and very valuable. In

Thailand they are even sacred and untouchable since they are meant for the King. In this story, the white elephant, unique and invaluable, may stand for the baby that the girl carries in her womb. Nevertheless, whether it is untouchable or not is to be decided by the characters. On the other hand, a "white elephant" is also an idiomatic expression which stands for something useless and unwanted, a burden, which could well represent the American's feelings towards the baby.

With great dexterity Hemingway describes the setting of the story which also plays a symbolic role. The two characters are at a train station, "between two lines of rails". The contextual function of language (Jacobson, 1960) is realised here not only to give the reader factual information about the characters' whereabouts, but mainly as a symbol of the conflict the characters are experiencing. They are not on the train yet. They are at a station- not moving, not acting- and they are at an emotional crossroad "between two lines of rails", facing an important decision that will affect them for ever. Or rather, that will affect "the girl" for ever.

The American is not in his land, he is in Spain, one of Hemingway's favourite places. The girl is not a Spaniard either because she does not know Spanish. The American does – probably to show that he has travelled widely and that he is certainly the one who knows better, which is emphasised every time the narrator alludes to the other character as "the girl". This almost turns her into a nameless character with no definite identity who is perceived by the American as just a girl he can label and control at will. By this simple resource the girl is placed at a disadvantageous position. The male character is in a clear position of power. He knows how to order a beer in Spanish and he does so. He knows what to do.

Additionally, if "the American" talks to the girl, he calls her Jig. This name is also highly symbolic since Jig means a type of quick, lively dance, which may represent what the girl is for the man- just some kind of lively entertainment. Only once does Jig ask the American to do something for her and it is a highly dramatic moment which could be considered the climax of the story. He says: "I'd do anything for you". At this point, we do not know what she may want, but we certainly do not expect her to

beg in the way she does: "Would you please please please please please please please stop talking?" Count the "pleases"! Seven times she repeats the same extremely painful word. And again, Hemingway surprises us with the simplicity of the device he employs and the huge emotional impact he creates in the reader. We cannot help sympathizing with the girl. We too want the American to stop talking and let her think for herself. After all, they are discussing an abortion and it is her body what is at stake.

Regarding the ending of the story, it can be interpreted in several ways. In the final part of "Hills" the American moves the luggage from one side of the rails to the other. What do you think Hemingway symbolises here? It is certainly an open-ending. However, it can be suggested that what the male character wants to do is to continue living in the way they did before they found out about the girl's pregnancy. His inner desire might be to return to the starting point in their endless trip instead of moving forward. Or is it that he simply wishes to turn his back on her no matter whether she performs the abortion or not?

Before we conclude, we would like to point out that as the theme of abortion is one of the most controversial issues of our times, "Hills like white elephants" is a thought provoking story which will undoubtedly lead students to question themselves about this issue. Consequently, we believe that it provides us a great opportunity to organize a debate that will allow students to take part, to use the language to express their opinions, to surf the net looking for relevant information that may support their position, to respect their classmates and learn not to "hog the floor" and to practice the necessary skills that are required to act as moderators. Therefore, we suggest a debate between our two courses as an extra curricular activity, in which the story will just be a trigger that will be pulled to help them think for themselves, which is ultimately our main goal as educators.

Conclusion

Throughout this paper we have tried to prove how language goes beyond the mere words that a student encounters in a text. To this end, we have gone through cohesive devices, macro functions of language and floutings of the conversational principles. Likewise, we have attempted to introduce our

learners to the *Iceberg Theory* as devised by Earnest Hemingway in the 1930s (Smith,1983) and we were happy to find the link between the famous American author and the Dutch linguist Teun van Dijk when they both use the image of the Iceberg to explain what is not said.

Finally, our goal as language teachers is to help our students become aware of the infinite possibilities they may have at their disposal if they approach discourse taking into account the psychological and sociological perspectives. We expect to equip our translators and teachers to be with the necessary tools to make the most of every text and make inferences that will allow them to become critical thinkers and proficient language users.

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Let's Make Room for Literature in the Phonology Class

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1. Introduction

The oral component has played an important role in literature since ancient times when most literary works were meant to be orally transmitted. These early works were addressed to the ear as well as to the eyes and adapted to the demands of oral performance so as to facilitate its transmission to an audience. Undoubtedly, the successful transmission and reception of an oral message depends on the effective use of phonological resources. As phonetics teachers, we try to help our students develop the ability to use this type of resources effectively and become competent readers aloud. To achieve this goal, we make Literature and Phonology converge on the subject *English Phonetics and Phonology II*, which is part of the programme of studies at the School of Languages, National University of Córdoba.

The aim of this presentation is to share our experience as participants, together with our students, in the Book Fair annually organized in Córdoba. Our participation in this event started in 2004, when we encouraged our students to make a public presentation of some of the activities they performed in the phonetics class. As the years went by, what began as a half an hour presentation organized by Literature and Phonetics English teachers became a two-hour multilingual event with

teachers and students from the training courses in other languages.

During this presentation we will refer to the theoretical background that supports our class instruction: 1) the role of prosodic features in the organization of oral discourse (Barr, 1990; Brazil, 1997; Brazil et al., 1980; Brown and Yule, 1983, Couper-Kuhlen,1986; Wichmann, 2000; Yule, 1980), 2) the Theory of Orientation (Brazil, 1997; Brazil et al., 1980), which allows students to become, from a phonological perspective, committed and engaged readers aloud and 3) a taxonomy of paralinguistic features (Brown, 1990) which helps readers aloud to express some kind of feeling or attitude about the verbal content of a text. Next, we will refer to the work done in class with different texts and to the preparation before the event. We will finally point out the benefits of this activity and its positive results.

2. The mainstays of our instruction

Reading aloud forms part of the training that students receive in their third year of the English Phonetics and Phonology courses at the School of Languages. It plays a key role in our instruction since we think that reading aloud is a good way to sensitize our students to the importance of phonological resources in the construction of oral texts. Besides, reading aloud enhances overall language development and provides a beneficial context for students to see how language works (Cunningham & Allington, 2007).

Effective reading aloud seems to be a skill which is difficult to develop without guidance and training. There are three key elements to be taken into account in the reading aloud process: the reader aloud, the text, and the listener. Of these, the first deserves special attention because it is the reader aloud that decodes the written message and encodes it phonologically for the hearer. That is, the reader aloud performs a two-fold role: decoder and encoder of information at the same time.

Our experience as teachers and our research findings in the area of reading aloud have allowed us to design an integrative approach to the teaching and practice of communicative reading

aloud with the following objectives: (1) to promote our students´ interest in reading, specially, in reading aloud; (2) to provide our students with phonological resources that help them become efficient readers aloud; (3) to improve our students´ oral linguistic competence in English; and finally (4) to promote creativity, and the ability to interpret and express ideas through the oralization of written texts. Our approach is based on three mainstays: (i) the use of prosodic features that structure oral discourse, (ii) the Theory of Orientation (Brazil 1997; Brazil et al 1980), and (iii) a taxonomy of paralinguistic features that contribute to the expression of emotion (Brown 1990).

2.1. Prosodic features

The use of prosodic features is of paramount importance to structure oral discourse in a cohesive and coherent way. These features play a key role in the effective transmission of a message since they provide the hearers with hints that help them interpret what the speaker means. Since our students are already acquainted with features of the intonation of English that involve pitch movement and pitch level, we focus on the following phonological units: (i) tone units (Brazil et al. 1980, Halliday 2004), (ii) pitch sequences (Brazil et al. 1980; Coupler-Kuhlen 1986; Yule 1980) and (iii) paratones (Brown et al.1980).

Tone units, in which pitch movement is central, are minimal intonation units that organize the text into information units (Brazil et al., 1980; Halliday, 2004). Each tone unit is a piece of information, which readers aloud present as given or new through different pitch movements.

Pitch sequences (Brazil et al., 1980; Couper-Kuhlen, 1986; Yule, 1980) are units of intonation that may include one or more tone units and always end in low pitch on the tonic syllable ('low termination' according to Brazil et al., 1980). However, on the onset, the reader can choose between different pitch levels ('key' for Brazil et al., 1980) according to the communicative value he intends to give that part of the message. Depending on whether the new pitch sequence starts with low, mid or high key the information presented will be, respectively, a mere repetition of the content of the previous pitch sequence, an additively related

matter or a new topic or subtopic. This latter type of pitch sequence coincides with a larger unit of intonation: the paratone.

Paratones, sometimes called 'oral paragraphs', are other units of spoken discourse through which speakers organize information (Brown et al. 1980, Brown and Yule 1983, Couper-Kuhlen 1986 and Yule 1980). Typically, a paratone starts with high pitch level ('high key') and ends with low termination followed by a long pause. As already mentioned, the beginning of a paratone frequently coincides with the beginning of a new topic or subtopic. It is worth pointing out that in reading aloud, the reader is the only one that has access to the typographical organization of the text and he has the possibility to either follow this graphic arrangement in his oralization of the text or structure the information in a different way.

Through systematic practice, our students gradually learn to go beyond the graphic structuring of the written text and to use prosodic features to make their own organization of the oral message.

2.2. The Theory of Orientation

Brazil et al. (1980, 1997) provide an interesting framework which helps to describe the role of the reader aloud as encoder of a text from a phonological perspective. According to Brazil et al., silent reading is, first and foremost, an interactive process between the reader and the text since the main purpose of the reader is to discover the meanings expressed in the text. In addition, they support the view that reading is, at the same time, an active process in which readers try to "mesh the new information provided by the text with their (the readers') existing knowledge" (1980:83). As to the process of reading aloud, the authors also define it as an interactive process in which the main role of the reader aloud is to translate the content of the written text into a spoken one.

The Theory of Orientation presents two ways of reading aloud which constitute two options in the continuum of possibilities available to the reader. One way of reading a text aloud is by

using a *direct orientation* in which the reader interprets the text for the audience. The other way of approaching the reading aloud is by employing an *oblique orientation* in which the reader simply repeats the text aloud without attempting any interpretation. Either orientation the reader may adopt is characterised by a set of intonational choices. A direct orientation to reading aloud is signalled by the use of referring and proclaiming tones; whereas an oblique orientation is characterised by a choice of neutral and proclaiming tones.

These two types of orientations placed at opposing ends in the continuum of possibilities imply different degrees of involvement of the reader aloud with the reading task. That is to say, the reader aloud may cooperate or not with the enterprise of transmitting a message while reading aloud. A direct orientation implies a reader who is highly involved with the activity and who therefore cooperates with the transmission of the message; an oblique orientation, on the other hand, will be the result of the lack of involvement of a non-cooperative reader.

The aspects of this theory that are most useful and therefore emphasized and practised in preparation for the Book Fair event described above in which reading aloud becomes a central activity, are those related to readers fully involved in transmitting the content of a text to an audience with a communicative intent.

2.3. A Taxonomy of Paralinguistic Features

According to the taxonomy proposed by Brown (1990:113), paralinguistic features are "features which we listen to, and which we can hear over the radio, telephone or tape recorder". They are independent from the phonological contrasts that constitute the verbal message and are used to reinforce or contradict it since they help express a certain attitude or feeling. Paralinguistic features involve variations in the use of loudness, tempo, pitch span, timing of segments and syllables, and pauses other than the ones used at grammatical boundaries or for breathing. Readers may resort to these features and thus set up

a certain attitudinal positioning that goes beyond the linguistic level.

Although in general, paralinguistic features are used in a similar way in English and Spanish, our students, Spanish-speaking learners of English, are generally unaware of the use they make of these features in Spanish and consequently do not resort to them when reading in a loud voice in the target language. We have found that Brown´s simple and clear taxonomy contributes to improve not only reading aloud but also students´ oral performance. Thus, they gradually and systematically incorporate these features when they want to express a certain attitude or emotion or when they want to reinforce or contradict the content of the verbal message.

The use of literary texts to practise reading aloud clearly shows our students how "the spoken word enhances the written one, how phonological choices at the paralinguistic level can add to the lexico-grammatical choices" (Bombelli & Soler, 2006: 186).

3. Getting Ready for the Event

As already mentioned, we train our students in reading aloud on the basis of the methodological approach described in the previous section. Until our participation in the Book Fair, we did not have the possibility of putting into practice, outside the classroom, all that was learned in class. The Book Fair has provided our students with a real context and a real audience eager to listen to them reading aloud different texts.

Class training involves, first, listening to recorded texts that are analyzed, discussed and practised. The idea behind these activities is to make our students aware of the ways in which phonological resources are used to organize discourse. Next, students are expected to use these resources to translate written texts into oral ones. They are encouraged to identify the different features and effectively use them to organize and enhance their reading aloud. Finally, they move away from the recorded material and read aloud unrecorded texts making their own decisions as to what features to use and where and when to use them so as to convey the desired message. At this stage, our

students should be able to go beyond the mere oral delivery of the verbal content of the message and express the emotional positioning resulting from their own reading.

To get ready for the event, our students, in a collaborative fashion, choose a literary work either from the material used in class or they look for poems, tales or stories depending on the theme agreed on for the event. The fact that the topic changes every year allows our students to come into contact with different literary genres and different areas of interest. Besides, once the text has been chosen, our students analyse and discuss all possible resources that can be used to "make the affective content of [the chosen text] come alive" (Bombelli & Soler 2006: 186).

We believe that another advantage of this activity lies in the fact that learning turns into a social activity that allows for cooperation among peers, contributing to their own and their classmates´ learning. Teachers and students organize the activity together and distribute the roles in a democratic fashion among those students who volunteer to read aloud in front of an audience; other students prefer to become part of the audience. These latter students also play an important role since they are encouraged to take a critical stance on the readers´ performance that will help improve their classmates´ reading aloud. Some time before the event the group has a couple of meetings outside class time in which they rehearse. Some of them read aloud and others contribute with ideas after listening. With time, presentations have become more elaborate and our students have come up with new ideas to make the events more and more attractive. Reading aloud is now accompanied by realia, acting and even power point shows, which have generated great enthusiasm among participants and audience.

It is worth mentioning that, in general, not everybody in the audience understands English. It is precisely the task of the readers aloud to use all the resources described in this paper to make the intended message clear to the whole audience.

4. Conclusion

The inclusion of this extra-curricular activity has undoubtedly had positive effects on our students. First, this annual event has somehow helped to foster a love for literature among our students since they come into contact with different literary genres and can enjoy the oral aspect of the literary works chosen for each event. Second, this public presentation has contributed to build our students´ self-confidence to read in front of an audience, which will, in many cases, be part of their everyday work as professionals of the language. Last but not least, the most important effect of the Book Fair is that it provides a suitable context to raise our students´awareness of the importance of phonological and paralinguistic resources in the construction of oral texts.

We believe in the importance of integrating phonetics with other fields, in this case Literature, so as to help learners make use of what they learn outside the phonetics class. The activity in the Book Fair is just one of the many things that can be done to put what we teach into practice. Maybe this is just the beginning of many other fruitful experiences that lead to the achievement of this same objective.

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Visual Representation:
An Instrument for Research and Instruction on the Imaginative Dimension of EFL

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In this paper we argue that a visual representation is a form of textual intervention that is suitable for the investigation of cultural understanding in EFL college reading, in particular its imaginative dimension. This investigation is framed within CIC CONICET and the Program of teacher-researchers called "Incentivos" within UNLP. The paper has two sections. In the first one, research-oriented, we describe this research instrument and briefly say why it is suitable for our research purpose, i.e. the investigation of cultural understanding in this setting. In the second section, practice-oriented, we exemplify the visual representation with two student samples. This illustration shall reveal ways in which this instrument is useful for instruction. For reasons of space, details about this study can be found in Porto (2009). Suffice it now to say that participants read three literary narrative texts (fragments from *Mi planta de naranja-lima, Cat's Eye, Desert Wife*) on different days and carried out a number of tasks based on them, among which was a visual representation. Participants were Argentine college students (9 female, one male), prospective teachers and translators of English, Caucasian, between 21-22 years of age.

The visual representation

A visual representation can be defined as the visual presentation of textual content, including the combination of words, phrases, and/or sentences with visual information in different formats of varying complexity (such as charts, tables, graphs, grids, mind maps, flowcharts, diagrams, drawings, and the like). It distances itself from reformulation in the classic sense, whereby a reader rewrites a text (not his/her own) trying to adhere to the writer's assumed intended meaning (Cohen, 1983a, b, 1989).

This task presupposes some textual intervention, i.e. an act of "transformation" and change that allows for a deeper understanding of a text (Pope, 1995: 1). The participants in this study produced a new "text" (Anstley & Bull, 2006: 24), *different* from the prompt texts. In this sense, this instrument is different from the free recall protocol, where the exactitude and precision in the reproduction of the original text is fundamental.

These new texts are the result of, and at the same time, conform to the literacy identity of each participant, in his/her role as reader of the fragments as well as writer of the visual representation task. In this study, this task focused the attention on the repertoire of resources that each student brought, specifically in relation to his/her *cultural knowledge and experiences* in his/her process of literacy within a wider matrix (constituted by his/her previous experiences with texts, his/her knowledge of texts, and his/her social and technology experiences and knowledge, among other aspects; Anstley & Bull, 2006).

A visual representation is also different from the academic essay or the analysis paper, which reflect how much "knowledge about" cultural aspects readers have, but would not allow for the emergence of their "knowledge in action" about the cultural aspects in a text. This notion of knowledge in action refers to the participants' capacity to use cultural knowledge in new and concrete problem solving situations, in this case a textual intervention. Put differently, it involves the intercultural skills (Byram, Nichols & Stevens, 2001) set in motion while articulating knowledge about culture and cultural values. From this

perspective, the visual representation task, as a textual intervention, captures the participants' cultural understanding at two points simultaneously: while reading a text and producing another one at the same time. Producing an intervention requires exploiting a text in order to rewrite it from an alternative perspective, a perspective that will always be complementary or supplementary but never identical to the original text.

Readers had to decide how parallel, contrary or alternative his/her production would be in relation to the prompt text. This can be complex in the case of literary narrative texts as used in this study because of their inherent ambiguity and aesthetic value. In addition, the visual representation is a re-centered textual intervention (Pope, 1995), i.e. it involves an adaptation or change to a new medium (visual) without any genre modification from the original fragments. A visual presentation, through image, is congruent with the importance attributed in the literature to image and emotion schemas in cultural understanding (Sharifian, Rochecouste and Malcolm, 2004). It is useful to justify emotional responses in reading – an area in which the theories of schemata have weaknesses (Sadoski & Paivio, 1994)

Student samples from *Cat's Eye*: Implications for instruction

We chose to work with a fragment from this text by Atwood (1998: 137-140) because of the ambiguous cultural context it is set in. The scene introduces a family in the West, particularly in Canada, celebrating Christmas. There is a visitor celebrating with them, a biology student from India. Readers notice cultural tension since they perceive the visitor feels awkward in a context where he does not understand the cultural meaning of the celebration and can only fully interact in conversation when he and his professor, the father of the family, use scientific language. Interestingly, this whole tension is only in the eyes of the child of the family who narrates the story and readers are never sure whether the Indian visitor ever felt anything like that at all. Readers are unaware whether the latter has cultural awareness and is able to "read" cultural codes at ease or not.

To show the implications for instruction, we selected two samples to analyse. The first student, Luz (a pseudonym), carried out her visual representation task by resorting to her own cultural standards to draw the family dinner. The father of the family sits at one of the table's ends, the mother opposite him and the children and visitor on the sides. At the same time, the father is the biggest of all the figures signalling his authority over the rest of the characters, his wife, his children and his student. There is no special characteristic that indicates that the Indian student does not really belong to the whole party. We know who is who because she chose to write down their roles below the figures. The turkey they are about to eat is one of the most important cultural units of the text and occupies a central position in the drawing. Following the illustration there is a chart which intends to summarize the narrator's thoughts throughout the whole dinner. Interestingly, the student does not include any of the narrator's opinions about the Indian visitor in which the cultural tension is to be felt and chose to elaborate upon the others which have to do with wild and tame animals, relating them to the figure of the turkey. The student concludes with some reflection on a phrase "a lost flight" in relation to the loss of hope and progress. It calls our attention that she elaborated upon one of the cultural units of the text, the type of food introduced as typical of Christmas dinners, and not upon the other cultural unit which is the presence of a visitor who, apparently, does not share any of the rituals mentioned.
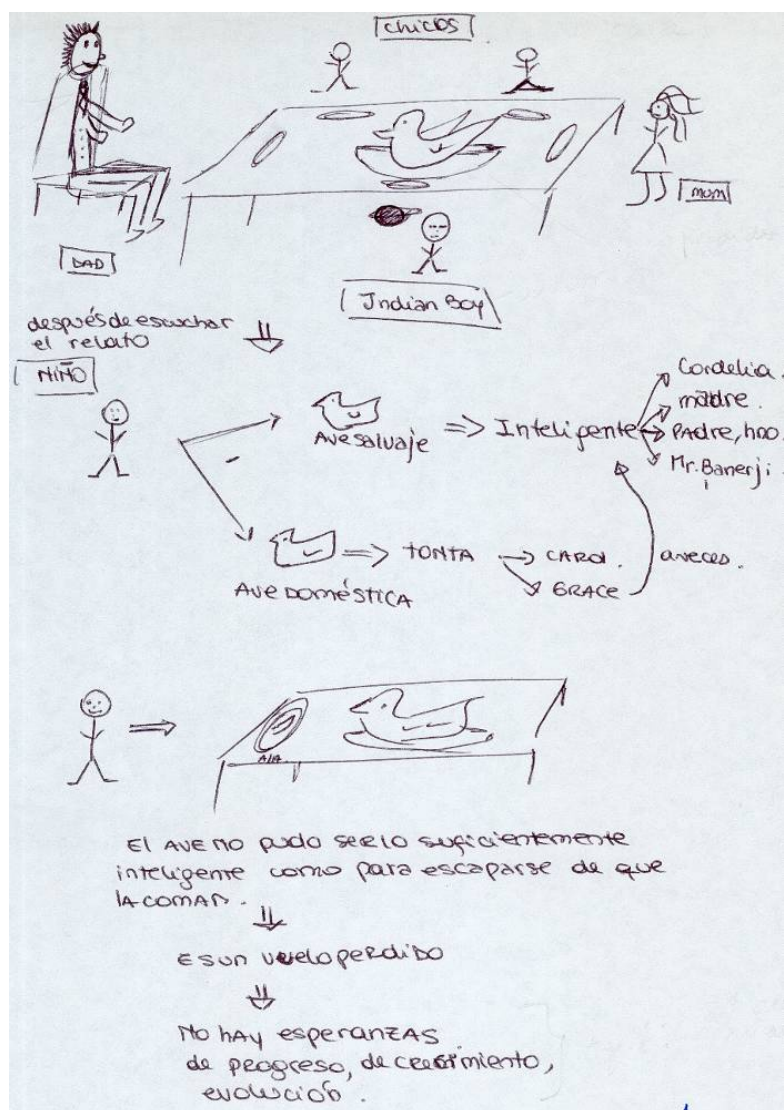
(Luz, pseudonym, visual representation, Cat's eye, disclosed by permission)

Another student, Enrique Alejandro (pseudonym), chose to draw a chart in which he organized the body of the text in opposites providing examples for each of the contrasting elements he found in the text. One notices that the first opposite he found was precisely the fact that an Indian student experienced defamiliarization at a Western Christmas celebration. However, he only mentions this fact but adds no extra comment on the issue. That is, he detects there is cultural tension in the story but does not elaborate upon it. He also expands on the narrator`s views of wild and tame animals and, in this relation, the tension between everyday and scientific language. It is interesting to

highlight that he did not connect the last two opposites (wild-tame and everyday-scientific) to the turkey they are eating for Christmas. The turkey is a cultural capsule the student ignores. In other words, this student explains the text in binaries and introduces cultural tension but does not elaborate upon it. He notices the interplay of two cultures in the text, the defamiliarization it provokes in one of the characters, but does not delve into the differences.
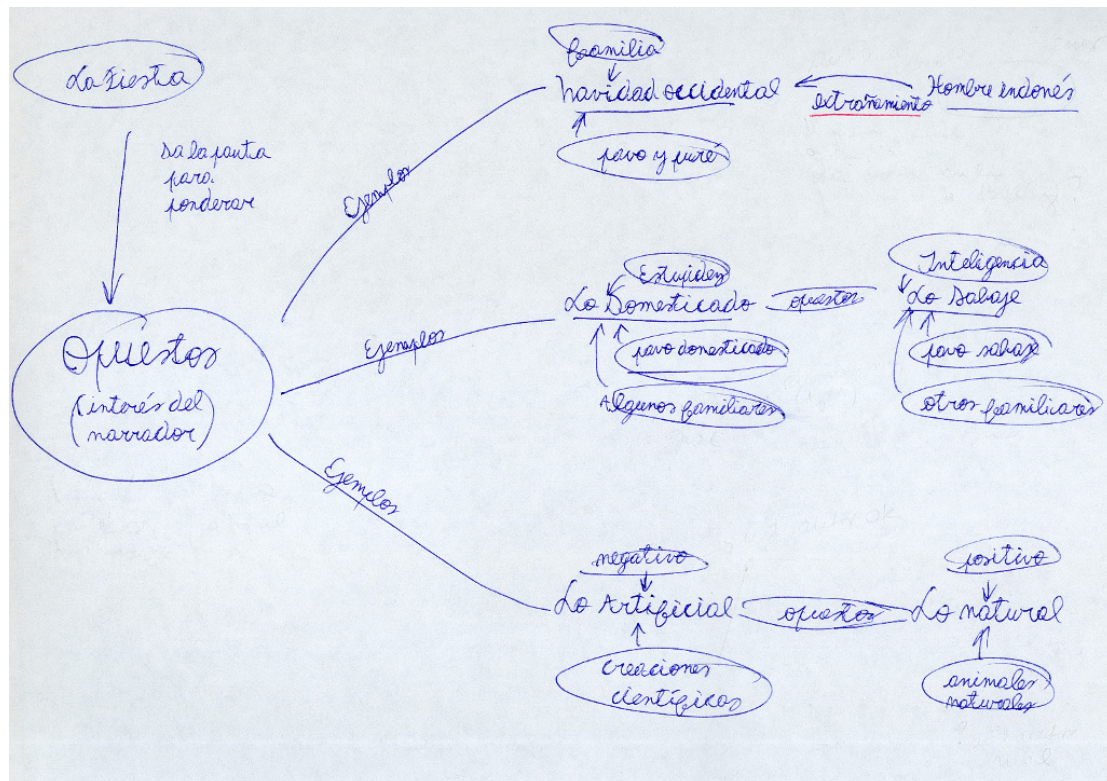
(Enrique Alejandro, pseudonym, visual representation, Cat's Eye, disclosed by permission)

As we have shown, teachers may find these visual representations useful material to analyse so as to detect what students have understood of a given text, what parts of the text they give more importance to, what parameters they use to read, how much of their own culture is activated to help them understand a foreign text and how conscious they are of the latter. In other words, these visual representations can be considered a diagnosis of the students' cultural knowledge and interests. Knowing what their students lack or know helps teachers design a number of activities to carry out in the classroom to help students develop cultural awareness. These

illustrations can also be used in class as part of those potential activities. Using material produced by the students themselves can be a positive way to engage them into discussing cultural topics.

For example, if students are made to compare the two samples provided, and they are asked to signal the absence/presence of some relevant cultural aspects, we may expect to have a debate on whether these absences have to do with a certain inability to understand some parts of the story due to lack of knowledge of the language or of the subject matter caused by cultural gaps in the students' knowledge of the world. In our samples, what teachers can highlight is the fact that in Luz's visual representation the Indian visitor does not seem to be a cause of worry in terms of cultural understanding, whereas in the text this is one of the narrator's concerns. At the same time, Luz writes down "Indian boy" to label the visitor's position at the table whereas in the text the visitor is not introduced as a boy but as a young man. This might reveal some sort of cultural inadequacy that can be discussed with the whole class. In the same way, the other sample includes a key word to work with: *extrañamiento* (defamiliarization). This word is used to link the Indian visitor with Western Christmas celebration but remains isolated and without further expansion. The whole class could discuss about its meaning and in what ways this episode may be strange for that particular visitor. At the same time, the nationality of this visitor is not quite clear in the visual representation, which may indicate lack of knowledge or just a simple typing mistake. By focusing on these cultural elements using their own visual representations as a starting point, we can help students become conscious of their cultural gaps. This is the first step towards cultural awareness.

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Developing Intercultural Competence in the EFL Class through the Use of Cartoons

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It is widely recognized that EFL learners do not need just knowledge and skill in the grammar of the language they are learning but also the ability to use it in socially and culturally appropriate ways. This is one of the most important contributions of 'communicative language teaching' alongside with other important changes introduced by this approach with an emphasis on the functional-notional- aspects of the language, framing syllabus design, teaching methodologies, materials and assesment. In the last decades, the concept of communicative language competence has been transformed into the concept of "intercultural communicative concept" (ICC) and incorporated into the work of the Council of Europe. The Common European Framework of Reference provides a method of assessing and teaching which applies to all languages in Europe; it has embraced the communicative approach underpinnings and has further emphasised the importance of 'intercultural awareness' and 'intercultural skills' to learn a foreign language. Under such perspectives, it could be stated that teaching a foreign language alongside an intercultural dimension helps learners not only to acquire the linguistic competence needed to understand and produce texts correctly and appropriately, but also to develop their intercultural competence, that is, the ability to see relationships between different cultures - both internal and external to a society - and to interpret them in terms of the other. An individual with some degree of intercultural competence also has a critical or analytical understanding of his own and other cultures and is conscious of his own perspective and of the way in which his thinking is culturally determined (Byram, 2000).

In EFL and ESL courses, teaching culture means acquiring a set of pragmatic rules and cultural values embodied in the target language. A great number of authors support the integration of language and culture, sustaining that both can be taught and

learnt simultaneously. Trinovitch (1980) defines culture as "...*an all-inclusive system which incorporates the biological and technical behaviour of human beings with their verbal and non-verbal systems of expressive behavior starting from birth,* and this `all-inclusive system is acquired as the native culture*". This process prepares the students for the linguistically and non-linguistically accepted patterns of the society in which they live. Along the same lines, Brown (in Cakir, 2006) maintains that "*culture is deeply ingrained in every fiber of our being, but language is the most visible and available expression of that culture".* So, according to the author, a person's world view, self-identity, and systems of thinking, acting, feeling, and communicating can be disrupted by a change from one culture to another. Similarly, Tang (in Cakir, 2006) propounds the view that "*culture is language and language is culture".* Language and culture are inextricably linked, and as such we should think about moving away from questions about the inclusion or exclusion of culture in a foreign language curriculum to issues of deliberate immersion versus non-deliberate exposure to it.

Sociocultural approaches have emphasised that ICC requires that students acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and critical cultural awareness necessary to communicate interculturally. Byram (1977) suggests thar learners develop ICC through the ability to analyse and interpret texts from another culture, and to relate them to texts from their own culture. Considering the influence of culture on EFL reading, it has been claimed that readers transfer not only the cognitive, metacognitive and linguistic processes, but also sociocultural ones from the native to the foreign language. Hence, to help learners to become reflective and critical readers, it is necessary to develop specific skills that would allow them to read both analytically and critically; this is meant to say that a critical reader should develop certain strategies that would contribute to detect the authors' intentions, retrieve content from a text, and most importantly, prove its truthfulness by building up critical awareness to evaluate, judge and even adopt a stance towards the incoming information (Casany, 2006). In other words, this type of reader should ideally be able to infer, deduce, and interpret ironies and presuppositions as they read and interpret text, gather data about place, time and the circumstances under which the text was produced; and eventually activate through language knowledge structures - not only cognitive but also intra and intercultural ones. As these cognitive and intercultural structures vary across cultures, *assumed cultural knowledge* is required to understand a text since our shared cultural schema

of the world facilitates comprehension (Widdowson, 2007). Finally, readers should accept and acknowledge values, principles and customs of other cultures as well as reject socio-cultural segregation, discrimination, among others.

In the area of EFL reading research, Seglem and Witte (2009) have stressed the importance of extending the definition of literacy into a broader concept as determined by the cultural context. Within the sociocultural perspective, one of the goals of critical literacy is to raise students' responsiveness toward cultural and societal problems in their world, to prompt them to ask why things are the way they are, to question who benefits from a situation, and most importantly, to expose them to a variety of texts in new ways and from multiple perspectives. Moreover, critical literacy allows students to bring their own experiences into debate, offering them opportunities for participation and engagement in reading and discussion activities, and the possibility to understand the power of language (Soares and Wood, 2010). If educators want learners to become analytic and reflective readers, then students should develop a critical understanding of different types of texts within different social, cultural, and historical contexts.

As students should receive information in a variety of formats, literacy must be expanded beyond traditional reading and writing to include the visual arts as another form of communicating meanings (Flood and Lapp, 1995). In this sense, the EFL language and content class can be enriched through the use of cartoons - a form of visual art that combines image with text. Through highly motivating visual images, cartoons offer a different way of teaching and learning since they move learners away from traditional linear texts. Furthermore, cartoons call for "visual literacy" which embraces not only the ability to read and write, but it can also refer to the ability to "read" different kinds of signs other than words such as images. The proliferation of images in different cultures makes *visual literacy*, the ability to "read" them, a vital skill. Hence, visual literacy is the ability to see, to understand, and ultimately, to think and create graphically. Generally speaking, the visually literate student should look at an image carefully, critically, and with an eye for the intentions of the creator's image. Those skills can be applied equally to any type of image since they convey ideas allowing the reader to gather the information and ideas contained in an image, place them in context, and determine whether they are valid or not (Thibault and Walbert, 2003).

Furthermore, visual literacy encompasses more than one level of skill. The first level in reading is decoding language since, linguistically, cartoons are highly valuable as they can be used to show high-frequency vocabulary in context (culture-specific words) and idiomatic expressions, and to illustrate lexico-grammatical features such as types of adjectives (objective / subjective), adverbs of manner, verbs, evaluative nouns and suffixes, metaphoric uses of language, among others. Nevertheless, reading comprehension is equally (if not more) important for teachers to help students not only to decode words but also to make sense of what they read. That understanding requires not only broad vocabulary and knowledge in a particular content area but also critical thought; therefore, teachers should display various approaches and strategies to help students build intercultural and contextual understanding of what they read. Understanding of what is seen and comprehending visual relationships are important to lead students to suceed in developing critical thinking skills in any language or content area in which information is conveyed through visual formats. These visual literacy skills are also beneficial to students attempting to make sense of the barrage of images they may face in texts and Web resources (Thibault and Walbert, 2003). In short, cartoons can promote the development of intercultural competence because they reflect authentic language and culture; they can tell a complex story in a few images, provoke thought on political events and issues, show culture in action through the ways in which women and men are expected to behave, and, finally, comment on and illustrate a whole range of issues like ageism, sexism and racism (Lavery, 2008).

The political cartoon is a type of visual device used as a primary source by EFL instructors in the social studies class to encourage students' critical thinking, oral debate and argumentation in writing. The potential of this resource to simplify and crystallize complex ideas across a variety of situations has played a significant role as an educational tool, for example in the history class, since it offers a model structure for the interpretation of historic and political ideas, issues, events and images. Indeed, a political cartoon often highlights a particular viewpoint through the use of illustration in which the image is exaggerated and intended to be humorous, critical as well as informative. It can also be satirical or even serious in tone, depending on the audience, the artist and the idea illustrated. Their main purpose, though, is not to amuse but to persuade the audience. Besides, this visual element provides an opportunity to explore the power

of persuasion in visual rhetoric since the image/s contained in it may prompt an argument for discussion and debate about controversial themes in different social, political or historic contexts. Moreover, cartoonists use several methods, or techniques to get their point across such as symbolism, exaggeration, labeling, analogy, and irony. Consequently, for a reader-viewer to fully interpret the message the artist intends to convey in the cartoon, he needs to identify which of the above mentioned devices has been used to fulfill the author's purpose (Mayers, Stone and O'Connor, 2007)

Proposal

One of the highest goals of the Teachers' Training Programme at National University of Rio Cuarto, both in language and social studies courses, is the achievement of a solid linguistic formation to enable students to handle the four macro skills and the production of oral and written texts in different communicative situations. In the language classes, teachers are always concerned with the selection of materials that are not only linguistically but also culturally authentic and with the design of activities which aim at developing students' linguistic, strategic and intercultural competence. This implies knowing and understanding the interrelationship between language and culture. In this educational context the incorporation of a wide array of texts and tasks becomes crucial to enhance language learning and students' motivation. The inclusion of visual aids such as cartoons would not only add to textual variety but it would also offer new alternatives to exploit language resources and its cultural implications. Meanwhile, in the history classes, students are not only exposed to reading and interpreting content from secondary sources (textbooks, articles, encicopaedias) but also from primary sources (historic documents, newspapers, letters, autobiographies and cartoons). In fact, political cartoons constitute a rich source for analysis of historic events, processes and characters which generally lead students to deep thought, reflection, criticism and judgement.

As already mentioned, students need to "capture" the interrelationship between text, image and culture; to achieve this, they have to be able to read and understand text forming a picture of the images in the cartoons by reacting and even taking stances on an issue. Thus, it becomes necessary for EFL teachers to orient their teaching practices towards the development of higher order cognitive skills through the careful and meticuluos selection and preparation of specific activities

that will activate students' intercultural competence. The guideline below - adapted from Cassany (2006) – has been used as a model framework for the design and implementation of tasks to be carried out in the analysis and interpretation of a set of cartoons to be exploited in the language and history class of the above mentioned Teacher Training Programme. The following prompts aim at guiding the students through the process of developing their intercultural competence. They have been organized under four categories so that students can focus on different aspects of analysis.

To discover the author's world:
1)   Identify the purpose of the cartoon
2)   Discover subjective traces in the cartoon through the combination of images and the language used: Does the language used reveal the cartoonist's attitudes, opinions about the topic?
3)   Discover the author's stance, social stereotypes, cultural representations (is the cartoonist sexist, racist; does he reveal any political ideology?)

To analyse the genre of the cartoon and its intertextuality:
4)   Evaluate the structure of the cartoon - linguistic and visual resources
5)   Identify meanings constructed by the cartoonist
6)   What kind of reader is being addressed?
7)   Determine whether the cartoonist's expectations are fulfilled

To assess cartoons from multiple perspectives:
8)   What view of the world is this cartoon presenting?
9)   What does the author want the reader to know?
10) Recognize different voices in the cartoon
11) How is power used and what effect does power have on others?
12) Discover hidden/ implicit messages, presuppositions
13) Determine agreement or disagreement between the cartoonist and the reader. Compare the meanings the cartoon conveys through image and text with the potential readers' beliefs. Accept or reject the author's view.

To interpret a political cartoon
14) Identify the purpose of the cartoon. Is it critical or humorous?
15) Are there any objects or characters in the illustration used as symbols? If so, which one/ ones?
16) Does the cartoonist make use of irony? How is it effected?

17) Whose features are depicted in an exaggerated manner? What does this attempt to represent?

Conclusion

In the area of foreign language instruction, teachers are constantly searching for new and innovative materials to enhance learning in the formal classroom environment. Even though many publishers attempt to advertise their material as being authentic, still a great number of teachers, and even students, find that course textbooks are still "artificial" since they have been modified to suit learners' needs. Besides, in the new age of information and technology, visual images lie at the core of the communication revolution and so, the learner's ability to interpret them meaningfully is a vital skill encompassed within today's extended notion of literacy. For this reason, we believe that the multi-dimensional nature of cartoons makes them an excellent teaching aid to enhance language learning through different text formats. They also allow teachers and students to explore language in a singularly creative way, and, in turn, promote the development of linguistic and cognitive skills necessary for the students' academic success. Lastly, and most importantly, through the use of cartoons EFL teachers can encourage critical reading since they show that texts offer more than one way of interpretation; besides, varied perspectives should be considered if we want our students to discover and build a critical stance and to recognize that individuals view the world, people, and events differently since all this will ultimately lead to the development of their intercultural competence.

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Making the Most of Films. An Approach to the Purposeful Use of Movies in the English Language Classroom

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Introduction

According to David Nunan (1989), in order to succeed in the teaching-learning process, it is necessary to accept the view of language as a dynamic resource for the creation of meanings and the view of communication as an integrated process. In the same line, M.A.K. Halliday has suggested in *Spoken and Written Language* (1989) that "[l]earning is essentially a process of constructing meanings; and the cognitive component in learning is a process of constructing *linguistic* meanings –semantic systems and semantic structures" (98). If teachers adhere to these views, they will be taking into account both the end – individuals who are capable of using the target language to communicate with others- and the means –classroom activities which develop this capability- of EFL instruction. These two components need to be merged if communication is to be placed at the centre of our teaching. The question is, then, how can we help students in the development of their competences and how can we enhance their learning experience? If, as stated above, the main focus of our classes is the construction of meaning, then learning will be considered an imaginative process involving cognition and interpretation. Therefore, we should find ways of facilitating and improving the construction of meaning.

In *Literature with a small 'l'* (1991), John McRae distinguishes between referential and representational language, and states that referential language is

> language which communicates on only one level, usually in terms of information being sought or given, or of a social situation being handled. It states (…) and it encompasses the basic range of functions, from agreeing or apologising,

through offering, requesting or rejecting, to verifying and wishing. (...) It is transaction-based, socially conditioned, and motivated by a social or personal rationale. Referential language is almost exclusively limited to everyday real-life situational use. As such (...) it is the basis of all second language learning. (3)

In contrast, he argues that representational language is

language which, in order that its meaning potential be decoded by a receiver, engages the imagination of that receiver. (...) [It] opens up, calls upon, stimulates and uses areas of the mind, from imagination to emotion, from pleasure to pain, which referential language does not reach. Where referential language informs, representational language *involves*. (3) (my emphasis)

This differentiation can be, in turn, extrapolated to materials, and so we can speak of referential and representational materials. Representational materials aim at fostering dynamic learning, i.e., they are meant to involve students both actively and personally. Because films are authentic materials and, thus, good examples of 'real' language use in context, and because they encourage imaginative thinking, they are a more than helpful tool for language learning.

As stated by Donna Brinton (2001), media have always facilitated the task of language learning, and the extent to which they are used in the foreign language classroom has varied widely. "In some methods, media have figured prominently as a force that drives the curriculum (…). In other methods, media are relegated more to the design and procedure level" (459). However, regardless of the approach, it seems language teachers "agree that media *can* and *do* enhance language teaching" (p. 459). Of course, the definition of 'media' could include several and different things, but I believe most of us will agree that films are certainly included. Consequently, and as previously stated, films have proved to be more than advantageous at the time of teaching a foreign language. The main aim of this proposal is to discuss the use of films as an educational tool and to provide a teaching apparatus for using them effectively.

Pros and Cons of Using Films in Language Teaching

Since students live in a visual culture, using movies in the foreign language classroom can engage them with and/or help them to understand course material better, especially because they will be able to relate that material to a medium with which they are more familiar. In addition to the benefits referred to in the previous section, there are many other reasons for using films to enrich and expand our English language teaching and which should also be mentioned.

First, many people enjoy watching movies. Because it is a well-known pastime, it tends to be associated with a relaxed, comfortable environment, and so it may help to create a stress-free atmosphere, which is more conducive to learning. Equally important is the fact that movies are readily available and come in various formats. It is not necessary to have state-of-the-art equipment in order to watch a movie. Although it is true that latest movies might only be available in certain formats, chances are you will find at least a few movies you can work with. Second, the length of viewing is controllable. This means that every movie can be adapted to the class time available. While some times you may need or be able to watch an entire movie, some others you can just work with segments –either several segments shown throughout several classes, or simply one segment shown in one class– depending on your teaching purpose and the activities designed. In this way, movies can work as a dynamic supplement to traditional lecture or textbook formats. Third, movies are a source of real language in real use. On the one hand, they offer a great opportunity to practise listening skills. They expose students to accents different from the ones they are used to listening to in class and to other varieties of English, usually not available to them when studying in a formal context. In addition, they provide examples of paralinguistic features, which are definitely absent in textbooks or audio recordings. These features are of prime importance if we want our students to become proficient speakers of the foreign language. On the other hand, they can also help students to enrich their vocabulary. Depending on the level of proficiency of the students, subtitles in English can prove to be very helpful

in different ways: they can aid listening comprehension, contribute to vocabulary development, and, at the same time, allow for the possibility of practising reading comprehension skills. Fourth, movies are also a cultural expression, and as such, present students with cultural behaviours which are not so obvious in written texts. Through a movie, you can experience the look, feel and rhythm of a culture. Thus, the cultural experience of learning a language becomes much more vivid and realistic when using films in the classroom. Fifth, movies produce an emotional response in audiences. A film can produce fear, excitement, sorrow, tension, patriotism, rejection, sympathy, and many other feelings. In this way, it can influence an audience to react to the situations and conditions presented, and therefore embrace or reject the ideas, ideals, values, and perspectives promoted in the film. Needless to say, this is highly conducive to the discussion, either in oral or written form, of said ideas and values. As a result, we can say that movies also promote the development of critical thinking skills.

The reasons stated above are only a few of those proposed in favour of the use of movies to teach a foreign language, but should be adequate for the purposes of this paper. Having said that, this discussion would not be complete if I did not refer to some of the drawbacks or dangers of using films in the classroom. First of all, and according to Sprau (2001), "film[s] in educational settings [are] often relegated to filler material for overworked, underprepared, or absent instructors" (paragraph 10). It is true that, just as with other tools, some teachers use films merely to entertain students or to keep them quiet. Unfortunately, this is a clear waste of a valuable resource, which, for the abovementioned reasons, can certainly aid the language learning process.

In addition, although it is true that students may express a real interest in watching a movie as part of their language learning activities, it is also true that some of them literally proceed to sleep while watching the movie. Then, teachers are faced with the challenge of designing tasks with clear goals and which actually motivate students to watch the movie in order to fulfil the tasks and experiment a sense of achievement upon their completion. As stated by Sprau, "[i]n order to make use of this

versatile resource, instructors must learn, and in turn teach their students, how to make movie-viewing a meaningful and active educational experience" (paragraph 10).

Finally, owing to the fact that many times the films chosen deal with sensitive issues, care must be taken in the choice of films and the activities planned. Whereas it has been stated that movies can favour debate and that said debate is desirable for learning purposes, it is a fact that care should be taken not to offend anybody. The classroom should be a place for constructive discussion of topics related to the syllabus –with the ultimate aim of learning a foreign language- and not for bitter confrontation.

Despite these inconveniences, it is my firm belief that the benefits offered by using films to teach English are several and should not be overshadowed. Having discussed their benefits, I will now propose a teaching apparatus for the purposeful use of movies in the classroom.

An Apparatus to Use Films Purposefully in the Classroom

In general terms, the guidelines for the use of this type of material in the classroom do not differ much from other guidelines regarding lesson planning. Therefore, aspects such as the target audience, the pedagogical quality of the movie, the teaching objectives, and pre/post activities also play an important role here. Moreover, as argued by Brinton (2001), it is important to highlight that films "should not be viewed simply as extraneous to the lesson, or as contingency plans. Rather, they should be planned as carefully as the lesson itself and should form a central (if not *the* central) component of the lesson" (463). The apparatus for using films presented here is based on that suggested by John McRae (1991, 94-95), but has been adapted to films, since his proposal was aimed at literary texts. This apparatus includes the following stages: pre-watching presentation (warm-up); pre-watching stimulus (and follow-up); vocabulary; comprehension; and extension. Let us analyse each of these stages in turn.

Just as the activities to be implemented are to be carefully prepared, so are the students. Thus, a preliminary preparation is necessary before watching the film. This preparation can take several forms, such as a warm-up exercise, an introduction to the subject matter or a recapitulation of something done in previous classes. What should be remembered is the relevance of the film used both to the students and to the syllabus of the course.

Even more important is the pre-watching stimulus, which will confirm the brief presentation or introduction made by the teacher, and which will give students a clear indication of what they are supposed to do with the film. The easiest way to give the pre-watching instruction is probably the formula 'As you watch the movie…,' which allows students to do something constructive with the film. The options in this case are varied, too, being listing characters, evaluating them in simple terms (positive or negative), and identifying the key theme(s) the most common of all. Needless to say, the pre-watching stimulus should be within the students' capabilities so as to keep them motivated. The follow-up stage should take up from the pre-watching stimulus. First, an answer to the pre-watching question should be provided, and then, students and teacher should go deeper into the aspects foregrounded in said stimulus. In addition, the follow-up stage can include rapid comprehension checks, which are necessary to gather first impressions and subjective reactions. When working with segments of films, a second watching might be available before focusing on problem areas such as vocabulary, key words and ideas etc. However, this is not always the case and students will be able to watch it only once, especially when working with an entire film.

In relation to vocabulary, it is important to remember that, in order to obtain even more benefits, vocabulary work should be accompanied by vocabulary evaluation. This means that, apart from focusing student's attention on certain vocabulary items (either through dictionary work, matching exercises, filling in grids or charts, or the like), they should also be made to evaluate said items. Questions such as 'Which word is more effective, the original or the synonym?' or 'What difference does one word make to the overall meaning, impact or effect of the dialogue or

scene?' can prove to be very helpful. Only by paying attention to the use of lexical items in context will students be able to acquire said items more quickly and to use them more effectively.

The comprehension stage, which differs from the follow-up stage, can be carried out in oral or in written form and either individually or in small groups. The aim of this stage is to go even deeper into certain aspects of the film, most frequently related to current issues or cultural aspects explored in the film. This stage usually focuses on the interactive possibilities opened up by a closer look at the film, and may imply a discussion of either the elements of the film itself –style, tone, structure etc-, or its content and thematic links to other films or other materials already studied. If, as stated in previous paragraphs, we consider films to be representational materials, then we will agree that they should provoke thought, reflection and response in readers, and the comprehension stage should have precisely that objective.

Finally, the extension stage includes tasks aimed at production based on what has been watched. Once again, it could be implemented in oral or written form. A difficulty frequently encountered is that class time is not enough to develop the whole apparatus, so the activities included in this stage –and even the comprehension stage- could be assigned as homework. Of course, if assigned as homework, these activities can only be done in written form. This can include writing letters, paragraphs, essays, surveys, advertisements etc, based on the film, an issue it touches upon, the characters etc.

An example apparatus for the movie "The Emperor's Club" (2002), by Michael Hoffman

Pre-watching activity:

In pairs, look at the poster of the movie and answer the following questions:

1. What do you think the movie will be about? Why?
2. How would you describe the man in the picture? Try to predict some characteristics of his personality.

While-watching activity:

As you see the development of the two main characters, write down at least seven adjectives to describe them:

Mr. Hundert	Sedgewick Bell

Post-watching activities:

1. Vocabulary

Read the following sentences taken from the movie and explain the meaning of the underlined words. Use a dictionary if necessary.

a. *Shutruk Nahunte… Is anyone familiar with this fellow? Texts are underline(permissible).* (Mr. Hundert)
b. *I told the man in the store I wanted something for a very serious underline(scholar) of antiquity.* (Elizabeth)
c. *It's just new school underline(bravado), that's all. He'll be fine.* (Mr. Hundert)
d. *The fate of the republic is underline(at stake).* (Mr. Hundert)
e. *I can't just underline(mellow out), Deepak. (…) They catch us, and we get kicked, and we don't get our underline(tuition) back.* (Martin Blythe)
f. *You're a history underline(buff), aren't you?* (Mr. Bell)
g. *The first underline(quiz) is tomorrow morning.* (Mr. Hundert)
h. *Tony's been offered a underline(lectureship) at his old college in Oxford.* (Elizabeth)
i. *I might make the suggestion to you and to Mr. Woodbridge that in the future more underline(alumni) are invited.* (Mr. Ellerby)
j. *His brief flirtation with underline(diligence) was supplanted by a new appetite for underline(brashness), underline(contempt), and underline(folly).* (Mr. Hundert)
k. *Mr. Hundert, your contribution to St. Benedict's has been extraordinary; your underline(tenure) is unmatched.* (Member of the Board)
l. *What experience do you have in fundraising or building underline(endowments)?* (Member of the Board)

m. *I expect to see you all in <u>detention</u>, gentlemen.* (Mr. Hundert)

n. *You were a wonderful student, Martin. I never quite <u>gave you your due</u>.* (Mr. Hundert)

Working with a dictionary, find synonyms for the underlined words in sentences a, b, c, d, e, f, g, j, and l. Did you know any of the synonyms? Which do you prefer, the underlined word or the synonym? Why? Which do you think is better in the context of the movie? (in order to answer this question, take into account the scene, the speaker, the addressee etc).

Choose six items from the underlined words and write your own sentences.

2. Comprehension/Interpretation

Answer the following questions by referring the movie. Then, in groups of three or four students, share your answers and be ready to support them.

a. At the very beginning of the movie, Mr. Hundert, quoting Heraclitus, says: "A man's character is his fate." What does he mean exactly? Answer by referring to any of the characters.

b. When Mr. Hundert meets Mr. Bell, the latter tells him: "Your job is to teach my son (…) You, sir, will not mould my son. I will mould him." What would be the difference between teaching and moulding? What is Mr. Bell's opinion about the role of a teacher? Does Mr. Hundert agree with him? Why/Why not? What is your opinion about this?

c. After the contest rematch, Mr. Hundert says to Sedgewick Bell: "I'm a teacher, Sedgewick, and I failed you as a teacher." He had already thought about this at Sedgewick's graduation. What does he mean exactly? Why does he say that he 'failed' him as a teacher?

d. After the surprise the old students gave Mr. Hundert before the end of the weekend, he says: "I want to thank you for this weekend because you have taught me something of inestimable value." What did they teach him? What did Mr. Hundert learn during this weekend? Did the students intend to give him a lesson?

3. Group discussion/Debate

In small groups, share your views on the following questions and try to reach an agreement. Choose one member of the group as speaker and share your ideas with the rest of the class:

  a. What does *The Emperor's Club* imply about the relationship between virtue and success in leadership? Do you agree with this?
  b. What questions does this movie raise about character and fate? How do you see this relationship between character and fate?

Extension

1. Writing

Choose any of the two previous questions and write a paragraph of about 200-250 words answering it. Remember to follow the formal structure of a paragraph (topic sentence, supporting sentences, concluding sentence).

Conclusion

Several reasons have been enumerated for the use of films to teach a foreign language, but what is important to consider is that films should be seen as both rich comprehensible input and a stimulus for real communication. In the introduction to this paper I argued that due to the fact that films are authentic materials and, therefore, good examples of 'real' language use in context, and because they encourage imaginative thinking, they are an extremely valuable tool for foreign language learning. In view of the previous discussion, I believe I have made my point and you will agree that films can certainly enrich our teaching, yielding a number of benefits both for teachers and students. Nonetheless, we should bear in mind the words of Andrew Wright (1976), who notes that "language teaching is a collective title for a variety of activities undertaken by different people in very different circumstances. There is consequently no single medium 'ideal for language teaching' as is so often claimed" (as cited in Brinton, 2001:473). The teacher's ability and creativity will be of prime importance at the moment of deciding whether

to use films or not and to what extent and with what purpose they should be used.

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Art matters: Greys in a Creative Classroom

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What is art and why is it useful?

Art is workmanship, i.e. the creation of aesthetic objects in dance, music, theatre, plastic arts, film, literature, architecture and the like. It turns every abstraction into concrete reality and forms part of human cultural experience, educational background and ability (Jailani 2006). Thus, art should have a place in the ELT classroom as it can be exploited in many different ways. Activities incorporating art are motivating for students as they provide a change of pace while developing creative and critical thinking skills. Besides, meaningful learning through the arts stimulates imagination and opens our eyes to other possibilities outside our space-time situation (Zoreda 2005).

Creativity, imagination and emotion through the arts in the ELT classroom

Contemporary ELT authors acknowledge the powerful impact of imagery on FL/SL learning (Goldstein 2008, Keddie 2009). In particular, they stress the importance of the development of creativity as essential to any learning environment. Although fostering this skill is time-consuming, the end product will not only be worthy of praise but, above all, memorable for the students. Whatever they do out of curiosity will naturally yield meaningful and long-lasting results. Likewise, a similar outcome is expected when it comes to creativity. The more involved the students are, the easier it will be for them to learn. Another related term is that of agency – the possibility for students to have a say in their learning process (Keddie 2009) –. If they are given choices, chances are that their imagination will spark off innovative ideas making their learning experience more valuable to them.

According to Greene (2001), imagination is the capacity to construct alternative realities. In fact, human imagination has

an inexhaustible potential that should sparkle in our students if exploited in a systematic way, hence encouraging affective education. Ieong (2004: 6) maintains that "imagination is the antidote for the inhuman paradoxes of our times". It is in this world that committed teachers should take learners on an imaginative immersion journey to stimulate their sensitivity. This will, at its best, enable them to distance themselves from their own contexts and see the complexity of the world from other people's viewpoints, thus, encouraging self-reflection and hypothesising.

When learning a second or foreign language, affect can facilitate or hinder students' performances (Luk 2002). For this reason, the process of task design should take affective factors and the students' emotions into account. This will not only foster a positive learning atmosphere but also boost their self-esteem.

A Selection of Art Types: Brief description

Visual Art: Photographs, paintings and posters

Photographs have accompanied us for decades and have served different purposes, from capturing the essence of a scene, a landscape, a person or a city, to provoking a number of reactions in the viewer. Society and its many facets have been depicted through the lenses of a camera and varied artists' perspectives. A photograph is a visual powerful tool, an art expression that is meaningful in itself. The void that needs to be filled between what the picture shows and what the viewer sees offers an array of possibilities for the EFL teacher. Below are two samples of photographs, which any educator can make use of to get an image-induced mind activity in a language learning environment.

Artistic painting is a mode of expression that serves to channel and give voice to a person's intention. Paintings can be naturalistic (i.e. a still life, a landscape) or abstract, and they provide the fertile environment for narrative reconstruction, interpretation of symbolism and/or political meanings.

Fine paintings – that is, the ones that are found in art galleries and museums – have traditionally been divided into five categories or 'genres' as follows: *history painting* – works with message or moralistic content –, *portraits*, *everyday situations*, *landscapes and still lifes* – describing inanimate objects or subject matter –. Here are two samples of well-known portraits that can be put to good use in the ELT classroom.

Posters have become a vital art form in any society exhibiting a wide variety of styles such as art nouveau, symbolism, cubism and hippie, among others. Typically posters include both textual and visually striking graphic elements, with contrasts and bright colours in order to make the message clear and evident. Awareness-raising posters are of particular interest in the ELT environment, since they are meant to be inspirational and thought-provoking. Thus, they have a tremendous potential
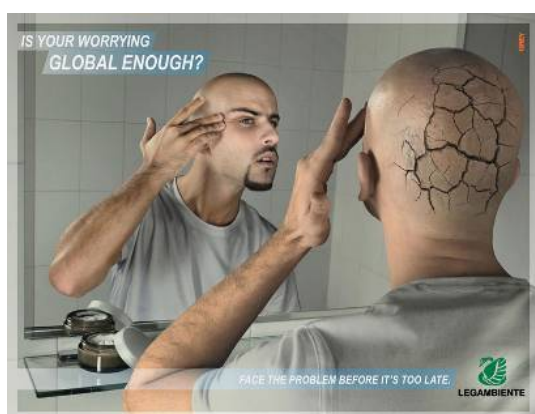
for the development of controversial issues in the language classroom.

Audiovisual Art: TV commercials, sound effects and music video-clips

A **TV commercial** or television ad is a type of public announcement or advertisement carried on TV. It is a non-personal form of communication intended to persuade an audience (viewers, readers or listeners) to purchase or take some action upon products, ideals, or services. There are two kinds of TV commercials: those with linguistic input and those without verbal linguistic input. In the first type, the audience perceives visual elements and hears language that may include double meanings and plays on words; they are usually accompanied by background music and sound effects and sometimes by written texts. In the second type, the audience only perceives a set of visual effects or sequence of events generally accompanied by a written message, background music and sound effects. However, there is no verbal linguistic input at all. The following two samples can be found at YouTube.

Keep your hands off my mamma!

House Rules - *Doritos*   Kids these Days - *Doritos*

The use of **sound effects**, music generated with everyday objects as **musical instruments** and **human vocals** emulating popular songs can get a breath of fresh air into the learning process. Sound effects are created in an artificial way to stress the artistic content of different media (films, television shows, live performance and animation, among others). Two attractive artistic expressions with these features are STOMP and The Voca People. STOMP is a whole new experience for the senses as it challenges

the audience to find music in noises which are usually blocked out or ignored. In this artistic endeavour music and dancing are dependent on one another. This combination is certainly an experience learners should go through at some point in the learning process. The Voca People is a new international group of eight musician-actors who combine amazing vocal sounds and a cappella singing with beat-box to produce an imitation of sounds of different musical instruments such as drums, trumpets, guitars and other effects. The use of short videos by this or other groups in the ELT context can offer students the chance to appreciate what the human voice and talent are capable of producing when combined.

Music videos are short films that accompany songs. They are primarily made and used as a marketing device intended to promote the sale of music recordings. Music videos use a wide range of styles of film making techniques, including animation, live action filming, documentaries, and non-narrative approaches. Many of them do not reproduce the lyrics in the images on the screen, thus, making it difficult to interpret the overall meaning of the song. The two music videos below can be accessed at YouTube.

Modest Mouse King Rat by Heath Ledger   *If Anyone Cared by Nickelback*

Methodological Approach

Both visual arts (photographs, paintings and posters) and audiovisual arts (TV commercials, sound effects and music videos) can serve as the starting point of an EFL/ESL lesson. They can be used with varied pedagogical and methodological objectives. For instance, in a lesson that has content as the focal point, the exploration of a particular *historical period* can be carried out through an analysis of the most outstanding paintings of the time, or the most relevant artists, the techniques they used, and so on. A virtual tour through online collections of paintings in museums all over the world can be

quite stimulating. In this way, our learners will become aware of how history is reflected in art and vice-versa. An alternative is to choose one *artist* as the focal point and then analyse his/her work in tandem with the socio-historical context of the time. Yet another possible course of action is to focus on a particular *genre* – for example *portraits*, which lend themselves to descriptions of people and their personalities, or *landscapes*, which are particularly useful for descriptions of places –. Likewise, a comparison of artists and their techniques can turn out to be quite enriching and motivating, just as discussing guidelines to understand and judge art.

Photographs and posters have a great potential for classroom use as well. Taking a particular *topic* as the starting point, a whole lesson can be designed on the basis of pictures – with or without verbal support – to generate discussions and debates, which will then lead to the learners' production of their own artistic expressions. In particular, when dealing with *people's feelings and emotions*, photographs can speak louder than words. And the same idea applies to posters when embarking on the analysis of contemporary controversial issues. In all cases, the integration of *content* as back up or support is suggested, so that learners get new information as well as exposure to new vocabulary and patterns.

In a similar vein, a TV commercial can be the point of departure for the consolidation of a particular set of functions or linguistic exponents in context. When using sound effects, different strategies can be developed, such as inferring and hypothesising, among others. By encouraging students to create a story on the basis of a selection of sound effects, storytelling can become much more appealing and real, thus complementing dialogue and music. Video clips have great potential for building lexical domains and enriching the learners' collocational competence.

Using audiovisual art in the English classroom brings about a number of advantages. TV commercials and music videos typically last between thirty seconds and five minutes. Owing to their brevity they can be played several times and accommodated at any moment of the lesson. Likewise, their shortness makes them easier to select and manipulate than finding an appropriate scene from a film and preparing it. Another benefit is that they contain authentic material. The texts in commercials and music videos are produced by native speakers from different countries, and this makes it possible for students to have exposure to accent varieties and dialects (Tuzi,

Mori & Young 2008). An extra advantage is that short audiovisual materials say a lot in a concise way as they offer visual clues to help the audience grasp overall meanings. Besides, they are catchy and designed to be entertaining (Smith & Rawley 1997). Interpreting audiovisual art depends on the viewers' experience and background knowledge. This implies that, for example, when watching a commercial from another culture, only some of the intended meanings may be grasped (Katchen 2001). Even though the messages conveyed may be complex due to cultural and historical references, these clips pave the way for the discussion of intercultural issues. The resources outlined thus far will create a comfortable atmosphere and strengthen motivation, especially if a multisensory approach is advocated (Baines 2008). In all cases, the emphasis is placed on the integration of both perceptive and productive skills as well as on a balance of meaning and form-based tasks.

Conclusion

The implications of a multisensory approach to learning such as the one sketchily outlined above are several. By being systematically exposed to visual and audiovisual arts the students' creativity and imagination can be stimulated while their emotions can be overtly expressed. This can be achieved by means of diverse tasks aimed at developing not only the cognitive but also the affective aspects of the learner. Since emotions are intrinsically linked to parts of the brain which words fail to reach, students will be sensitised to perceive other artistic expressions inside and outside the classroom. Finally, visual and audiovisual art will always offer opportunities to engage the minds of our students in meaningful and memorable learning.

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Picture Books as an Aesthetic Experience:

The 'Reading' of Images in Anthony Browne's
The Tunnel

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A wish: that children feel so much pleasure when reading

and looking at my books as I feel it when I draw them

(Nora Hilb, qtd. in *Magic Pencil* 21).

1. Introduction

This paper intends to provide a general view of the main theoretical assumptions related to visual literacy and the importance of working with picture books as a means to introduce young learners to the universe of illustrations. As children explore images and develop the ability to "read" them, they obtain deeper meanings from literature and an awareness of how visual images are used in their own meaning making. This calls for the need to develop children's visual literacy at the early stages at schools to be continued as a systematic practice to develop crucial strategies in their aesthetic development and understanding. This idea could be supported by what McRae argues about the importance of introducing representational materials "from the very earliest stages of language learning" when, according to him, "the learner's imagination is called into play, there is awareness that judgment and response are part of language development…" (Mc Rae, 2002: 9).

The Tunnel, written and illustrated by the award-winning artist Anthony Browne, serves as a point of departure to determine some of the reading 'paths' which can be taken when approaching a contemporary literary text. Browne's art acts as a stimulus to become active participants in the creation of meanings due to the numerous narratives, ambiguities and contradictions that his

stories contain. The author's use of written and/or illustrative texts results in the generation of new ways of reading, thereby enabling the formulation of alternative interpretations. This special combination and interaction of words and illustrations provoke responses at the cognitive, emotional and cultural levels. By means of an aesthetic experience of this type, a wide range of actions and attitudes, that involve the use of the senses, are set into motion: perceiving, contemplating, observing, discovering, recognizing, visualizing, and examining. Picture books increase the readers' understanding of how visual features such as colour, line, shape and composition contribute to construct a multi-layered discourse. In this type of texts, images are not viewed as independent elements, but as part of a significant whole in which ideas are expressed metaphorically through the artist's technique and style. The innovative character of contemporary literary productions imposes new modes of approaching texts which include the filling of innumerable gaps and the resolution of ambiguities.

2. Some considerations about picture books and visual literacy

Bajour and Carranza define a picture book as:

> contrapunto de imagen y palabra, donde la imagen narra lo no dicho por la palabra, o la palabra dice lo dejado de lado por la imagen. En un libro-álbum la imagen es portadora de significación en sí misma y en diálogo con la palabra. Illustración, texto, diseño y edición se conjugan en una unidad estética y de sentido.[5] (Schritter 2005: 65).

As readers transact with picture books, the process is a recursive one, where readers go forwards and backwards throughout the illustrations and the text in order to make sense of the story. The written text and the illustrations help readers, each in its own way, to 'navigate' through the complexities of a picture book. High-quality picture books become a valuable tool to learn a foreign language, especially in relation to both visual literacy and the stimulus to read providing the means to become skilled

[5] "an image-word counterpoint, where the image narrates what is not said by the word, or the word says what is left apart by the image. In a picture book, an image is in itself a unit of meaning which establishes a dialogue with the word. Illustrations, text, design and edition make up an aesthetic and sense unit." (My own translation)

readers. If we start working with picture books from the earliest stages, many are the possibilities for developing reading strategies which will in turn create successful autonomous readers in their mother tongue as well as in a foreign language.

Anthony Browne's famous contemporary picture book *The Tunnel* (published in 1989) proves to be a book with high literary value following "certain standards both in its form and content that make it worth reading: an appealing layout, quality of illustrations, a meaningful design that invites to different interpretations …" (Jure, 2003:75). Moreover, the combination of picture and word in this book allows the possibility of transcending the purely thematic and structural levels. In the process of meaning making, readers interact with a text that acts as a prompt to go beyond the surface. In *The Tunnel*, Browne, in his roles as both writer and illustrator, tells a story about the typical relationship between a brother and a sister. It begins when one day their mother orders them to play together outside. While Jack (the brother) is exploring the place, he finds a frightening tunnel and decides to go into it. As he does not come back, Rose (his sister) decides to follow him through this dark passage, leaving her fears aside. At the other end, she discovers a quiet wood which soon turns into a scary forest. As she is so frightened, she begins to run without stopping. Suddenly, she comes to a clearing where she finds her brother's stone figure. Once she puts her arms around the figure, it suddenly starts changing, becoming a human being again. At the end, Rose smiles at her brother, as a symbol of their reconciliation.

Among many of the theories put forward to understand the reading process, Iser points out that "literary texts always contain 'blanks' which only the reader can fill" (in Selden, 1997:50). During the act of reading, there are gaps of information within the text which the reader has to complete. These gaps are even more noticeable in picture books. For Style (in Arizpe, 2004:98), picture books, especially the contemporary ones (within postmodern trends) let the reader complete innumerable blanks and resolve the ambiguities of the pictorial text. These aspects lead the reader to a world of alternate meanings. As such, the reading of picture books contributes to the development of language skills and literacy. The visual content

of this type of books is a useful tool to develop these abilities but at the same time it enhances the effect of the text, develops children's aesthetic understanding and provokes readers' imaginative responses.

Visual and verbal arts are different since they express meanings in different ways. Nevertheless, both arts share some characteristics when considering how meaning is expressed. Both exploit different elements for conveying messages. Moreover, they employ certain principles of composition to organize these elements. The choices of theses elements and principles depend on the author's and artist's style to build a symbolic universe by means of their particular aesthetic forms. Therefore, not only should the author's literary choices be considered, but also how these choices affect the readers. Writers as well as illustrators have to be taken into account especially in relation to their ways of transmitting meaning through different elements of art. Principles of composition and other factors related to picture book design should be explored in order to help children broaden and deepen their aesthetic awareness and responses.

3. Visual Experience: entering into *The Tunnel*

What can be perceived in a picture book? Attention can be directed to meaningful details, intratextual and intertextual references, and the relationship between text and image. In the case of *The Tunnel,* analogies between what one observes and personal facts are inevitably established as soon as one starts reading the story. The pictures of both children are shown on the first pages while readers start making predictions about what will happen to the protagonists. Readers become interested in the story since the moment they first see the cover of the book due to its visual richness: a girl is entering into a dark tunnel and an open book containing the illustration of a fairy tale lies on the floor, just where the tunnel begins. This type of illustration helps in the creation of a mysterious atmosphere that predisposes the reader to expect something strange and threatening. Also at the beginning, the book contains two different pages: one of them showing flowers and leaves, while the other having a brick wall. By observing these pages, the reader also starts to anticipate and hypothesize about the story plot which is not so easily predicted. One of the possibilities could make reference to the fact that the

two main settings where the story takes place are the city and the forest.

Questions about gender also arise when the girl is shown reading a book peacefully while her brother is playing football. Some instances in the story show him as always trying to bother his sister. However, as the story reveals, Browne manages to subvert these stereotypes as the story develops. For example, it is the girl who finally rescues her brother representing the 'courageous' character. Rose is emotionally stronger than Jack since she beats her fears in order to rescue her brother, an insensitive boy who is all the time frightening and laughing at her. Rose's courageous action turns her into a heroine. As Blanco asserts: "El 'final feliz', en este caso, propicia la confianza en que es posible modificar conductas estereotipadas a través de los siglos"[6] (2007:86).

As the story proceeds, another scene shows the moment when Jack late at night is creeping into Rose's room in order to frighten her. In this illustration, some intertextual references related to other fairy tales could be identified: a Little Red Riding Hood's painting, a red coat with a hood hanging on a hook, a lamp with the shape of a fairy tale house, and Jack wearing a wolf mask. Browne's sophisticated style with its references to surrealism has made him one of the most widely analyzed and highly praised contemporary illustrators. Thanks to Browne's careful use of symbols, little children can make connections and construct meanings, maybe better than young readers who have lost contact with the fairy world of stories in which Browne immerses the reader.

The narrative becomes stronger if the readers have more time to think and make more connections. The symbolism of the ball and the book shown in the last pages of the book may stand for a closer relationship between brother and sister. Some visual elements such as patterns and colours help to increase the

6 "The 'happy ending', in this case, makes us think that it is possible to change stereotyped behaviours through the centuries" (My own translation).

connections (book-flowers/ball-bricks). In fact, connections are characteristic of Browne's work. With a hyper-realistic style, the illustrations call for inferences beyond the immediate text. As an artist, Browne uses colour and pattern to define the symbolism of his pictures. The contrast created with the use of darkness and light contributes to create the appropriate atmosphere to contextualize the story. The scene in the scary forest is fascinating because of the great number of elements. As readers look at them, more and more details appear: trees that have the shape of different animals, different objects (some also providing intertextual clues) which have been left with no apparent reason. This stimulates imaginative deduction, and the need to give sense to the story in order to integrate them into a coherent whole.

4. Conclusion

Along the whole story there are not only intertextual references but also intratextual ones. The text and the illustrations refer all the time to these types of references, and this results in the generation of new readings and the turning of pages forwards and backwards, searching between words and images to make more connections between the new visual messages.

Through Browne's texts children can be involved in a process of searching since they are invited to examine pictures minutely by means of a variety of techniques and strategies used by the writer such as objects that appear out of context. Anthony Browne has the capacity to connect textual and visual components coming from different contexts thereby causing interaction between elements that are not normally brought together.

All things considered, there is enough evidence to sustain that when children have enough time to read visual texts and reflect and think about them, they have the possibility to enter into a world that prompts multiple responses using their imagination and creation. Moreover, children are encouraged to learn a target language in a less structured way where there is no room

for providing predictable answers. Teachers should teach children how to see visual images through the use of different exploratory activities to be carried out with worthy picture books. This is a valuable tool to help learners to operate at a higher level in relation to visual literacy and to become successful readers in the future: "… es vital educar estéticamente a nuestros chicos como único recurso para que no sean adultos consumidores de imágenes enlatadas sin ningún poder de discriminación"[7] (Silveyra, 2002:87).

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7 "… it is vital to educate children aesthetically as the only means for not being adult consumers of images without any power of discrimination" (My own translation).

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Serendipity: Promoting Students' Self-Expression through a Literary Magazine

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1. A bit of history

'Serendipity' is a publication of poems, essays and short stories, written by students of the Teacher Training School of the National University of San Juan. So far, three volumes have been published, with a fourth currently under way. The creative writing activities behind each publication are carried out in the context of English Language courses, and students are free to decide whether they want to participate as writers, peer-readers, editors or 'assistants.' The texts in the three finished volumes were illustrated by pictures and drawings produced by students from the Arts School of the university in an attempt to integrate different talents and establish institutional bonds.

The idea of publishing a literary magazine with students' production was first suggested by Prof. Dennis Manion while he was in San Juan working for the Language II and Language III courses as part of the Fulbright Commission's Teacher Exchange Program. His passion, his encouragement and, above all, his conviction that there was a great deal of talent to be untapped in our classrooms, were determining factors in making this publication come to life. He decided to name it *Serendipity* and explains why on the inside cover of the first volume published:

> *Serendipity: -n. the faculty of happening upon fortunate discoveries when not in search of them. Coined by Horace Walpole (1754) in "The Three Princes of Serendip" (Sri Lanka), Funk and Wagnells*
>
> > *I certainly felt like one of the Three Princes upon discovering so much talent in my English*

classes – hence the title of this collection.
(Manion, 1993).

Dennis led the workshops and guided us towards the publication of Serendipity 1 (1993). Many of the activities and ideas later used in preparation for Serendipity 2 (1995) and Serendipity 3 (2001), and currently for Serendipity 4, have actually been inspired in Dennis' original guidance.

2. Some guiding principles

One way to start discussing a publication of poems, short stories and essays is by defining what is meant by creative writing. As is the case with many other concepts, there is no consensus on a single definition for the term. Some attempts are transcribed below:

> "*Creative writing is writing that expresses the writer's thoughts and feelings in an imaginative, often unique, and poetic way. Creative writing is guided more by the writer's need to express feelings and ideas than by restrictive demands of factual and logical progression of expository writing." (SIL, 2010)*

> *"The term creative writing suggests imaginative tasks, such as writing poetry, stories and plays…[….]. Creative writing is 'a journey of self-discovery' (Gaffield-Vile, 1998, in Harmer, 2007:328)*

Regardless of any definition we might endorse, some words of clarification are required. In the first place, we do not intend to engage in a debate as to what is, or is not, literature. For some specialists, it may sound too ambitious to speak in terms of literature when we are dealing with poems and/or other creative pieces written by students of a foreign language. However, we feel it is our duty as teachers to promote self-reflection and self-expression, in the hope that this will also lead to growth in the use of the language as well as to self-discovery. Secondly, we believe that creative writing is not the exclusive realm of professional writers. After all, professional writers also have to start somewhere and perfect their skills as they write. We might

have some true artists in the making in our classes. Thirdly, and in close connection with the previous idea, we believe that creative writing should not necessarily or exclusively be conceived of as a skill to be developed only in our native language. Examples abound of authors who excel at writing in a second or third language.

3. Starting points

Deciding where to start is a difficult step in any process. In the field of writing, whether expository or creative writing, the use of models has been the subject of a never-ending debate. When we use models, are we curtailing the students' imagination or are we providing the necessary scaffolding to allow them to take the first steps? Is the model a straightjacket or a bridge to reach a possible destination? We believe that the answer to these questions will vary for each student and each context; it will be the teacher's task to decide when to resort to a pattern to provide some guidance, and when to leave a model aside to let students try out their own forms of expression.

Another question that comes to mind when we think of teaching creative writing is whether this activity is actually different from teaching a regular composition class. To answer this question, we can borrow Bishop's words when she states that "we need to be crossing the line between composition and creative writing far more often than we do." She insists on the importance of allowing students to "explore creativity, authorship, textuality, and so on, together, all at once" (1994:181).

Working with creative writing demands a great deal of flexibility, and commitment on the part of the teacher, as well as "tolerance for each student's unique personality style, work habits and writing process" (Sarbo and Moxley, 1994:143). At times, especially at the start of a creative writing project, it may be advisable to provide models or templates. In the same way as we provide guidelines for paragraph and essay writing, we may show students possible paths to get started, mainly because students will often feel they are unable to produce original pieces on their own. Once the process is underway, and students

have already tried their hand, it may be a good idea to let go of models and encourage students to explore new paths. When students' imagination is given free rein, we need to be ready for a couple of surprises and remain open to their ideas. Providing feedback and genuinely praising the students' work while they are trying and once they have managed to put together a piece is essential to the success of any creative writing project.

4. Poems - Some models/templates used

4.1 Cinquain poem

The simplest model we have used is the Cinquain template. In this model, students are asked to write a poem whose lines correspond to the pattern below. In our concern to acknowledge authorship of the template (initially used by Prof. Manion for Serendipity 1), we contacted Dr. Leslie Opp Beckman, who offers numerous resources for creative writing on her webpage http://www.uoregon.edu/~leslieob/pizzaz.html, where the template reproduced below is currently available. She informed us that this "type of poem has been around for a long time," as well as other similar formats (2010, personal communication).

It is interesting to note that students do not always follow the pattern to the letter. In this sense, we favor an attitude of openness to make room for their ideas. The poem below (right – Serendipity 2) shows some small variations with respect to the pattern, but we welcome such innovations.

Cinquain – Suggested pattern		Student's adaptation
Line 1:	1 noun. The topic or theme of the poem.	*Eyes*
Line 2:	2 adjectives. They describe the noun in line 1.	*Meaningful, tender,*
Line 3:	3 gerunds. They describe the noun in line 1.	*Saying, reflecting, living.*
Line 4:	1 short, complete sentence about the noun in line 1.	*Your open heart.*
Line 5:	1 noun. A synonym for the noun in line 1.	*Sincerity....*
		By Mariela Trigo

In our experience, the Cinquain is a friendly template to get started and it lends itself well to engage students in a collective effort. This activity shows the group that the task is manageable and that it is possible to work collaboratively. It also serves to boost motivation to pursue further instances of self-expression. We actually used this idea during our first workshop for Serendipity 4 (2010). We asked students to suggest a first word. The term 'eternity' was selected, and after a short time of collaborative work, the group had produced the following lines, again straying a bit from the original Cinquain template:

Eternity

Dangerous, scary,

Lasting, intimidating, puzzling,

Why do you torment me with your endless existence?

Forever

The most intriguing mystery.

Apart from being a good motivator, an advantage of this type of template is that it "scale[s] well to beginner through advanced level proficiency and can be used with all ages" (Opp Beckman, 2010).

4.2 Collaborative one-line-at-a-time poems

Another simple idea for an initial stage is to ask students to write a poem 'one line at a time' with no specific form/structure restrictions. We devised this activity almost by accident when we first invited our language students to produce Serendipity 2. Their first reaction was to voice their concerns about the challenge of writing. Each concern was picked up and written on the board, giving shape to the poem below:

Writing

A challenge

The most difficult task

Looking for inspiration

Never comes!

You try and you try

You are wordless, thoughtless

It's worthless

Though you are trying your best

Please help!

There must be a way.

We then found that this approach can work well as a group activity with many other topics.

4.3 Word/ Phrase / Structure repetition

The use of repetition as a rhetorical device is a resource that can serve as a frame for students to organize their writing. The repetition of a word or a phrase at the beginning or at the end of each stanza was well exploited by some of our students. One of them wrote a poem about 'Love' with each stanza starting with the same pattern (Love is + gerund). Another student wrote about the difficulties she experienced to express her feelings and finished each stanza with a 'Why' question. Very creatively, she closed her poem with the pattern she had been using and an afterthought:

Why… why can others write?

(But not I)

[excerpt] By Vanesa García

4.4 Parody & Imitation

As suggested by Pope, creative writing may begin with an activity of imitation, parody or adaptation and "move towards a more free-standing text" (2001:257). These activities can be fertile ground for critical expression or social protest. This was skillfully demonstrated by two of the writers in Serendipity 2. Laura created her own version of some proverbs we had seen in our language class, and rewrote them to protest against corruption in politics, which was one of the topics in our course curriculum:

Proverbs of Politicians of Hell

Never judge a politician by his cover.

In God we trust, all politicians pay cash.

Never look a gift politician in the wallet.

A politician in need is no friend indeed.

A burnt electorate dreads politicians.

Too many politicians spoil the country.

Late to bed, late to rise makes a politician wealthy, wealthy and wise.

If you don't know where you're going, you will probably end up in politics.

By Laura Rodriguez Zato

Mariela used a well-known song (Blowin' in the Wind, by Bob Dylan) and rewrote the lyrics with the same protest purpose.

Dylan's remake: To our dearest politicians

How many times must we forgive your acts

Before you decide to be frank?

How many times must we take you to court

Before you disclose all your thoughts?

The answer my folk, has blown with the wind

The answer has blown with the wind

How many times must we give you our hope

Before you betray us once more?

[……………….]

[Excerpts] By Mariela Trigo

The work of these students shows how the activities of a creative writing workshop can bring together material that is covered in other parts of a language course, confirming the idea that there need not be a sharp division between creative writing and other components of an L2 class. These pieces also show that the products are "a compound of the 'found' and the 'made,' the old and the new" (Pope, 2001:257).

4.5 Personal expression - No template

Once students have dispelled the myth that they cannot write creatively, they feel more confident to express themselves, drawing on their own experiences and emotions. Again, we must be prepared for the unexpected and ready to praise their initiatives. When they dare to look inside, they find they have a great deal to say. One of our students wrote about her relationship with the language and her difficulties learning it, making very creative use of personification:

English

Sometimes I think you don't love me

If you only knew how much I love you.

…

You sound so beautiful in other people.

But when I try to pronounce you

It seems that nobody understands you.

[Excerpts] By Analía Manrique (Serendipity 1)

In *My Ex-nose (Serendipity 1)*, Valeria wrote about the way her life changed after she underwent surgery, and also resorted to personification:

My Ex-nose

Some people told me

you were Roman,

some others told me

you were personal

….

You made me feel unhappy,

inferior, ugly

…..

You are gone and I'm glad to be rid of you.

[Excerpts] By Valeria Fagale

5. Short stories

As students are exposed to a number of short stories in their curricula, they are familiar with the characteristics of the genre (roughly corresponding to the narrative stages of orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution and coda presented in Martin & Rose, 2008:63). As part of this creative writing initiative, these features are reviewed in order to provide a scaffold for those students who feel more comfortable writing prose. The scope of this paper precludes the illustration of our students' work. As a general comment, short stories are -in our experience- more frequently written by the more advanced students, and constitute a genre which derives tremendous benefit from peer reading and peer editing. Some of the short stories in Serendipity 3 are: '*Bless me father, for I have sinned;*' '*Once in a Lifetime,*''*We are never alone,*' among others.

6. Students' perceptions of the task

It is true that when these activities are first suggested, they can make students feel a little uncomfortable, pushed away from the certainty that rules and structures provide. However, once they break that initial barrier, they start gaining more and more

confidence as writers. The best reward they have is the satisfaction they experience when they see their work published, as they have repeatedly expressed in feedback sessions. This response from the students confirms that creative writing generates in them a sense of pride and achievement (Ur, 1996 in Harmer, 2007:328), and that these feelings are "more marked for creative writing than for other more standard written products" (Harmer, 2007:328).

7. Some closing remarks

The experience of organizing these creative writing activities has shown us that we definitely have a great deal to learn from our students. It is true that the activities are time-consuming and they may bring some chaos to the classroom, but all of this is outweighed by the satisfaction of seeing them grow in their capacity to express themselves. Bishop (1994:294) states this idea in simple, straightforward terms:

> *I don't think it matters what we're teaching –literature, composition or creative writing- what we're helping students to achieve is the ability to empower themselves through language. When we understand this, the tools – literature, essays or poems or stories or criticism- take on an equal weight: one is no more primal that the other. What is most important is that students experience language, discover it, and clarify their relationship to it.*

We wholeheartedly embrace these words as our own. We feel that these activities engage our students' creativity and their many artistic talents, giving teachers one more resource to bring to our classrooms.

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Painting "Eveline". A Language Experience

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But it is not "or", that is the point.

It is "and". Everything is.

(Lessing, Briefing for a Descent into Hell)[8]

No doubt this is the point, Art **and** EFL. This paper is about a classroom activity at a TTC in the southern suburbs of the city of Buenos Aires. The teaching of 20th Century Literature can become a hard issue when students have little literary background. If to this we add that Joyce's writing goes under concepts such as formalism, symbolism and modernism, difficulty is guaranteed. However, this becomes an interesting obstacle to surpass. As Blades argues, "*Joyce expects the reader to work harder than most novelist do, not only to work out what is going on in a novel but also to decide on the significance of the goings-on*" (Blades,1996:2).

The curriculum for Teacher Training Colleges in the Province of Buenos Aires changed in 1999. In this new curriculum literature does not appear as such but within the subject Language and Culture. This goes beyond the change of a name; it implies a change of approach. Culture is much broader than literature, it involves at least three components: what people think, what they do and the material they produce (Bodley,1994). This would mean that art and music are part of the subject. However, there is one more aspect to consider and this is the fact that since it is Language and Culture, language acquisition is as important as Culture.

The Language and Culture teacher must decide which approach to follow: literature for study or literature as a resource?

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8 in Birch, 1991:141.

Literature teaching as product or literature teaching as process? According to Maley (Maley1989 in Carter and Mc Rae, 1996) the study of literature involves "*a considerable baggage of metalanguage, critical concepts, knowledge of conventions and the like, which for second language learners presupposes a prior engagement with the study of literature in a first language.*" Even though literature is part of the curriculum of Secondary Schools, only some of our students have dealt with the study of literature in their first language and very few have read unabridged books in English. The implication of this is that we should consider that our students might be 'literary illiterate'.

Carter and Mc Rae (1996) consider that language based and process oriented approaches to the teaching of literature are reductive, but they admit that even though the studying of literature as language may be necessary in some educational context, it is not a sufficient condition.

On the other hand, Gillian Lazar (2002) examines the reasons for using literature in the language class. She states that literature provides the teacher with motivating material since literature faces the students with "*complex themes and fresh unexpected language*". Literature becomes the bridge that provides access to the culture of the people whose language is being studied. Literature stimulates acquisition by the provision of meaningful and memorable contexts. What is more, while students focus on a task which requires their personal responses to multiple levels of meaning, they can be accelerating their language acquisition. Lazar (2002) also claims that literature expands students' language awareness and interpretative abilities. One major benefit of using literature beyond the linguistic one is the stimulation of imagination, the development of critical abilities and the increase of emotional awareness.

However, by adopting this approach we are leaving out basic contents. What about the history and characteristics of literary movements? What about the social, political and historical background? What about text genre? And what about the relevance of an author's biography in his or her writings? Since this subject is Language and Culture adopting either of the approaches would mean leaving something out. Culture includes

art and music so the approach adopted should deal with these areas too.

Sandra Ruppert (2006) determined that the learning of art plays an important role in the development of students' capacities for critical thinking, creativity, imagination and innovation. All students need these capacities, as they are core skills and competencies of high quality 21st century education. The responsibility of the teacher is to provide students with a rich learning environment, empowering pedagogy, quality instruction, and a challenging culturally responsive curriculum among others.

Art is fundamental to education because it is fundamental to human nature and to the human being. Daniel Pink (2005 in Dobb, n.d.) writes ``*We are moving from an economy and a society built on logical, linear, computer-like capabilities of the Information Age to an economy and a society built on the inventive, empathetic, big picture capabilities of what's rising in its place, the Conceptual Age.*´´ He presents six essential aptitudes necessary for success in our world; design, story, symphony, play, empathy and meaning. Pink (ibid) moves from the six left brain directed reasoning to the six right brain directed aptitudes: not just function, but also design; not just argument, but also story; not just focus, but also symphony; not just logic, but also empathy; not just seriousness, but also play; not just accumulation, but also meaning. Pink (ibid) develops the idea by describing the needs of future students such as the capacity to find "*patterns and opportunities to create artistic and emotional beauty to craft satisfying narrative and to combine seemingly unrelated ideas into something new.*"

Studio Habits of Mind (2004) enumerates the eight cognitive dispositions of artistic thinking and practice in the visual arts. These eight thinking habits are: develop craft, engage and persist, envision, express, observe, reflect, stretch and explore and understand art world. The chart below (fig1) includes the description of the eight habits of mind developed by researchers at Harvard Zero Project.

Develop Craft
Learning to use and care for tools (e.g., viewfinders, brushes), materials (e.g., charcoal, paint). Learning artistic conventions (e.g., perspective, color mixing).

Engage & Persist
Learning to embrace problems of relevance within the art world and/or of personal importance, to develop focus and other mental states conducive to working and persevering at art tasks.

Envision
Learning to picture mentally what cannot be directly observed and imagine possible next steps in making a piece.

Express
Learning to create works that convey an idea, a feeling, or a personal meaning.

Observe
Learning to attend to visual contexts more closely than ordinary "looking" requires, and thereby to see things that otherwise might not be seen.

Reflect
Question & Explain: Learning to think and talk with others about an aspect of one's work or working process. *Evaluate:* Learning to judge one's own work and working process and the work of others in relation to standards of the: field.

Stretch & Explore
Learning to reach beyond one's capacities, to explore playfully without a preconceived plan, and to embrace the opportunity to learn from mistakes and accidents.

Understand Art World
Domain: Learning about art history and current practice.
Communities: Learning to interact as an artist with other artists (i.e., in classrooms, in local arts organizations, and across the art field) and within the broader society.

Fig. 1 Project Zero's Studio Thinking Project is funded by The J. Paul Getty Trust, the Ahmanson Foundation, and the U.S. Department of Education

Undoubtedly including art in the classroom would have positive effects on the development of academic skills, innovation skills and life skills and as a side effect language acquisition might occur. However, the main problem would be how to put into practice all this new information. Evidently the Language and Culture class could not turn into an art class or a literature class solely. There were more questions that needed to be answered: how could I help my students with the reading of "Eveline"? How was I going to put through concepts such as fragmentation, ambiguity, variety of theories, interior monologue, among others?

The first step was a teacher centred class where Modernism was presented as a movement of the first two decades of the 20th Century. Students discussed how Modernism is not just about literature so they explored the Sciences, Philosophy, Psychology, Anthropology, Painting, Music, Sculpture and Architecture of the time. Briefly, students were introduced to Darwin, Carl Marx, Albert Einstein, Mark Plank, Friedrich Nietzsche, Henri Bergson, Sigmund Freud, Carl G. Jung, Ferdinand De Saussure and their theories.

The second-class students visited a virtual art exhibition of the time. They were introduced to Picasso, Braque, Wyndham and Kandisky.Brief comments on each painting, the techniques painters used and the different characteristics of each were introduced. Students were given a glossary with the words they would need at a later stage to talk about their paintings.

On the same class students listened to Stravinsky and Schoenberg and they watched three videos: an excerpt from an interview with Arnold Schoenberg where he talks about art, a second video on Arnold Schoenberg's Three piano pieces, and a third video on Stravinsky's Rite of Spring. Next students read and discussed the story "Eveline" in class.Students also carried out research about the author: James Joyce.

However, all this would not guarantee understanding of the story and the techniques used by the author. And most important of all, this had been a traditional literature class. Something was missing, an element that would act as a bond between the story and understanding, something that would enhance language development but also academic skills and learning skills. Students were asked to prepare a painting that would show in a modernist mode what "Eveline" meant to them. They were to produce an A4 size painting or collage, water colour, or even oil. At first there was panic and complaints "I do not know how to draw", "But this is a Language and Culture class!" The following class enthusiasm had replaced fear. Enthusiastic students came up with sketches to check if their ideas were clear. Others asked if they could use other paper size for their paintings.

When all students had handed in their paintings, they were displayed in our classroom. This was the most difficult step to follow since students were not willing to show their work to their classmates. Fortunately, the comments on other students' work were always positive and encouraging, slowly fear died away once more.

So far students had developed some of the cognitive domains listed in *Studio Habits of Mind*: engage and persist, envision, express and observe. The following step in the class should foster reflection, so students were asked to describe their painting to

the other students in class. This also enhanced language acquisition since students had to be precise in the use of language to get their message across. Lexis and grammar played a central part. Fragmentation, the representation of interior monologue and paralysis together with the choice of colours or techniques were thoroughly described. The richness of the interpretations was such that the language they used had to reflect that richness, so students took risks and tried new ways of expressing themselves.

The last step was holding an art exhibition with the paintings produced. Students at the TTC were invited to visit the exhibition. When the exhibition finished students were asked to evaluate the activity and the process they had undergone. This is what they said: "to draw abstract things I had to pay attention to details I had not seen before." "Sharing was important and preparing to speak, you had time to think and look for the right words or structures", "we had our perception of the story and listening to others you got lots of variations", "As a reader you are limited, but as a creator you are not." "There were certain elements present in most paintings, such as the window, dust, the sea, the boat, but they had different meanings, or were represented in different ways". The result of the activity was: Modernism and Joyce were no longer strangers to the class. Art **and** EFL had made it possible.

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The Integration of Multiple Artistic Views to Enhance your EFL Class

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Our current reality is characterized by its complexity, ambiguity and diversification. Edgar Morin states that there is an ever-widening gap between our dissociated, divided and compartmentalized knowledge within different disciplines, and our increasingly pluridisciplinary, transversal, global and multidimensional realities and problems (Morin 1998: 13). The challenge of facing globality in education, therefore, resides in embracing complexity. Originating from the word "complexus" which means what is woven together, complexity is defined as a network of heterogeneous constituents inseparably bound together. Thus, this presupposes a paradox in itself, embracing both the one and the multiple, the whole and the parts.

In order to enable learners to apprehend this complex reality, it is necessary for education to provide students with tools to describe, decipher, contextualize and integrate the interrelated network of information, stimuli and knowledge to which they are exposed. A second challenge education faces today is the need to develop in the learners an attitude of curiosity, doubt and reflection which will ultimately lead to a personal, critical and holistic construction of their understanding of the world.

This transformation of education can only be achieved through a change in the way students perceive their surrounding reality; in other words, in a complete restructuring of "the organizing

principles of thought" (Morin op.cit.:27). The seeds of this paradigm can be traced back to the humanistic approaches that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. Williams and Burden (1997: 30) point out that "humanistic approaches emphasize the importance of the inner world of the learner and place the individual's thoughts, feelings and emotions at the forefront of all human development".

Proponents of these approaches have often resorted to a vast number of activities known as Growth Strategies developed by humanistic psychology. Such strategies enable students to focus on their inner worlds of need, feelings, concerns, interests and subsequent values, and to express these to others. (Galyean in Legutke and Thomas 1991: 37). Or in words of Moskowitz, they are intended to foster "self-discovery, introspection, self-esteem and getting in touch with the strengths and positive qualities of ourselves and others" (Ibid).

In addition, advocates of Confluent Education, with its basis in Gestalt theory, aimed to promote growth in intrapersonal awareness and interpersonal sharing as well as intellectual development. According to Perls, "it is always the whole person who is a participant in this process of involvement in contact with himself, with others and with themes using his perception, feelings, thoughts and actions (op.cit.: 44-45). This movement drew heavily on Roger's (1970) observations of interpersonal learning and self-directed change, and on the theories of self-actualization and creativity by Maslow (1977).

With their strong emphasis on a learning environment which fosters both students' inner growth and abilities to interact with others, humanistic approaches have provided educators with ways of facing our present day complexity.

Another learner-based philosophy with profound impact on the present educational paradigm shift was that of Multiple Intelligences (MI). Based on the ground-breaking work of Howard Gardner in the 1980s and 1990s, Gardner's MI theory proposes an alternative definition of intelligence consisting of a radically different view of the mind. Characterizing intelligence as modular, pluralistic and multidimensional, Gardner posits eight native "intelligences", which he calls Linguistic,

Logical/Mathematical, Spatial, Musical, Bodily/Kinesthetic, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal and Naturalist.

MI thus belongs to a group of instructional perspectives that focus on the need to recognize different learning styles and intelligences in teaching. Within this trend, educators should structure the presentation of material in a style that engages most or all of the intelligences.

Never has this approach in educational practices become more significant than in our multimedia twenty-first century. In order to meet the impact of new technologies on communication practices, the traditional concept of literacy is becoming insufficient. In response to this increase in the variety of modes and in the range of information at our fingertips, educators are exploring the concept of "mutiliteracies". A multiliterate person today is not only exposed to texts within a linguistic semiotic system. In addition, he/she should be literate in visual, auditory, gestural and spatial semiotic systems.

Within these multi-modal aspects of literary practices, visual literacy has become an important concept in the learning field today. Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) refer to this as the semiotic shift from the verbal to the visual in contemporary society and propose that educators should reconsider the meaning of "literacy". These authors further explain that "given the importance of visually displayed information in so many significant social contexts, there is an urgent need for developing adequate ways of talking and thinking about the visual" (in Heberle and Meurer 2007: 33).

Visual literacy refers to the skills used to construct and understand visual texts; that is, letting students engage in experiences to develop personal expression, aesthetic judgment and critical awareness. Jenny McDougall has identified three broad categories of visual literacy: the structural aspects, the aesthetic aspects and the ideological aspects. The first grouping corresponds to the conventions associated with the design and production of texts, the technical aspects involved and the communicative functions of the various components. The aesthetic aspects are related to the artistic qualities of beauty, originality and imagination and how they affect the potency of

the communication process. Another important aspect of visual structure is acknowledging the ideology behind imagery. This calls for an understanding that images are culturally and socially constructed (2002: 3).

One of the methods that has explored the aesthetic aspects of visual literacy is known as Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS). This method, proposed by Housen and Yenawine, develops aesthetic knowledge through the observation of works of art and the formulation of questions which allow for participation and stimulation of debates during the analysis of those artistic expressions.

A second semiotic system which should be explored is the auditory through the appreciation and response to music. Music is a unique form of human intelligence which can enhance all learning abilities. Not only does it educate the senses and have a harmonizing effect, but also it provides cognitive benefits such as spatial awareness, auditory discrimination, the understanding of whole-part relations and sequencing skills.

Therefore, it is clear that art, with its multiplicity of expressions and modalities, is an ideal means that may lead to an understanding of our multidimensional reality. For María Inés Freggiaro, the aesthetic moves further than the obvious, raises questions, sparks thoughts and the exchange of viewpoints, and allows for renewed pleasure. Every participant in a work of art (either active or passive) has the opportunity to travel through time and space, relate images, discover new ones and create a unique new world of their own. Thus the use of different groups of artistic expressions constitutes an appropriate medium to develop an aesthetic stance and enjoy the challenge of knowledge (2010: 34). The fact that art is presented in multiple modes and can provoke multiple responses and interpretations calls for new kinds of interrelated thought patterns which will prepare learners to face the challenge of our complex modern realities.

Thinking in the form of a network becomes the inevitable road to an understanding of this complex and ambiguous reality. Hence, since ambiguity and doubt foster thinking and reflection, it is the role of the teacher to design actions and teaching

practices that promote reflection, cast doubts and stimulate questions. Luis Felipe Noé points out that "in this new century things are changing. The central core is the network (…) which is multiple and disperse, with an abstract logic in itself" (in Freggiaro 2010: 34).

This network, which shows, builds and discusses the state of the world, becomes a new way of walking along the path of knowledge.

As a consequence, there is a very strong case for the integration of multiple artistic expressions within a given task in the EFL class. These integrated materials are conductive to multiple perceptions, viewpoints and questions that encourage dialogue, sharing, and intra and interpersonal learning.

What follows is a description of two integrated tasks in which different art forms become valid media to approach a given topic in the EFL context. The first task proposes a combination of a PowerPoint presentation with paintings by Van Gogh, accompanied to the music of the song "Vincent" (or "Starry, starry night") sung by Josh Groban. As a warm-up to the task, students are asked to listen to the song while they follow its lyrics, and consider what images come to their minds. Following this, the teacher works with certain vocabulary items from the song which the students are asked to join with pictograms. Almost certainly the images the song will evoke will differ from student to student, leading to a rich and varied class discussion.

A second listening proposes a closer analysis of the song including its tone, and the feelings and ideas it raises. Finally, the teacher proposes a discussion in which the students predict who they think Vincent could be and what could have happened to this character.

The following activity involves the viewing of a PowerPoint presentation which consists of a gallery of pictures by Van Gogh, accompanied by the song discussed previously. On finishing this activity, students work in pairs describing to each other the paintings they remember seeing and the feelings these evoked. The students are asked to compare the feelings they had regarding the listening of the song the first times and those they

experienced later when the song accompanied the images. Now the learners are in conditions to infer that the Vincent mentioned in the song is Vincent Van Gogh, and information about this painter can be elicited. If the students are not familiar with the painter, a short biography will be provided and read in class. Bearing in mind this additional information, the song lyrics are analyzed once again in groups, and group interpretations are read out and shared.

Two follow-up group activities are introduced. In the first case, learners are told to imagine that they are a team of publicity experts and have been asked to use one of Van Gogh's paintings to design a publicity campaign. The group will have to decide which painting to use and what product they will advertise. Next, they will have to consider either a poem, or a song or jingle that will be introduced in the advertisement. This can be done as an out-of-class activity for the sake of time constraints, and a vote for the best publicity can finally be made by class members or by external assessors such as students from other classes.

The second follow-up activity makes use of role-play. In this case, one group of students plays the roles of a group of assistants at the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam. In order to do this, the group must do some research on this painter's life and some characteristics of his art work. Another group plays the role of art students who are doing some research on this painter and decide to go to the Van Gogh Museum to gather more information for their work. This group must decide what questions to ask the museum assistants about the painter's life and work.

This integrated task is aimed at students with an upper intermediate level and would include linguistic components such as the use of simple past tense in biographies, language of description and speculation, the use of descriptive adjectives and the persuasive language typical of advertising.

The second integrated task proposed in this paper makes use of a PowerPoint presentation including photographs of swans to the music of Tchaikowsky's Swan Lake, Scene 1, a recording of "The Swan" by Saint-Saens, and a short poem by L. and P. Opie in

The lore and language of school children. As an introduction to the task, learners are first asked to label the parts of a bird in a picture, thereby introducing relevant vocabulary. Following this, the teacher asks students to work in groups, noting down the names of birds they know in their mother tongue, some of which are then translated into English on the blackboard. After this, working in the same groups students are given a number of questions to answer such as: "Which bird do you like the most?", "Which is the prettiest bird?", etc. A whole class discussion follows.

In the next stage of the class, students listen to two pieces of classical music that describe a bird. These are "The Swan" by Saint-Saens and Tchaikowsky's Swan Lake, Scene 1. As they listen, they must guess which bird they think the music refers to. After a short discussion, the students watch the PowerPoint presentation and confirm their guesses. This presentation is shown again but the second time students are asked to answer a number of questions in pairs. Most of these questions test their powers of observation. For instance some questions asked are: "How many birds can you see?", "Where are they?", "What colour are their beaks?" and "What are they doing?" A final question explores students' reactions to the music by asking: "How does the music make you feel? Happy? Sad? Tired? Angry?" Finally, the learners are asked to compare the two classical pieces they heard and consider which one was best to match the photographs in the PowerPoint.

As a follow-up activity students can be asked to find pictures of other birds and pieces of music or songs that could match those pictures. Another possible follow-up activity involves the reading and reciting of the poem "As I sat under the apple tree" by L. and P. Opie in *The lore and language of school children.*

This second integrated task is geared towards young intermediate learners and includes practice of vocabulary related to birds, the language of description, the use of superlatives, and the use of have got, can, simple present and present continuous.

Undoubtedly, in the twenty-first century we are witnesses to a deep transformation in modes of socialization, aesthetics and knowledge. Our present world is characterized by a complex

network of interwoven concepts and realities, which call for the understanding and application of new perceptive, cultural and aesthetic patterns. Education must adapt its practices to this new paradigm shift in society. To achieve such an aim, educators should promote in learners an attitude of curiosity, doubt and reflection; an integration of their fragmented knowledge and realities in the form of a personal, holistic construction; and a growth in their intrapersonal awareness and interpersonal sharing.

Art, with its multidimensional essence, offers a fertile soil for the development of an aptitude to integrate, contextualize and reflect upon our multi-modal world. The aesthetic realm is ambiguous, universal and comprehensive enough to offer materials to prepare learners to face this new challenge of knowledge. It has been the aim of this paper to present one model for the use of integrated tasks, which make use of various art forms. The combined use of such artistic expressions will offer multiple views and multiple readings that will enhance learners' understanding of the class and thus of the world around them.

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Art in Learning through a Learning Platform at High School

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1. Introduction

The technological revolution and globalization have changed our lives in significant ways, and education is not an exception. At present, new technological resources are being incorporated gradually into the education system. One of the numerous resources technology offers us is the learning platform. A learning platform constitutes a highly beneficial tool in the teaching-learning process since it poses several advantages over the traditional learning experience in the classroom such as time and space flexibility, knowledge mobility, interaction between distant participants, self-discovery learning, collaborative learning, self-assessment and development of navigational strategies, among others. The students' participation in forums, the construction of a wiki, the possibility of watching a video, the downloading of information related to the topic being studied are some examples of the multiple pedagogical tools a teacher can make use of by means of a virtual platform to aid the process of learning a language. In this way, we are not only developing our students' digital literacy, which will then be required in their future career and profession, but we are also helping enhance some aspects related to our students' affective domain. Self-esteem, various learning styles, creativity and motivation are promoted in this type of learning since we are encouraging sharing, empathy, trust, support, innovation as well as making learning more enjoyable in a collaborative learning environment. The aim of this paper is to share our experience related to a project about working with a reader through a learning platform carried out with third year students at Colegio Nacional de Monserrat. First, we are going to analyze, grounded on constructivist principles, the type of activities proposed within the wide variety the learning platform offers us; and then, we are going to refer to the influence this virtual type of learning has on affective factors.

2. Learning and e-activities

The project consisted of working with the abridged version of the reader Oliver Twist by Charles Dickens in a Moodle learning platform. One hundred thirty students, between twelve and thirteen years of age, participated in it, divided in four courses. The project was implemented from May to August. The first step involved helping students become acquainted with the procedures for this online instructional setting by explaining how to use Moodle. In this regard, having several classes in the computer laboratory was crucial at the beginning. The types of activities that we designed and selected for this learning platform are grounded on constructivist principles and thus the activities require interpretation of information, creativity and willingness to make assumptions. Constructivism claims that learning is an active process in which learners construct knowledge based on their personal understanding of learning and previous experiences (Bruner, 1966). A constructivist teaching sequence has to start with what learners already know because of their previous learning experiences and general knowledge of the world and guide the learners in establishing links between new and given information through various activities that promote "significant learning." Drawing on these principles, the e-activities were organized around six main topics: the story, the characters, the sociopolitical context of the story and the author's biography. All the activities designed exploited the various synchronous and asynchronous resources Moodle offers (Hrastinski, 2008). The tasks promote the development of different types of practice for using the foreign language with an emphasis on listening, reading and writing and two patterns of interaction: student-student and students-teachers. Initially, the resources of the Moodle virtual learning environment utilized in this project were on-line texts and uploading of files since students are familiar with these types of activities that are usually performed to assess reading comprehension. In this sense, we included tasks that asked students to complete charts, write a short paragraph or answer questions about Victorian England, the sociopolitical and historical context of the story, Charles Dickens' biography and the plot until we could make use of a wiki. Students had to construct collaboratively a different ending for the story, that is to say they had to work together to achieve a task and support each other. The forums were aimed at having students express their opinions and comment on other students' ideas. They really promoted interaction among students themselves and the

teacher, which is in line with the theoretical tenets posed by Vygotsky (1978 in Williams and Burden,1997) that claim that learning occurs through interaction with other people and that we learn a language by using it to interact meaningfully. The Vygotskian concept of mediation and Bruner's scaffolding theory played a central role in most of the activities. The role of a significant other was important not only to aid learning but also to help students develop or improve navigational skills. This was instrumented by the opening of a chat for clarifying doubts and supporting understanding of instructions and resources. The teacher and the students agreed on a day and time to be connected in the chat. The use of mails also scaffolded this e-instruction.

Other resources that were used in the design of activities were web sites and links. The opening activity in the learning platform consisted of watching the trailer of the movie based on Oliver Twist's story, downloaded from *Youtube*, and students answering what they thought the story was going to be about in a forum. This video served to introduce the project and the story, activate students' schemata about stories and set the first motivation. A link for an on-line dictionary for students to look up any word they did not know and a web site on Britain history of the BBC were also posted. The use of these links and web sites led students to use higher order thinking skills and to become independent learners. One final task on the assessment of the project was included to inquire into the learners' perceptions about the use of the learning platform and learning.

3. The Role of Affective Factors in virtual learning

When teaching a second language an essential aspect to be considered is that of affective factors which play an influential role in our learners' world. Krashen's (1981) affective filter hypothesis claims that our students' emotional state acts as an adjustable filter that freely permits or hinders the input we need to acquire a second language. By working with a learning platform in a teenagers' class, various aspects related to our students' affective domain can be improved.

The use of technology enables students to work at their own pace and in this way, feel more secure about their progress increasing their self esteem and motivation. As EFL teachers, we want our learners to acquire the language as well as to develop their potential to learn. We believe that using a learning platform can provide students with highly valuable language

experiences giving students the chance to become active learners in a one-on-one environment. It not only improves self-concept and mastery of basic skills but results into a more student-centered learning and this leads students to gain confidence in directing their own learning and in becoming autonomous learners. Thereby, students are prompted to assume more control and responsibility for their own language learning. To Wang (2005), educators should focus their efforts on the development of human values, the growth in self-awareness and in the understanding of others, the sensitivity to human feelings and emotions and the active student involvement in learning and in the way learning takes place. This is of great significance to the school where this project was carried out since, as it is a humanistic school, the work on affective factors is taken into special consideration in all the areas of learning. While working with this learning platform, we could observe that many students were very much involved in the project since they visited the virtual classroom many times and at very unusual times. They took part in the forums and wrote messages about the plot, the characters and the way they would change the ending of the story. They even uploaded Oliver Twist's photographs and pictures they collected from different movies and books. What is more, students made use of different cognitive and metacognitive strategies to fulfill the different tasks for they went through the set of activities by using the different instruments they had at their disposal, dictionaries, chat and web pages according to their own needs.

When taking motivation into consideration, it is fundamental to refer to the technical issues and what students think and feel about online learning. Some people do not feel sure about their use of computers and they can feel embarrassed while they are striving to comply with the "e-activities" (Salmon, 2002). Consequently, it is the teacher's role to help students deal with these feelings and lower students' anxiety. Particularly, in this project, some of the students knew how to handle the activities online they were required to perform. However, a considerable group of them were not used to working on certain tasks such as uploading pictures or files. They were able to do it with the help of their peers and their teachers who showed their support by sending positive messages, concentrating their corrections on meaning, and making use of verbal praise as positive reinforcers of students' productions. Davis et al (1989) developed a theory claiming that students will only accept the use of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) if they find it both useful and easy to use. That is why teachers must bear in mind that computer mediated learning should be satisfying and

pleasant for students. Consequently, students will feel confident in completing the work they have been asked to do and they will get involved and attain more control of their own learning and thus, develop greater self esteem and keep motivated.

The social aspect of this type of collaborative learning is also of a great importance. Kim (2001) points out that individuals create meaning through their interactions with each other and with the environment they live in. In this project, students were given the opportunity to work in the school computer laboratory, this was purposefully done to see how they reacted by doing the exercises in a whole-group environment. Not only the commitment of the whole group was highly significant but also the willingness to help each other; each student was in control of his/her activities but this did not stop them from trying to help the ones who were behind. Less able students could become more active participants in the class and shier students could feel free in this new environment. All the students could compare their achievements with those of their mates and in this way, their self esteem was raised and their knowledge improved. Therefore, it is evident that in this kind of computer mediated work, the student relationships were enriched as learners shared their ideas and exchanged information. The students' self confidence was increased and their stress level was lowered by the immediate responses provided by the teachers and by the comments made among the students' themselves in both the forums and wiki.

At the end of the project, students were asked to provide their opinion about the learning platform they had worked on. This was done by means of a file resource, a short text, in which students were given the chance to write their comments either in English or Spanish. Surprisingly, most of the answers were written in English. Moreover, all the comments included positive opinions about the project and the way it was developed, emphasizing the innovative aspect of the project, its usefulness in developing digital literacy, the creative aspects of the tasks and the ways of carrying them out, the freedom in time, place and pace to visit the learning platform and above all, the motivation in participating in this project. Some of the learners even added suggestions that would improve the use of the platform on a future occasion.

4. Conclusion

The world we live in has been radically transformed by advances in the field of technology which have permeated all the aspects of our daily life. As teachers, we are interested in the impact on the learning process in and out of the classroom brought about by these significant changes. As can be inferred from our students' performance, the use of a learning platform in the ELT classroom offers the chance to enrich the teaching learning process since it becomes more dynamic, appealing, creative and personal. Not only does it promote the use of language beyond the classroom but it also helps students become digitally literate and most important of all, it helps students grow in their self awareness, reflection and autonomy in a cooperative setting.

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Second Language Writing: On the Relationship between Imagination and Genre

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In the literature of second language writing the use of imagination is associated with creative and expressive writing. The term creative writing suggests imaginative tasks such as writing poetry, stories and plays. According to Harmer (2007) when teachers set up imaginative writing tasks, "the students exert themselves harder than usual to produce a greater variety of correct and appropriate language than they might in the case of more routine assignments" (Harmer, 2007:328). Needless to say, other kinds of writing, such as factual writing can have the same function (Martin, 1985).

Writing from pictures is a well-known technique for eliciting written texts in a second or foreign language, but only recently, have pictures begun to be considered from a semiotic perspective, that is to say, from the perspective of the meanings the visual images communicate. Research by scholars working in different contexts, subdisciplines and languages in different parts of the world (Ventola and Moya Guijarro, 2009) have demonstrated the importance of undertaking multisemiotic analysis of texts and visuals in today's media-oriented world.

In the field of second language learning, it has been shown that such analysis in texts in which language and image interact to tell a story can enhance the process of second language learning (Astorga, 1999, 2009). This author proposes a multimodal descriptive approach based on the work of specialists who have extrapolated visual categories from the systemic functional descriptions of English grammar (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1990).

Drawing on Halliday (1985), Kress & van Leeuwen (1990) propose that visual design, like language or other semiotic codes fulfills the following functions: it can represent patterns of experience (the ideational function), it can enact social interactions (the interpersonal function) and it can integrate the representational and interactive patterns into a meaningful whole (the textual function).

Within the ideational metafunction, the analysis of visual images is concerned with the experience of the world, realized semantically through:

- A variety of participants, e.g. *Alice* (animate), *a large mushroom* (inanimate);
- Processes, e.g. *ran* (material), *wondered* (mental), *said* (verbal) *swallowed* (behavioural), was (relational), there was (existential), and
- Circumstances, e.g. happily (how?), in a thick wood (where?), just at this moment (when?) (Astorga, 1999)

In relation to this first metafunction, for the analysis of the visual system of transitivity, Kress and Van Leeuwen (op cit) distinguish between conceptual images and presentational images.

> Conceptual images are those images that represent the meaning of a participant, its stable and visible image and define it as a member of a class. They serve to explain what things are like and are about "being". As to the relationship that these images have with the grammar of transitivity, Kress and van Leeuwen attribute to them a function akin to- but by no means identical to- existential and relational processes.

> Presentational images, in contrast, deal with actions and events; they show a particular moment in time or a particular event. With respect to the system of transitivity to which they can be related, Kress and van Leeuwen observe that they fulfill a function akin to- but by no means identical to- material, behavioural and up to a point, mental processes. The presence or absence of a setting also serves to categorize these images: the setting is not necessary in conceptual images but it is obligatory in

presentational images. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (1990) a picture of an action or interaction without a setting acquires a conceptual aspect and the more defined the setting is in conceptual images, the more the picture will blend the conceptual and the presentational (Astorga, 2009, pp: 125-126)

Following Barthes (1965), Astorga, (1999) makes the distinction between two types of text-image relations: elaboration and relay:

> Barthes (1997:39) who held the view that images are polisemous and therefore dependent on the verbal text, identified two basic types of text-image relations: elaboration and relay. In elaboration, the verbal text restates the meanings of the image or vice versa; in this case, the same meanings are communicated by the verbal code and the visual code. In relay, the verbal text extends the meanings of the image or vice versa, but in either case, word and image are in a complementary relation and new meanings are added to complete the message.

We find the concept of standard vision as proposed by Chatman (1978) useful for our descriptive purposes. Chatman (op. cit.) observes that visual readers have a standard vision when they have access to the characters and setting actually shown in pictures. This means that the possibility exists for different readers to construct the same visual image or mental representations of illustrated stories.

Our proposal to associate the concept of standard vision with the semiotic visual categories developed by Kress and Van Leeuwen (op cit) for the ideational metafunction has a pedagogic purpose. If we approach the analysis of the standard vision in terms of the conceptual and the presentational images that pictures depict, we are in better conditions to assess the learners' written text (prompted by pictures) considering the extent to which the written text accurately represents the meanings of the picture or whether the text either adds new meanings or omits others. The information we can gain from this comparison can be profitably used to provide feedback that can help learners to become aware of the meanings and

linguistic resources they have used in response to the visual stimulus.

In our analysis of the visual narratives, we have considered the different frames as representing the different sections of the schematic structure (Rothery and Stenglin, 1997) of the narratives including the orientation, the complication and the resolution. To provide feedback that is beneficial to the learners, we need to encourage them to become aware that their meanings are functionally expressed if in the orientation they introduce the characters and the setting, if in the complication they include the events that bring it about or if in the resolution they show how the problem was resolved. In synthesis, we may provide *generic feedback* in the process of teaching second language writing.

Through the corpus of narratives written by second language learners and collected for research purposes, we are going to show unedited samples (as they were written by the students including their mistakes) of text that serve to illustrate different kinds of relations between the meanings of the images and the meanings of the written narratives. Though we have already identified two kinds of relations - elaboration and relay -, we intend to focus on the type of relay that shows how learners expand, modify and construct new meanings by adding either processes, participants or circumstances and by evaluating specific situations depicted in the pictures and often by personalising those situations.

The following Learner's samples show how the written text expands or modifies the meanings of the visual images. In order to highlight this type of relay, the new meanings have been written in italics.

Learner	*Stage*	*Texts*
L1	Orientation	It was a common morning in my house. My mother was bringing the meal to the table. My father, my grandmother and my sister, were anxiously waiting to eat *the excelent lasagna* mum had just

		cooked.
L2	Orientation	The Jonas family are about to have dinner. The father, the mother, the grany and the dauther were all waiting for Kevin, the youngest, but he was _too busy watching TV_
L3	Orientation	The family is getting ready for dinner, almost the whole family is sitting around the table except for the little child who is listening to music in his bedroom. Mum is calling him to eat, _but he can't listen her shouts, he is very concentrated on his favourite song from his favourite rockband._
L4	Orientation	It is a wonderful sunny day. Mary is almost to have lunch with her little brother, her parents and her grandmother. _Everybody is cheerful and happy enjoying a great time with the people they love_
L5	Orientation	Every night my family and me get together to enjoy dinner. _We do not spend a lot of time together during the day so we take advantage of this moment to spend time as a family._ That nigh as we were about to eat, my brother was listening to the radio in another room so we had to wait for him
L6	Orientation	It was lunch time, the cook was made and _smelling perfectly_, everybody was waiting and ready to eat, However the little Tomi wasn't, he was laid on the floor _watching TV, the news were horrible for his seven years, although he watched three burglers have gone away of prison._
L7	Orientation	It was 12.30 am and everybody was sitting on the table ready for having lunch. Everybody but no my brother. As always he was watching television. "Edward come on son It is lunch time"-

		my mother said-. "I'm coming"- Edward replied. "*Listen!, I'm really fed up with you!, we are never able to have a normal lunch, because of you*"- I angrily shouted, but he didn't say a thing. (*Young people watching plenty of TV*)
L6	Complication	Suddendly the *noise of a smashed window* started off a horrendous situation.
L6	Complication	*My heart was almost breaking my chest.*
L6	Complication	"Help us, *call the police*"
L6	Resolution	Police turned up *really quickly*. They *broke into* the house with their guns and *there was a figth between the police and burgles*
L7	Resolution	*My mum always tells me this story*, *it's a good narrative, I like it.*

As it can be observed, there is enormous variation in the way the students interpret the meanings of the visual images, though we notice a common tendency: to evaluate, either positively or negatively, the events that they present as new information. We hypothesize that the added meanings are the result of the interaction of different factors: the learners lack the appropriate target language resources to provide an accurate verbalization of the semantic content presented visually; they make use of their imagination –prompted by the pictures- and simultaneously resort to their knowledge of the world.

The output that the learners produce provides useful insights into the state of their interlanguage. This means that the L2 teachers have the necessary data to provide generic feedback by encouraging the learners to look inside the sentences they have constructed, the clauses that make up the sentences and the groups that make up the clauses. For example, they may be

asked to look at the nominal groups, the verbal groups and the adverbial groups they have constructed to become aware of how these actually represent or depart from the meanings conveyed by the narrative images.

We have already acknowledged the value of pictures as they create the context that enables the L2 teachers to have some degree of control over the language the learners produce by establishing the relationship between the learners' intended meanings and actual messages. This, in turn, makes it possible for the teacher to assess the learners' written texts in positive terms rather than only consider their weaknesses.

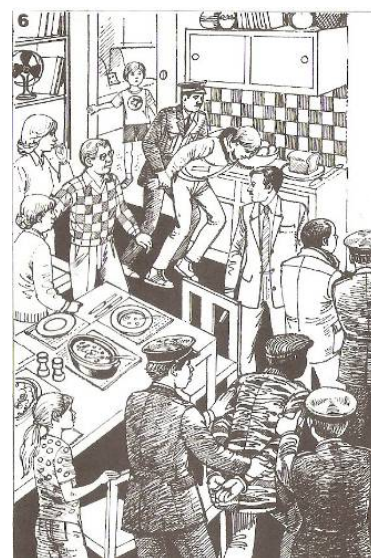The pictures below belong to the narrative image used in the samples

Frame 1

Frame 2

Frame 4

Frame 6

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Voices from the Canvas:

Language Production and Visual Texts in the EFL Classroom

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Of all of our inventions for mass communication,

pictures still speak the most universally understood language

Walt Disney

The power of pictures to convey meaning and promote the development of spoken and written language is not new in the EFL classroom. The variety of authentic texts at hand prove to be of great use as a springboard for teaching and learning activities. As resources evolve, and more technologically advanced material becomes easier to access, it is necessary that teachers attempt to trigger a deeper understanding of the material, analysing it with a keen eye, and taking into account that students are likely to absorb the audiovisual stimuli uncritically and unconsciously. In this paper, the material chosen to discuss is mostly related to art: artistic visual productions (such as paintings and posters), in order to enhance the students' cultural competence while exercising their written and spoken production in the EFL class. The project proposed here involves student participation in research activities for the production of informed texts, with sound theoretical background, but at the same time, appeals to the students' imaginative skills and abilities to empathise.

"Framing" the work

The study of the Arts is usually carried out in the mother tongue in primary schools, and in later stages of education, can be reduced to a complementary subject. Unfortunately, this neglects the fact that students need to develop strategies to interpret, understand and internalize the artistic texts they are exposed to during their lifetimes. These strategies are fundamental for the completion of their education as citizens, because literature, music, drama, paintings and film, as social discourses, aesthetically reproduce the codes, values and disvalues that create and sustain the society in which they are conceived (Verón, 1998).

The EFL classroom need not be a stranger to this, since a picture may be approached not only through its more immediate visual content (in activities involving description, for example), but through the inclusion of the study of the state and evolution of the Arts so as to contextualize a certain artistic piece. By reading, re-reading and questioning it, students can exercise their language as well as broaden their understanding of cultural identity and enhance their own, following Régine Robin's conception of identity as a dynamic process of cultural construction (Robin, 1993).

Having an idea of the background of a painting can give ample basis for the production of peculiar texts such as Arturo Pérez-Reverte's short story "La Fiel Infantería" – "The Faithful Infantry". This story, which uses first person narrator, focuses on the surrender of Breda seen through the eyes of an almost insignificant character -or at least this is what he says about himself-, who has been taken from Velazquez' painting "The Surrender of Breda". Pérez-Reverte's story gives a vivid account of an important moment after the surrender of the Dutch Army, because the Spaniards had won the Battle of Breda, and recovered the city. Characters are described by the narrative voice alluding to moments before and during the protocol ceremony of surrender shown in the canvas, paying attention to the feelings of both armies and granting life to otherwise mute characters in an art gallery.

The project proposed in this paper mirrors the mentioned short story since after thorough research on a painting's background, students are expected to produce imaginative texts borrowing the voice of a character in the picture in order to tell a story from their perspective.

Work proposal: an application of the project in the classroom

1. Getting inspired

One of the aims of this project is to investigate the context of production of a certain piece of art, so it is very much at the teacher's discretion what to concentrate on, depending on taste, inclination, or desire to focus on certain specific artistic movements[9]. Nevertheless, in any case, it is always advisable to start with renowned pieces, famous worldwide, taking into account, of course, that because of the requirements of the following exercises, it might be a good idea to have more than just one character depicted in the painting. For illustration purposes, in this paper we will refer to Pablo Picasso's "Guernica" (1937), which was used with secondary school students of intermediate level.

Students might not be art critics, but an artistic piece can be appreciated even if the eye of the beholder is untrained. According to Dustin Wax (2007), "there's no need to become an expert to have a meaningful relationship with art. All it takes is a moderate attention to detail, a little bit of patience, and a willingness to reflect on your own feelings". In his article "How to read a painting", Mr. Wax refers to the emotional responses that art can provoke, and how, by using the language, we can help channel those feelings towards something productive that can deepen our understanding of the painting and even of ourselves:

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[9] Interdisciplinarity might also be encouraged if the Art Department at school is coordinated together with this project.

> A large part of the appeal of art is emotional […] It's easy to dismiss work that upsets our notion of what art could be […] Knowing that an artist may be deliberately evoking an emotional response, it pays to take a moment and question our immediate reactions. If a work makes you angry, ask yourself why. What is it about the work that upsets you? What purpose might the artist have in upsetting you? Likewise, if your feelings are positive, why are they positive? What about the painting makes you happy? And so on — take the time to examine your own emotions in the presence of the painting. (Wax, 2007)

Students may have different attitudes towards a painting when they first look at it, and may tend to be categorical in their judgement of what they like or not. Teachers can use this data to have students explore their own reactions so as to give sound foundation for their opinions. In this way, the target language is used in a contextualized and meaningful way, while individual perspectives and emotions are catered for.

This may pave the way to a deeper analysis of art. Once the first barrier of emotions has been overcome, students are ready to face the more demanding activity of inquiring into the context of production of the pieces of art: historical periods, schools of painting, author's biography, etc. This research can take different formats: quizzes, group expositions in front of the class, webquests, and the like. This delving into the past and working with the background of a painting provides another "dimension", as its composition, choice of characters, even style, give added value to a picture that goes beyond something merely beautiful or striking.

In the case of "Guernica", students were first baffled by the images presented to them. After initial hypotheses, they were asked to research the author's life and the history of both the bombing of Guernica and the painting itself. Some of the facts that caused great impression on the students were the actual dimensions of the original piece (mural-size 3.5 x 7.8 mts), the fact that it represents a historical event contemporary to the artist, and that it was almost immediately recognised worldwide as a masterpiece.

Students were then ready to face the following stage of work.

2. Facing the Canvas and Sketching

At this stage, students are asked to scrutinize the picture itself. A detailed description of the piece can be carried out with the whole class, and both teachers and students might benefit from the fact that elements are usually carefully crafted and constructed to give a specific message or to serve a purpose; even the event represented might tell a story: What are the elements present in the painting? Which ones are somehow highlighted? Are there any confusing or hidden images? Is there any symbolism in the pictures? Are the images painted realistically or have they undergone any alteration? Alteration? What is the purpose of that alteration (if any)? Is there any particular character or element that calls your attention? Why?10

The answers to these questions, supported by the knowledge of the context of production of the painting and the author's biography, will provide students with the necessary background to make hypotheses on a specific character's feelings, ideas and words.

In the case of our experience, "Guernica" is a Cubist representation of an extremely violent situation, showing a myriad of characters facing suffering and chaos. We helped students focus on the interpretation of each image, leading them to discuss aspects such as colour –or lack of it-, the position and body language of each character and the significance of the inclusion of certain elements such as the broken sword or the candle.

This initial *reconnaissance* mission was ideal to pave the way for the next stage, which demanded an even more focused attention to detail.

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10 These questions may trigger further research into the artist's techniques and school of painting, so as to complement the information gathered before and deepen the students' knowledge of art.

3. Setting Colours, Lights and Shadows

In light of the research carried out and the descriptive analysis of the picture shown, students are now ready to select a person, animal or object from the painting in order to visualize the situation from their particular perspective.

At this point, some guidance from the teacher might be necessary, in order to activate student's imagination: How does your character feel? What happened before the event depicted in the painting? What happened after? What about the character's feelings taking into account they are in a painting at a museum facing the crowd that looks at them? What would they see throughout the years? Would they enjoy being an object admired from the distance, immortal and frozen forever?

Students should be encouraged to let their imagination run free, and brainstorm as many ideas as they can. Other good techniques would include thinking of objects or events related to their character using all the letters from the alphabet; imagining the character's family tree; outlining the conflicts and happy events in the character's life; making up the character's relatives, spouse, job, education, etc., or filling in forms with the character's personal information.

Many of the productions based on "Guernica" were highly imaginative and celebrated by the class. Students faced the challenge with such enthusiasm that they even dared to choose unusual characters: one of them imagined the past events in the "life" of the broken sword.

Once the students finished these outlines, it was time for a more demanding step.

4. Final strokes

This stage involves more careful planning from the part of the teacher. Depending on the particular group, some activities might have greater appeal than others, but, in general, students can be helped to develop their skills by building their way to fiction writing progressively, using techniques that involve

group work and pair work, before reaching individual production.

Some of the activities that could be followed at first may include having two or more characters interact with one another; role-playing; representing the situation using comic strips, puppets or masks; the production of poems using key words related to the painting or adapting the lyrics of a song to tell about the character's feelings. Visual adaptations of the picture, such as including or rearranging images or changing colours, may help trigger students' imagination as well.

Working with Quino's comic strip "La Guernica" provided an excellent starting point to discuss the extents of intertextual relationships (Genette, 1982), and about how altering canonical texts can produce certain new and interesting effects and meanings that allow new perspectives on the same situation, without diminishing the value of the original. Students examined the two versions of the painting in the comic strip, and reflected upon the significance of the rearrangement of elements.

In any case, activities like the ones we propose at this stage must reveal that students have carried out an investigation prior to their production, showing a deeper understanding of the piece that goes beyond a mere description of the events shown visually.

At this point students can be asked to give flesh and voice to the character they have selected by writing extensively about their fictional lives, considering the data already collected and the exercises previously developed.

The production based on "Guernica" ranged from short stories and journal entries, to monologues and letters. The writing process suggested by Regina Smalley et al. (2001) was followed, namely: brainstorming, planning, drafting, revising and editing. Once the texts were edited, students exchanged their works with classmates so as to have peer feedback before handing in their final version.

Varnishing and Signature

Just as the process of finding and defining one's identity is intertwined with their background and history, the identity of any text can lose its power to communicate and its relevance if taken out of context. We cannot separate a text from its situation of production, of its author's ideology, in order to fully comprehend it. Through the application of this project, we intend to provide teachers with material to work with authentic texts that might not be analysed in a regular class, but which constitute an indisputable source of information.

The study of works of art might open doors to worlds that can be explored to great benefit, not only for the English language lesson, but for the construction of general knowledge and cultural identity. By using paintings, we are giving our students the chance to question, to marvel, to take a different look at a situation, putting themselves in different shoes. Through the power of language we will be creating magic, as the canvas is then brought to life, characters acquire new voices and history is made present again.

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Catering for Different Learning Styles through Art

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Introduction:

Every class we teach, especially if we teach teenagers, can be said to be mixed ability (Tice, 1999), simply because it is made up of different individuals who bring to the class the richness of their diversity. These differences may be related to different learning styles, background knowledge, age, sex, ethnicity, different levels of maturity, different skills and talents in other areas, or different interests.

The class in which we applied different didactic units based on literature is of an intermediate level of proficiency, aiming at B1 standards. There are eighteen students working together during one weekly class, and divided into two groups for the rest of the week. On the whole, they attend five hours of English as a foreign language a week. The students are highly motivated to learn, though they differ in many aspects. We have got several students who study music and belong to an orchestra or form part of rock bands, one who loves making short films, a student whose family is Chinese, one who has lived in the USA for six months and one student who is always daydreaming while he draws in class. There are more boys than girls. The girls are shyer but studious. We applied the Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire (Reid, 1984) in order to know more about their learning preferences.

We decided to include literature with the aim of motivating them, helping them develop an appreciation for literary works, but most important was the need to include tasks aiming at different responses to literature based on their diverse learning styles. We listened to their suggestions and developed activities following them. The song "Gallow's Pole" by Led Zeppelin was suggested by one of the students when we explained the meaning of gallows and it prompted a small group to do research into the death penalty. Another student, deeply impressed by the short story "The Black Cat" by Edgar Allan Poe brought to class paintings based on Goya, and was then asked to express through his own drawings and paintings the meaning of the short story and explain it to the rest of the class.

Theoretical background:

Teachers may face a variety of learning styles within the same class. Learning styles are described by Ehrman (1996) as preferred ways of learning. They are stated as bipolar differences such as perceptual styles related to how learners use their physical senses to study (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, hands-on); cognitive styles: field dependent or field independent, intuitive or concrete sequential (according to how they handle possibilities), open or closure oriented (according to how they approach tasks) and global or analytic (in relation to how they deal with ideas). Personality types, among them extroverted or introverted, have also been considered.

Perceptual learning styles refer to the sensory channels through which "each individual best absorbs and retains new information and skills and have become known as modality strengths" (Reid, 1995:173).These modality strengths vary with age. Small children are more tactual and kinesthetic; they become visual at primary school level and auditory at the end of elementary school. Underachievers may not develop this capacity at all. However, many classes at high school level are mainly based on lectures.

Brain hemispheres: right-brain vs. left-brain functions are also referred to when addressing learning styles (Kinsella, 1995). Research started with the work of surgeon neurologists Sperry

et. al. in the 1960's, who discovered through split-brain surgery that there are important differences in the functioning of the two halves of the brain as regards information processing. The left-hemisphere seems to be more analytical, linear, logical, abstract and verbal. It helps one's ability to think rationally and objectively, it excels at mathematics, verbal encoding and decoding of speech but it ignores emotional cues. The right-hemisphere, on the other hand, is holistic. It is highly relational, global, concrete, intuitive, spatial and nonverbal. It excels at musical lyrics and melodies, uses visual images and recognizes and interprets emotional cues. However, it does not learn by specific rules and error correction, it requires exposure to patterns that help to make associations.

Cognitive learning styles can be associated with left-brain and right-brain functions if we compare field-independent (analytic) and field-sensitive (relational) learners. Field-independent learners are reflective, dislike excessive input, are better at analytical problem-solving and enjoy working independently or with a partner with a matching learning style. They prefer to set their own learning goals .Their cognitive style is also referred to as sequential, abstract and deductive.

Field-sensitive or relational learners like to work with other classmates, they deal with assignments in a trial-and-error way, are quite sensitive to the opinions and feelings of others and need activities which are appropriately modeled by the teacher and linked to their personal experiences and interests (Violand Sánchez, 1995). This style is also regarded as random, concrete and inductive (Ehrman, 1996).These learners may have problems to adjust to classes unless teachers use a flexible teaching style.

Personality traits also correlate with learning styles. Ehrman (op.cit) uses the Myers Briggs model to explain personality features as bipolar dimensions: a) extrovert-introvert, b) sensitive-intuitive, c) thinking-feeling, d) judging-perceiving. Jung (1971) stated that these functions are different in orientation, thus the perceiving function is oriented to experiencing the world (sensing and intuition types), whereas the judging functions are oriented towards making decisions and taking action in the world. Thinking types tend to be more critical, pragmatic and try to exclude subjective or illogical

criteria from their decision-making process. Feeling types make decisions based on their values, may reject analytic processing and interpersonal harmony is very important to them. As regards introversion-extroversion, they are viewed as energy coming from different directions. For introvert people, energy comes from inside, whereas for extroverts energy comes from outside and the contact with others.

This overview of different learning styles should contribute to our realization that we sometimes may need to adapt our teaching style so as to help our students once we have identified their learning strengths, as this will help us avoid academic frustration. Apart from using tests, such as the Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire (Reid, 1984), or the Style Analysis Survey (Oxford, 1993) as instruments to diagnose our learners' strengths, we can later make use of study strategies that may help each learner learn better. In this way, we may empower students to become more autonomous, personalize our teaching and avoid conflicts with our teaching style.

Implementing small group learning in heterogeneous classes may help students become aware of other learning styles and in that way they can gain other skills and stretch their own styles. A class with balanced opportunities for individual, pair and small group work may elicit multiple contributions and stimulate collaboration and team work. Finally, listening to our students' voices will help us identify their needs and interests and plan activities that include concrete experiences, concept development, practice and meaningful application and transfer.

Using Literature in the classroom:

According to Lazar (1999:3) "Literature provides wonderful source material for eliciting strong emotional responses from our students. Using literature in the classroom is a fruitful way of involving the learner as a whole person, and provides excellent opportunities for the learners to express their personal opinions, reactions and feelings".

It is often assumed that literature can transform an individual's moral life, open up their world of vicarious experience through

empathy or lead to new insights of knowledge if tackled with enthusiasm and motivation. The personal engagement involved in reading leads to a pleasurable activity which, eventually, opens up the path to the so called "education of emotions" (Gribble, 1983). However, a reevaluation of the concept of literature and its impact in second language teaching is necessary so as to acknowledge its significance as a tool to develop not only linguistic skills but artistic and cultural ones as well. Although it has not been until the last decade that literature gained more general acceptance in the field of language teaching, it is worth mentioning that, as a resource, literature has the potential to foster students' creativity and imagination.

Literature-based instruction is the type of teaching which involves the use of original narrative or expository texts as the core for experience to support students in developing literacy. This kind of instruction goes beyond the mere teaching of a text; it gives students quality and authentic material and, if properly tackled, the opportunity to become better readers, writers and thinkers.

Among other advantages like the ones mentioned before, the use of literature as a learning tool can be the departing point to discover and approach other forms of art, like visual and plastic arts, music and films, from which we can enrich and expand the learning process of the language. At the heart of many artistic productions, over time literature has been one of the most outstanding sources of inspiration for film-makers, painters and musicians. Masterpieces like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* or Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* have been developed into numerous kinds of genres ranging from comics to films, paintings and even modern video clips produced by well-known rock bands. Edgar Allan Poe's *The Raven* has taken on so many forms that it is now almost embedded in teenagers' unconscious. Even Matt Groening devoted an episode of *The Simpsons* to illustrate the most bizarre thoughts of that man pondering among the pages of that "curious volume of forgotten lore" (Allan Poe).

The use of technology through video clips, internet-based projects, online reference tools, power point presentations and

films based on literary works enable students to grasp meaning and reality in ways more akin to their world of experience, and according to the different aspects operating on their cognition (Dudeney & Hockly, 2007).

One of the advantages of literature teaching is that "it involves emotions as well as intellect" (Ur, 1999). It contributes to the learners' personal development by encouraging empathetic, critical and creative thinking and it raises awareness of universal human conflicts. It allows students to use language to communicate feelings, and in this way it allows us to incorporate affective elements in language learning, not in opposition to cognitive aspects but rather as a welcome complement. Following Arnold & Brown, stimulating positive emotions such as "self-esteem, empathy or motivation can greatly facilitate the language learning process" (1999:3).

In order to exemplify how these ideas can be put into practice with a group of teenagers, we present a didactic unit based on the short-story "The Black Cat" by Edgar Allan Poe.

Didactic Unit based on "The Black Cat" by Edgar Allan Poe:

OBJECTIVES:

-In this unit, students will:

1. Gain an appreciation of good literature by listening to the teacher read the short story.
2. Develop the four macroskills and their higher –order thinking skills by responding to Literature.
3. Show understanding of the story and express their feelings through different artistic activities.

ACTIVITITIES:

The Black Cat (by Edgar Allan Poe)

Warm-up:

1) Discuss orally what you can see in the first picture and the phrase below it.

2) Discuss. Are black cats evil in your culture?

3) Look up the following words in your dictionary:

evil – lonely – mad – clever -gallows – axe – bury – plaster – cellar

While Reading activities:

Answer the teacher's questions orally as you read the story:

a)   Why does the man begin to change and become ill?
b)   What cruel things does he do to Pluto?
c)   What happened after he hanged Pluto, the cat, from a tree?
d)   How does the shape of a cat get into the new plaster?
e)   Where does the man find a new cat? Why is he afraid of it?
f)   How and why does he kill his wife?
g)   Where do the police find the man's dead wife? How do they find her?

After Reading the story:

I) Go through the story again and put a number of key sentences in order.

II) Get in pairs and discuss if there is a moral in this story. Share your views with the rest of the class. Present it as a graffiti poster.

Tasks derived from the story:

In groups of three:

A) Reread the last three paragraphs of the story on page 9. Write a conversation between the police officers as they inspect the story-teller's house.

B) Imagine you are a journalist. Write a brief newspaper article telling about the crime. Do not forget to write a headline and to add a picture or drawing.

C) Listen to the song "Gallows Pole" by Led Zeppelin's and solve the listening activities.

Oral Presentations, in pairs or groups of three:

D) How do the gallows and idea of death by hanging develop in the story? Do some research on the date when death by hanging was abolished in England.

E) Describe the main character.

F) Summarize the plot of the story.

G) Research the biography of the author and the literary movement that influenced his work.

H) One of the students showed his classmates the paintings he produced influenced by Goya's black paintings and explained some scenes from the story.

I) Do some research about Led Zeppelin's band origin. When and where was this song presented?

Conclusion: Implications for EFL teaching

The challenge of teaching teenagers lies in the fact that they are creative, critical and make excellent learners provided they are properly challenged by teachers who know, respect and help them stretch their learning styles. Puchta & Schratz (1993:4) state

that sometimes teenagers are less motivated or present discipline problems because "teachers have missed opportunities to build bridges between what they want to teach and their students' worlds of thought and experience".

Empowering our learners to become successful in the complex task of achieving communicative competence may imply the design of activities that allow them to use their preferred learning styles and to stretch the use of others. We need a curriculum that cares for the whole learner, and that takes into account not only their cognitive side but also their physical and affective states. Stimulating different positive emotional factors can help the development of emotional literacy (Goleman, 1995), one greatly needed in our modern world. Traditionally, schools have emphasized verbal-analytic learning associated with left-brain functions. But there are students that bloom when the right hemisphere, which specializes in making relations between images, spatial and visual aids and is capable of processing and interpreting linguistic ambiguity, irony and metaphor, is addressed in class. Using literature in the classroom (Lazar, 1993) linked to other forms of art, provides a rich source of pedagogic activities that may become an invaluable tool to address the needs and interests of our different learners.

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The Case for Literature in the Language Classroom:

Learning EFL through Short Stories

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1. Introduction

Literature has been used in the language classroom for a long time. The reasons that are given for its use are cultural, linguistic and personal. In fact, literature not only motivates students but also stirs their imagination making English language learning a more enjoyable experience. This rationale for integrating literary texts into language teaching is well established, but it does not go unchallenged. In this paper, we first examine the role of literature in the language classroom and then review studies in this field. One area of investigation that seems to deserve more attention is the evaluation of the teaching of English through literature. In order to contribute to fill this gap in the research, we describe an action research project in which we explore learning English through short stories. In this project, a questionnaire was administered before and after a classroom experience in order to obtain information about the students' abilities and attitudes towards learning English through short stories. The results of the pre- and post-study questionnaires were compared in order to assess students' abilities and perceptions, draw conclusions and make suggestions for classroom applications and future research.

2. The Role of Literature in the Language Classroom

The prominence of literature in language teaching has changed throughout the years. In the early years of EFL teaching, literature was included in the curriculum. Then, with the emphasis on linguistics literature disappeared (Widdowson, 1982 in Vandrick, 2003). Over the past decades, there has been discussion regarding the use of literature in the English language class. In the sixties and seventies, there was a reaction against the use of literature due to structural approaches to language teaching with an emphasis on grammar (Martínez, 2009). The

central role of literature was carried over into English language teaching in the early part of the 20ᵗʰ century. Recently, there has been a renewed interest in literature and its value for language teaching. (Maley, 2008). Current approaches have tried to stress the importance of literature for cultural, linguistic and personal development. Billows (1961 in Maley, 2008:182), points out three reasons given for the teaching of literature: "the cultural model, the language model and the personal growth model".

First of all, teaching literature within a *cultural model* enables students to understand cultures different from their own and perceive "traditions of thought, feeling and artistic form within the heritage the literature of such cultures endows." (Carter and Long, 1991 in Maley, 2008:182). Thus, literature develops cultural awareness as it brings another culture into the classroom (Lucero et al., 2001). In the *language model*, a literary text may be used as an example of certain types of structures. In this model, literature develops language awareness as students are exposed to authentic language and a variety of registers. They can learn vocabulary and absorb grammatical patterns in the course of reading as they are exposed to the complexity of the language. The *personal growth model* stresses the enjoyment students derive form literary texts. In such a model, literature stimulates personal involvement. As the reader goes beyond the language system and becomes emotionally involved, personal growth is fostered (Lucero et al., 2001). In fact, a number of writers (e.g. McRae, 1991) have stressed the difference between *referential texts*, which are vehicles for conveying information and *representational texts*, which require the reader to re-create the world of the text. As McRae (1991:3) puts it, representational language "stimulates and uses areas of the mind, from imagination to emotion, from pleasure to pain, which referential language does not reach. Where referential language informs representational language involves." In fact, representational language brings about personal interaction between the reader and the text and between the teacher and the students.

Closely related to this contention is the argument that literature promotes critical thinking. After all, "ideas, language, readings are not cut-and-dried in their meanings; a thinking person must analyse, question, interpret, synthesize what she or he hears and reads." (Vandrick, 1996 in Vandrick, 2003:265). It is not surprising that literature fosters critical thinking skills as students react to the texts they read. In fact, practice in analysing stories with multiple meanings can help take different points of view and lead to more flexible thinking. Besides, students responding to

literature develop the important academic skill of supporting their opinions with information gained from the close reading of a text and their own experience.

This rationale for incorporating literature into language teaching has been challenged. Edmondson (1997 in Maley, 2008), for example, has argued that many of the assumptions that underlie the use of literary texts in language teaching cannot be supported. Among the arguments against the use of literature in the language class, some have maintained that literary English is not everyday or practical English. It is not the English students will be required to use. However, even if students should not be expected to speak or write in the same way, they can learn from literary models. Another concern is linguistic difficulty and the fact that literature may be too hard for students, so they may become discouraged. Obviously, teachers must be aware of their students' levels and choose appropriate texts for those levels. An additional concern raised by some is that all the class time will be taken up by literary analysis. This assumes that the focus of the language class will be the same as that of a literature class, which needs not be the case. In fact, in the language class, literature is read for enjoyment, language learning and discussion so that students can respond to texts, but not for the sake of literary analysis per se (Vandrick, 2003).

Despite the relevance of literature in the language class, there is little empirical research in this field. The work that exists tends to fall into one of three main categories: theoretical debate in which an author puts forward assertions about what literature teaching should be, practical demonstration in which an author presents practical activities based on his or her own experience using literary texts in language teaching, and empirical research which is usually small-scale and oriented to particular contexts. One area of investigation that deserves more attention is the evaluation of the teaching of English through literature (Maley, 2008). To contribute to fill this gap in the research, we carried out the action research project described below.

3. The Current Study

In this study, we explore learning English through short stories in the context of the English Language II classroom at the School of Languages, National University of Córdoba. In this context, students deal with short stories that are thematically linked to syllabus units within a content-and task-based approach to the teaching and learning process. Students are given guidelines for

short story analysis, which focus on the key aspects of the literary work, namely, subject matter and theme, plot, characters, setting, point of view, atmosphere and tone. On the basis of these guidelines, students give group oral presentations, do the necessary vocabulary work (i.e. a glossary with phrasal verbs, idiomatic expressions, collocations and relevant vocabulary); and prepare a whole class activity to be carried out after the presentation (i.e. comprehension questions, roleplay, etc.). In this project, a questionnaire was administered before and after the classroom experience described in order to obtain information about the subjects' abilities and attitudes towards learning English through short stories. Thirty-nine upper-intermediate students aged between 19 to 38 (29 female and 10 male subjects) participated in this project. Seventy per cent of these students had never been taught the steps to follow when analysing a short story. The results of the pre- and post-study questionnaires are presented and compared below.

3.1 Pre-study questionnaire

The pre-study questionnaire was administered in April 2010 to build a profile of these students in terms of their abilities and attitudes towards learning English through short stories before being given guidelines for doing so. Below are students' answers to questions about their abilities:

1. What aspects would you consider when analysing a short story?
Most students (70% of the subjects) mentioned characters as an aspect to consider; half of the students mentioned subject matter and theme (50%), and many mentioned setting (35%), and plot (30%). These aspects were followed by vocabulary (mentioned by 20% of the subjects) and author (20%). Other aspects mentioned (in order of importance) are main ideas, message, organization, kind of story, audience, style and context.

2. Please, assess your ability to do each of these tasks by ticking the right box:

	Very good	Good	Fair	Weak
a) Identifying the theme and subject matter	4%	61%	35%	0%
b) Identifying the secondary ideas	4%	61%	35%	0%
c) Identifying the organization of the text	12%	53%	35%	0%
d) Summarizing the plot	12%	53%	30%	5%
e) Paraphrasing to retell the story	10%	51%	25%	14%
f) Describing the characters	10%	53%	33%	4%
g) Describing the setting	20%	43%	30%	7%
h) Identifying the point of view	10%	49%	33%	8%
i) Describing the atmosphere and tone	6%	51%	35%	8%
j) Making a critical analysis and justifying your position	10%	49%	35%	6%
k) Using specific terminology	4%	20%	70%	6%
l) Giving oral presentations based on your analysis of a short story	6%	43%	41%	10%
m) Giving and receiving feedback on your performance	12%	50%	30%	8%

Below are students' answers to questions about their attitudes:

1. Do you believe that learning English through short stories in the Language class is:
Simple?: 23%   Relatively difficult?: 71%   Difficult?: 6%
Very difficult?: 0%

2. Why? Justify your answer.
Those students that believe that the task of learning English through short stories is relatively difficult or difficult justified their answer giving the following reasons: the subject matter and theme are not clear and are difficult to understand; the vocabulary is difficult; it is necessary to know the context in which the text was written; it requires reflection, being critical, and justifying your position; it is difficult to identify the tone and atmosphere; it is difficult to understand the main ideas and details; it is difficult to summarize and retell the story, and it is difficult to identify the different parts of the story. Those that believe that the task is simple do not justify their answer.

3.   Do you think being able to read and analyse short stories is relevant for your cultural, linguistic and personal development? Why?

All students answered this question affirmatively. Among the reasons given to justify their answers, many students mention that learning English through short stories can help them in the future when they have to translate (25% of the subjects) and/or teach (10% of the subjects). They also expressed that it can help them analyse texts (15%), that it enlarges their vocabulary (10%) and improves their critical thinking skills (10%). They also add that it helps recognize main ideas and summarize texts (5%). Other reasons given are that learning English through short stories improves reading comprehension and the ability to retell stories, and helps produce texts, discover an author's intention and study a subject.

3.2 Post-study questionnaire

The post-study questionnaire was administered in June 2010. Below are students' answers to questions about their abilities:

1. What aspects would you consider when analysing a short story?

Most students mentioned the aspects considered in the guidelines for analysing short stories they had been given, namely, characters (69% of the subjects), setting (61%), tone and atmosphere (23%), subject matter and theme (76%), plot (61%), and point of view (23%). They also mentioned vocabulary (70%) and author as relevant aspects to consider.

2. Please, assess your ability to do each of these tasks by ticking the right box:

	Very good	Good	Fair	Weak
a) Identifying the theme and subject matter	30%	47%	23%	0%
b) Identifying the secondary ideas	7%	70%	23%	0%
c) Identifying the organization of the text	23%	62%	15%	0%
d) Summarizing the plot	23%	54%	23%	0%
e) Paraphrasing to retell the story	15%	78%	7%	0%
f) Describing the characters	23%	70%	7%	0%
g) Describing the setting	23%	70%	7%	0%
h) Identifying the point of view	23%	70%	7%	0%
i) Describing the atmosphere and tone	23%	77%	0%	0%
j) Making a critical analysis and justifying your position	7%	70%	23%	0%
k) Using specific terminology	0%	70%	30%	0%
l) Giving oral presentations based on your analysis of a short story	15%	62%	23%	0%
m) Giving and receiving feedback on your performance	23%	62%	15%	0%

Below are students' answers to questions about their attitudes:

1. Do you believe that learning English through short stories in the Language class is:
Simple?: 61%   Relatively difficult?: 39%   Difficult?: 0%
Very difficult?: 0%

2. Why? Justify your answer.
Those students that believe that the task of learning English through short stories is simple justified their answer giving the following reasons: they now know what aspects to consider; they now know how to analyse a short story; discussing short stories in class helps understand texts, discover hidden messages, enlarges their vocabulary, makes them think critically and develops many reading skills. Those that still consider learning English through short stories relatively difficult justified their answer giving the following reasons: the subject matter and theme are not clear and are difficult to understand; reading short stories requires reflection, being critical and justifying

one's position; it is difficult to understand details, to summarize and retell the story; it is difficult to identify the different parts of the story.

3. Do you think being able to read and analyse short stories is relevant for your cultural, linguistic and personal development? Why?

All students answered this question affirmatively. Among the reasons given to justify their answers, many students mention that learning English through short stories can help them in the future when they have to translate (30% of the students) and/or teach (10% of the students). They also expressed that it can help them analyse texts, that it enlarges their vocabulary and improves their reading skills. They also add that it helps recognize text organization and understand main ideas.

A comparative analysis of the pre- and post-study questionnaires reveals that students' abilities and attitudes towards learning English through short stories improved after they were given guidelines for analysing short stories.

As regards their abilities to learn English through short stories, the pre-study questionnaire reveals that although several students were aware of some of the aspects to consider when analysing a short story (i.e. characters, subject matter and theme, setting and plot), they were not aware of others (e.g. point of view, atmosphere and tone), and very few students were aware of the possibilities for language development, such as enlarging their vocabulary, afforded by short stories. In contrast, the post-study questionnaire shows that, after being given guidelines for analysing short stories, most students were aware of the relevant aspects to consider to learn English through short stories. In addition, most of them pointed out the opportunity to learn vocabulary offered by short stories. When students assessed their abilities to learn English through short stories, the pre-study questionnaire demonstrates that, although many students consider their abilities to be good or very good, a significant number of students consider their abilities to be fair and even weak. The post-study questionnaire, on the other hand, shows that most students consider their abilities to be good or very good. A few students still consider their abilities to be fair but none of them regards their abilities as weak.

In terms of students' attitudes towards learning English through short stories, the pre-study questionnaire shows that most

students believe the task of reading short stories in the English class is relatively difficult whereas, in the post-study questionnaire, most of them see the task as simple. With regard to how relevant students think being able to learn English through short stories is for their cultural, linguistic and personal development, they consider this ability as important in both the pre- and post-study questionnaires, mainly on account of the fact that it can help them in the future when they become teachers and/or translators.

These results, which show improvements in students' perceptions of their abilities and attitudes towards learning English through short stories after instruction, have important pedagogical implications. First, teachers that often find using literature in the English language class a daunting task should bear in mind that no previous experience in literature is necessary to be able to use short stories. Teachers need not be literature majors and, therefore, should not feel ill-equipped to accept this challenge. In fact, literature in the language class is not taught as literature per se but to facilitate language learning. Second, students should be encouraged to learn English through short stories in order to improve their cultural, linguistic and personal awareness.

4. Conclusion

The results of this classroom experience reveal that learning English through short stories is possible in the context of our educational institution. One of the limitations of this study is that it focuses on university students' abilities and attitudes. However, literature can be used at all levels. While the focus of this paper has been on university students, much of what is said also applies to younger students at other levels. Therefore, this rationale could be adapted to other EFL settings.

Research done to date has given insights into learning English through short stories. As regards future directions, the following areas seem to be of particular interest: the opportunities for cultural, linguistic and personal development offered by oral literature and the genre of story-telling as well as reading literary texts aloud; and the length and linguistic difficulty of literary texts, which have always been a major problem. Little work has been done on using original texts. While abridged literature is an option, there are now readers written as originals for EFL students, whose effects would be worth investigating (Maley, 2008).

We have traced the renewed interest in literature as a source of input to language learning offering a rationale for including it in the language classroom. It is our contention that literature always fuels cultural awareness as it lends itself to exploring the similarities and differences between one's own and other cultures. It also fosters linguistic and personal awareness. It is then our intention to encourage both teachers and students to exploit the benefits of using short stories to make language learning a pleasurable experience.

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Want Them Creative and Critical?

Be Creative and Critical!

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Introduction

We nurture creativity in the EFL classroom because it is useful and fun, yet, it is not sufficient in itself. When it is used together with critical skills, it fosters alert participation and memorable learning. Since our imagination is a powerful –though frequently neglected– learning tool, it is crucial that we rethink our teaching practice from a more balanced perspective of our students' intellectual capacities (Egan, 1986:34). Advanced EFL students are no exception; they acquire more relevant language and thinking skills when taught how to use higher order skills alongside their imagination from a creative and critical stance.

In the past, particularly in Western cultures, the notion that well-developed individuals were those capable of rational, logical thinking –along the lines of mathematicians, scientists and other specialists of our culture– prevailed in the educational system. Philosophers like Cassirer, Goodman and Langer radically challenged these ideas on the grounds that putting logic above everything else is excessively restrictive and that humans are able to use a wide number of symbolic competencies that reach far beyond the scientific garments of logic and language (Gardner; 1994, 25-27).

Art involves emotions, says Gardner, and these function in a **cognitive** way, as mental activity that involves the use and transformation of diverse symbols which can expressively or metaphorically transmit subtle meanings. It is then reasonable to assume that just as individuals need instruction to learn how to read and write, they will benefit from instruction when learning to 'read' and 'write' the different languages of art (1994, 29-31). Eric Jensen (2005:55) points out that "learning happens in many complex layers", and that emotion is "one of the most important regulators of learning and memory".

Foreign language teaching has for years been based on mere text, but we now know that learners certainly see this as increasingly de-motivating. Instead, they find materials most captivating and memorable when **multisensory activities** are used, that is, two or more sensory strategies combined to take in or to express information. As learners mix and match the channels through which they access materials, they make learning richer and more varied. Activities that harness different senses allow us a close contact with artistic manifestations that can fruitfully be used in the classroom. Borek and Thompson (2003) state that though people of all ages gather information through their senses, multisensory learning has more frequently been used with children, neglecting teenagers and adults. The authors invite "everyone who leads students in learning to explore new frontiers of sensory involvement in their classroom. Let us boldly go where only toddlers have gone before us." Moreover, the research team of Édouard Gentaz of Grenoble, France, (2009) showed that "the sense of touch allows us to make a better connection between sight and hearing and therefore helps adults to learn to read." They have proved that using the hands (tactile-kinesthetic sense) plays a "cementing" role between sight and hearing, favoring the connection between the senses.

We cannot, however, tip the scales to the other end and embrace artistic expressions to the detriment of logical thinking. A balanced approach between the two seems to be the answer. Indeed, to look at issues from different points of view, to imagine alternative scenarios, to find other relevant information, to determine the worth of arguments and ideas, to draw conclusions about complex claims, to construct and select the best of several alternatives, one has to be imaginative and creative (Fisher, 2001:11-13). If our students are to become critical thinkers they must be both skilled and creative thinkers. For this, the lower order levels of reasoning will not suffice. Bloom's Taxonomy of learning objectives shows us that once learners get passed the 'basic' cognitive skills (knowledge, comprehension and application), it is crucial for them to move on to the **higher order skills** (analysis, synthesis and evaluation). Nessel & Graham argue that "effective teachers actively seek ways of making high level thinking a regular part of their students' classroom work." And they add that "the key to increasing thinking capacity is to vary the purposes for thinking in ways that are appropriately challenging […]" (2007:6-8).

As teachers, we produce creative activities using different resources: texts, drawings, jokes, songs, poems, videos and the like. For this paper we have chosen to focus on short stories and the work we regularly do in our Language III class at the University of La Pampa. We believe that apart from being an appealing source of extra reading, stories make an undeniable contribution to the students' language, culture and affective areas. Martin E. Pedersen considers that "a simple narrative will always be the cornerstone of the art of teaching", and he adds: "stories educate, illustrate, enlighten and inspire. They give relief from the routine and stimulate the mind. They are a great motivator for teachers as well as for students" (1995: 2,9). Collin Davis, for his part, claims that systematic extensive reading "will make students more positive about reading, improve their overall comprehension skills, and give them a wider passive and active vocabulary" (in Harmer, 2001: 204).

However, the conventional, verbal-only approach often used to deal with stories in some advanced EFL courses and at teacher training level tends to undermine such benefits. Extensive short story reading in those contexts has been traditionally based on comprehension and literary analysis –setting, characters, plot, structure, style–, repeatedly overlooking the value of creativeness and discernment. According to Durant & Fabb (1990:168), pleasure in literature arises in the brain in different ways, such as the acknowledged joy of reading itself, making contact with pleasurable thoughts, or "as a by-product of interpretive activity." It is our understanding that we need to recover this aesthetic pleasure as well as the varied opportunities stories offer to stimulate the senses, to awaken creativity and critical awareness while doing student-driven tasks.

In sum, we aim to show that the use of intellectually challenging and motivating multi-sensory activities applied to short stories as artistic expressions will optimise thinking and resourcefulness as well as foster productive and autonomous learning habits.

Stories in Action

We will illustrate our exposition with activities that we have already tried out in class and have promoted rich personal responses that were both imaginative and critical. In general, we favour an initial individual brainstorming period and soon resort to different strategies for group division to foster collaborative work for the rest of the tasks. Nessel & Graham write "most high-level thinking activities can be accomplished by students

working alone, but individual work is ordinarily not as desirable as collaborative work" (2007:8). As will be seen in the examples, we seek to widen the range of sensory input, to challenge students into logical reasoning, and to promote creative transference to new contexts.

Some of the tasks we have used are as follows:

1. As warm-up and to retrieve the students' schemata, give each group a thick colour string that one student at a time must slowly wind around their forefinger as they speak about their personal experience on a theme in the story. (E.g.: *In the Silence* –tell about your fears.)

2. Group division with cards of different colours and shapes, or representing elements in the story. (E.g.: *The Murderer* – inventions; *The Duchess and the Jeweller* –animals.)

3. Locate on the map the different places mentioned in the story (E.g.: *The Duchess and the Jeweller* –Piccadilly Circus, Mayfair, Green Park, Saville Row, Bond Street on the map of London.)

4. Categorize, illustrate and arrange information from the story into a time line, chart, or other graphic organizer with different headings. (E.g.: *An Ideal family* –family conflicts; *A&P* –characters and social background). First share in groups, and then report to class. Some variants we used are:

   a. <u>Relay Race</u>: reproduce the chart on the board where a member from each group –using different colour markers– races to write down one idea at a time, returns to seat and passes the marker over to the next player. The group who writes more relevant ideas wins a prize. (E.g.: *The Lone Pilgrim* –main character and her relationship with friends, work, and love.)

   b. Student 1 from each group moves to another group to report on a given section of the organizer, after 5 minutes, students 2 shift to another group to report on a second section, and so on. (E.g.: *The Country Husband* –significant events in 5 scenes of the story.)

5. Infer, compare and contrast character traits and behaviours. (E.g.: *Weekend* –Martha and Martin's roles in marriage, weaknesses, views on money, work, guilt.)

6. "<u>Who said it?</u>": students are given quote cards from the story. They must guess which character said it and then join other students with quotes by the same character. The groups must decide and justify which of the different subthemes in a chart the quotes belong to. (E.g.: *The Boss*)

7. Find references in the story about key words written on colour cards to a background of brisk classical music. Every 5 minutes, the music stops, each group passes their card over

to the next one and starts working on the new key word. When the cycle is completed, the groups share notes in class discussion. (E.g.: *The Murderer* –music, killing, technology, noise, the prisoner.)

8. Identify and discuss comparisons and metaphors and explain their meaning in the story. (E.g.: *The Duchess and the Jeweller* –animals and objects the characters are compared with: peacock, elephant, hog, camel, horse, parasol, and wave.) Then transfer these figures of speech to a description of someone you know making an analogy with something else.

9. Design a map on a transparency, using the words/phrases given to establish cause-effect relationships. The students share their OHT and explain their web to the class. (E.g.: *Man and Daughter in the Cold* –Ethan and his daughter, his illness, his middle-aged crisis.)

10. Critique a character's contradictory traits, state of mind, point of view or moral dilemma. (E.g.: *The Bystander* –Mrs Ingram's plans and inaction; *The Sound Machine* –Mr Klausner's possible madness; *The Murderer* –Albert Brock's struggle against dehumanizing use of technology.)

11. Place yourself at a conflicting point in the story and call a friend to ask for help. Both weigh various alternative actions in order to select the most appropriate. (E.g.: *The Country Husband* –Francis after the plane crash, Julia after Francis' incident with their neighbour.)

12. Role play an imaginary conversation between two characters. (E.g.: *The Duchess and the Jeweller* –the Jeweller meets Diana, the Duke discovers his wife is gambling and questions her.)

13. Role play a law suit. (E.g.: *The Boss* –Miss Posen sues the company for her dismissal)

14. Imagine you are a character in a story: defend or attack a claim, respecting that character's point of view and his/her personality traits, in a speech or an essay. (E.g.: *The Murderer* –Albert Brock criticizes a machine, or The Doctor defends one.)

15. Represent information in a new way: write a letter to the Editor of the local paper, justifying your behavior during a situation in the story. (E.g.: *The Bystander* –Mrs. Ingram defends her act of bravery during the robbery; *The Murderer* –Brock questions the imposition of technology)

16. Transfer information to a game. (E.g.: *The Gift of the Magi* – The Gift: a board game with pictures of presents and cards with people's profiles in which students must provide a justification for giving a specific present to a specific person. The other players can accept or reject the reasons.)

17. Connect what is learned on one occasion to what was learned on another. Make up a conversation between characters of

different stories. Observe different degrees of informality depending on age, social stance, situation of each character as presented in the story.

18. Blog participation: the students post opinions in our blog and comment on other contributions http://lenguainglesa3-gra-clem.blogspot.com (E.g.: *In the silence* –what is the silence for you, compare it with something else; what kind of music/songs would you choose to break silence.)

As way of illustration we will look at the work we did with the short story by Ray Bradbury, "*Marionettes, Inc.*", from the syllabus unit **Love your Friends, Enjoy your Enemies**. In this story we combined auditory, visual, kinaesthetic, higher-order and task-based activities: a) In groups of 3-4, students produce a synthesis of an assigned subtheme of the story –friendship, truths & lies, etc. – on a shaped paper for 15 minutes. They then report to the class, and ideas, examples and opinions are discussed. Finally, using the shaped papers with their notes, they make a large poster that shows the 'big picture', as in the figure. b) Next, in groups of 7-8 the students engage in a debate on the question: "Can you keep on trusting a friend after s/he confesses s/he's lying to her/his spouse?" Consider the situation in the story and others you know of. Half the group argues in favour, the other against. Opinions must be justified. Time for brainstorming is allowed. c) Rumour has it: the 1st student of each group reads a short text on friendship provided by the teachers. S/he whispers it to the 2nd student who repeats it to the following one, and so on. The last student writes it down. Each of these last versions is compared to the original one. Finally, d) Robot Prototype: each group brainstorms a project for a new robot, with unusual benefits and innovations. They design the prototype. At home, each group

prepares a 3-minute power point presentation to advertise their model robot to the company's Board of Directors the following class, anticipating possible criticism on weak points. The Board of Directors brainstorms a set of rules and/or an evaluation grid
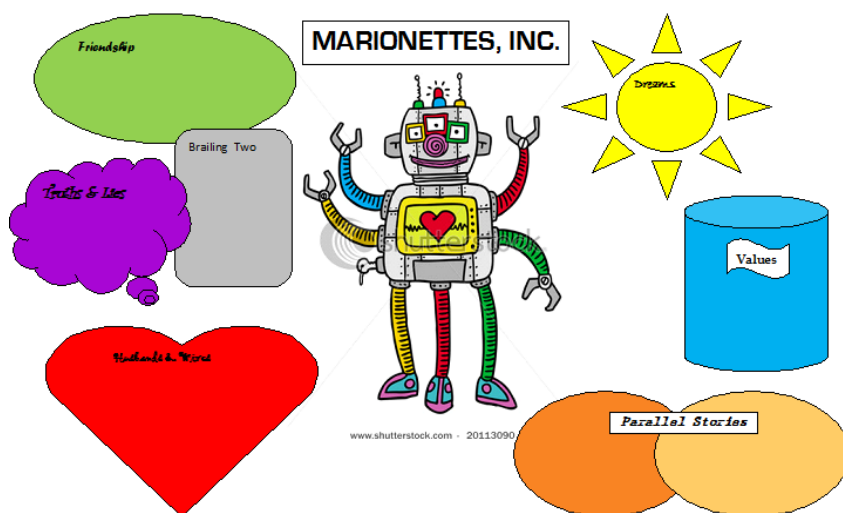
with rubrics for objective assessment of the presentations. They vote the best design.

Conclusion

If we want our students to grow as independent thinkers and to develop autonomous learning habits, while they raise their creative capacity, it is critical that we move away from class models based on structured, verbal-only, lower-order thinking skills. Nessel & Graham stress that students "need to represent their learning in interesting and creative ways that enhance their comprehension and retention" (2007:12). Indeed, learners develop richer learning, with more autonomous, creative and critical abilities, if we discourage unreflective thinking and stimulate their imagination by teaching across the senses and delivering thought-provoking tasks. It certainly demands hard work and creativity, since we must put aside conventional, ready-made activities. To lead our students' imagination into constructive relevant action, such as the expression and production of fresh ideas, we must encourage learners to plunge into exciting mental adventures that allow them to learn by creating while developing a keen insight into new ways of understanding and experiencing reality.

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Art and CALL: Can They Be Blended?

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As EFL teachers, we should take advantage of the artistic resources and technological advances available and use them to complement our classes. These resources promote dynamism, creativity, motivation and cultural awareness and they help students develop creative and cognitive skills. In this paper we describe how Moodle, a learning platform, can be used to help our Language I students at the School of Languages learn through their senses by incorporating online activities which use different artistic forms.

Introduction

'Art is all around', the saying goes and we could also add, 'so is technology'. Both of them can be useful resources to complement and help foreign language learning. On the one hand, language and art are involved in the development of abstract thoughts, creativity, personal experiences and personal interests (Moore et al., 1994). On the other hand, the introduction of Information Technology (IT) in the field of education and the rapidly growing advances in Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) have led to novel and multiple ways in which language teaching and learning can be carried out (Beatty, 2003:1). Both art and technology offer a number of opportunities for students of EFL to interact and work with the language: they change the pace of learning, they are intrinsically motivating, they help students be in contact with the real world and they help students develop creative and cognitive skills. As teachers and researchers of a foreign language, we have to take advantage of these resources and try to find the way to use the artistic forms and technological aids

available in our working environment to make our classes more efficient and motivating. Thus, the aim of this paper is to describe how Moodle, a learning platform, can be used as a means of helping students learn through their senses by incorporating online activities which use artistic forms such as cartoons, comic strips, songs and movies.

Theoretical Background

Art

Students' needs, likes and preferences should not be ignored when planning a course. Giroux & Simon (1989) raise important questions about 'the relevance of everyday life, student voice and the investment of meaning and pleasure that structure and anchor the why and how of learning' (221) and they also argue for the pedagogical value of popular culture. As students learn through their senses, art is the perfect resource that teachers can make use of to help them acquire a foreign language in a motivating and appealing way. "In its many forms art presents fantastic opportunities for discussion, focused language work and skills-based activities" ("Art in the classroom", para 1). In order to be motivated to learn, students need to see the personal benefits and life relevancy in what they are taught in the classroom, so teachers should aim at motivating students through the learning materials selected for in-classroom and out-of classroom activities.

Different pieces of art such as cartoons, comic strips, songs and films can help create a motivating learning experience. The use of popular culture, such as movies and songs, serves as a stimulus to motivate English language learning because through them students get familiar with the lifestyle, values, and ideas of the target culture. If we incorporate television, movies, music, magazines, comics and the Internet, which are a major part of the lives of youngsters, to the teaching and learning environment, we are providing students with information and resources which are relevant, enjoyable and meaningful for them (Cheung, 2001).

Research has shown that it is advisable to use movies in the language classrooms because they are widely accepted by students, they are usually easy to have access to, and they are also motivating for students: 'commercial movies and highly stimulating music, which are seldom used in the traditional classroom, can fulfill the students' psychological and social needs, and evoke their affective emotion and imagination' (Cheung, 2001:58). 'Movies may be a valuable source of L2 aural input in the EFL context, where there may be relatively few opportunities to improve L2 listening skills' (Webb & Rodgers, 2009). As regards songs, Domoney and Harris (1993) claim that 'more time and attention to pop music in an English curriculum would increase students' motivation because classroom activities would use *their* knowledge, *their* music, and *their* language' (p. 235).

CALL

With the introduction of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and the Internet major changes have occurred in different areas of society including education. In fact, in the 1980s, the use of different educational technologies led to the development of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), a term coined by the interested participants in the 1983 TESOL convention in Toronto. Beatty (2003), one of the experts in the field, defines CALL as 'any process in which a learner uses a computer and, as a result, improves his or her languages' (7) whereas Chapelle (2005), another leading authority on computer-assisted language instruction, defines CALL as 'the broad range of activities associated with technology and language learning' (in Brown, 2007:200).

Several authors have compared the impact of current innovations in electronic publishing and multimedia materials development with the revolution caused when books changed the nature of information and knowledge established by the illuminated manuscripts (Beatty, 2003:45). Designing CALL materials is not an easy task for it includes not only issues of materials design and technologies but also pedagogical theories and modes of instruction (Beatty, 2003:8). The author states that although it is unlikely to find learning materials that adhere to

one specific design, CALL materials have moved from a behaviourist instructional design to a constructivist design (16). Former CALL materials used many features of behaviourism and its model of programmed instruction such as:

- the statement of the purpose of the program or task
- the use of instructional steps and rules in the form of drills such as multiple choice questions
- the use of positive reinforcement through text, points, images, audio, and/ or video
- a marks system for each mark task, i.e. learners' motivation stems from extrinsic rewards such as points or scores
- the use of repetitions of key parts of the programme or remedial work

Thanks to advances in ICT, it has been possible to introduce constructivist features such as:

- the organization of hypertext, hypermedia and multimedia
- problem-solving activities such as online puzzles or games
- Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) which provides different opportunities for collaboration and negotiation

Regardless of the approach to learning materials used, research has proved that computers are needed in the language classroom and that CALL "can substantially improve achievement as compared with traditional instruction" (Meich, Nave & Mosteller, 1996 in Beatty, 2003). In fact, whereas early research on CALL focused on whether or not computers should be used in the classroom for the learning of a language, current research is now directed to "how computers should be used and for what purposes" (Beatty, 2003:14). It is our task as EFL teachers to discover how to use the technological aids available in our teaching environment to help our students interact and work with the foreign language.

Using Moodle to Learn through the Senses

The School of Languages, U.N.C. has two learning platforms available at the moment of writing this work: e-educativa and Moodle. *Since Moodle offers more features and resources, we set about to use this platform to design activities in which art is present.*

Moodle is a free software package for producing Internet-based courses and web sites. Moodle was created in 2002 by Martin Dougiamas, a WebCT administrator at Curtin University, Australia, who initially designed the learning environment as his PhD dissertation. Dougiamas is now the Lead Developer at Moodle Pty Ltd, Perth. It is a global development project designed to support a social constructionist framework of education. Dougiamas states that the design and development of Moodle is guided by the social constructionist pedagogy. However, because of the possibilities of creating drilling activities and providing positive reinforcement, it can also be stated that Moodle is based on the behaviourist model design. At the moment, Moodle has 51,945 registered sites with 36,445,025 users and it is being used in 214 countries. The site with the most users is The Open University Virtual Learning Environment with 651,727 courses (Dougiamas, Moodle Statistics). Moodle has useful resources (insert a label, link to a website, link to a file) and activities (glossary, survey, matching, multiple choice, true or false, cloze, online text, wiki, forum) which can be used to design different online activities which may make use of artistic resources such as comics, movies and songs. In fact, in the case of the Moodle virtual platform used as a complementary tool for Language I the resources 'insert a label', 'link to a website' and the activities 'close' and 'true and false' were used to teach English trough three artistic forms: cartoons, a song and a movie trailer.

Cartoons

Cartoons can be great tools for language teaching. In fact, their illustrative function, the strength of their images and the power of their messages can be really motivating for students. Moreover, since cartoons combine visual images with different figures of speech such as metaphor, simile, hyperbole, satire, and

irony students can make use of different strategies to break the language barrier and figure out the cartoon message. Because of these reasons, we have included different cartoons throughout the "Language I" platform to illustrate the different units, to amuse our students or to challenge them to understand the message behind the picture. For example, in the section 'Video Games' of the unit 'Technology', students come across a cleverly designed cartoon that can only be correctly understood if the pay attention not only to the caption but also to the picture (the caption states that the computer went blank because it was losing the game but actually it is its user the one who unplugged it!). Something similar occurs with the cartoon used to illustrate the subtopic 'Derelict Houses' of the unit 'Housing' since the 'For Sale' sign has an important small print. The cartoon on 'Halloween' which is a subtopic of the unit 'Nationalities and Celebrations' uses a play upon words for it shows a witch flying on her broom and saying 'Don't drink and fly'. Finally, the cartoon used for the unit 'Money and Success' clearly illustrates the set expression 'climb/step up the ladder of success' for it shows a woman who has just made it as assistant supervisor on a ladder.

Song: *Money* (1972) by John Kander and Fred Ebb

In the section devoted to the unit 'Money and Success' in the virtual platform, we propose an activity in which students work with the song 'Money' composed by the American songwriting team Kander and Ebb. The song is part of a musical called 'Cabaret' and although it became famous in the 1970s, it is catchy and students enjoy listening to it while watching the whole scene on the screen. Since the song is part of a musical, students can reach a deeper understanding by listening to the lyrics and watching Liza Minnelli and Joe Grey on stage at the same time because images contribute to the meaning. Moreover, by getting acquainted with the song, students can understand why some articles mention the cliché 'Money makes the world go round' or why the name Liza Minelli is associated with money.

Before watching the musical, students are asked to reflect on the value they assign to money in their lives through some thought-

provoking questions such as *How important is money in your life?* Then, by using a link to you tube, students are invited to watch the scene and listen to the song to see how important money is for the song writer and compare and contrast the ideas present in the song with their own view on the matter. After that, students are asked to listen for detailed information for they have to fill in the blanks with the appropriate word or choose the correct word. In fact, the Moodle activities 'multiple choice' and 'short answer' were combined depending on the difficulty of the term or the pace at which the term was pronounced by the singers. These behaviourist activities are very useful for they help develop students' listening for detailed information skills, they provide positive reinforcement and they give students the possibility of trying again in case the answer is incorrect. Students are also encouraged to use the online dictionaries to look up the meaning of unknown words in the lyrics. In the following activity, students are invited to participate in a forum and post their opinions and reflections on the importance of money, the role it plays in people's lives and their ideas on what the world would be like if money did not exist.

Movie Trailer: *The Holiday* (2006) by Nancy Meyers.

The movie 'The Holiday' directed by Nance Meyers and starring Cameron Diaz, Kate Winslet and Jude Law has proved very instrumental when teaching subtopics of the unit 'Housing' such as 'Types of Dwellings', 'Parts of a House' and 'Country vs City Life'. In fact, this 2006 blockbuster features two completely different types of houses (Amanda's villa and Iris' cottage) in two contrasting settings a posh neighborhood in L.A. and a hamlet in Surrey. When the two women decide to swap houses for the holiday break, the clash between country and city life also becomes apparent. Usually, the very first part of the film is displayed in class so as to bring up controversial topics such as small vs big house or city vs country life. However, the class period is not usually enough to deal with specific language areas or to watch some scenes again and that is why uploading the official movie trailer on Moodle and designing follow-up activities has been very beneficial. In fact, with the resource 'link

to a file' we imported the trailer to the platform and right below the video we designed true/false activities to check students' understanding of the trailer and of specific words and expressions used. Finally, we opened a forum so that students discuss which house (Amanda's or Iris') they would rather live in.

Conclusion

As language teachers and researchers, we should bear in mind that in order for learning to take place, we need to acquire the qualifications needed to be capable of creating a learning environment where students feel at ease and are encouraged to engage in their learning process. To achieve this, we need to learn to make use of the tools we have available while applying our pedagogical and methodological knowledge. *The aim of our paper was to show that it is possible to bring artistic and technological resources together in order to make language learning more motivating and appealing for our students. By designing behaviourist and constructivist online activities using different kinds of art such as movies, cartoons and songs on our English Language I virtual platform, we managed to create a learning environment where students are encouraged to engage their senses, emotions and imagination.* After having read the paper we hope that if we ask again: Art and CALL: Can they be blended? You will answer: Of course they can! It is the perfect match!

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Juggling Authenticity and Intelligibility in Text selection for Intercomprehension Development

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This paper addresses the issues involved in selecting texts for a course that aims at the simultaneous development of reading comprehension skills in three Germanic languages: Dutch, English and German. The course designer at the stage of text selection is seen as a juggler, in that the task s/he is involved in comprises a multiplicity of variables that s/he needs to give simultaneous attention to. The paper discusses those variables and their implications.

The materials designed are the result of an ongoing research project on the development of intercomprehension in Germanic languages carried out at the Facultad de Lenguas, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba[11]. The materials are for a course for Spanish speakers with basic knowledge of English, a language that serves as a bridge for the acquisition of reading comprehension in Dutch and German. The selection of texts for these materials involved several stages and issues that are described below.

The first stage of the design process

This stage of the materials development process involved collecting texts of varied lengths and genres in the three Germanic languages, on topics which we thought would appeal to our prospective students. They are Spanish-speaking adults with basic knowledge of English (Common European Framework

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Levels A1 or A2). Subject specificity is not a relevant criterion in our context, as the target groups are heterogeneous in terms of field of work or study. We came up with this possible list of content areas: arts (literature, films, painting, sculpture, etc.) whose value lies in several aspects that facilitate comprehension and which will be discussed later; other cultural, geographical and historical facts related to the countries where the three target languages are spoken, and miscellaneous topics.

We built a text bank by searching in varied sources. We found them in a variety of lengths, text types and genres. A grid was designed for managing the text bank (see Appendix A), and for facilitating the text selection. Authentic texts, as defined by Alderson & Urquhart (1984, p. 198) were collected and data about them were recorded on the grid.

So far, no *toss juggling* of varied selection and grading criteria had been necessary. Building the bank of texts had been a fairly straightforward matter, which simply had meant spending the right amount of time searching for texts in the right sources. However, when the time came for actually using the texts to design each task sheet -each of which required at least three texts (one in each language)- we found we needed to start *juggling* a multiplicity of variables that had to be given simultaneous attention. In the next section we discuss those variables.

Text selection: a *juggling* act

As a rule, we adopted the criteria proposed by McGrath (2002: 106) for the selection of authentic texts: a) relevance, b) the intrinsic interest of the topic, c) linguistic demands, d) cognitive demands (familiarity, degree of abstractness, etc.), e) logistical considerations (length, etc.), f) quality (as a model of use, which turned out to be a problematic issue with texts downloaded from the Internet) and g) exploitability. However, as stated above, there were several competing variables we needed to attend to. First and foremost, there was the strain between authenticity and intelligibility. We had agreed that we would use authentic texts since they provide more natural language.

However, we found that we needed to make some pedagogical adjustments to make the texts more accessible to the learners and to our objectives. Yet, we decided to keep their original structure and visual appearance, and we were careful not to alter the text cohesion and coherence (Wilke, Villanueva de Debat & Helale, 2010). In this sense, one very important *juggling prop* we needed to consider was text length. Most genuine texts that we found were simply too long to be manageable enough for worksheets that were designed for an 80 minute period and for students with no or scarce knowledge of the target languages. Therefore, a very frequent type of adjustment made to the texts was shortening. Including only extracts from the original texts was not felt to diminish from their authenticity in that space constraint and is an inevitable feature of reading materials for most purposes.

Another variable we needed to juggle with was linguistic complexity. The three levels of intelligibility proposed by Reissner (2007) proved to be a helpful tool to determine difficulty in this respect. In the author´s view, texts at level one facilitate intercomprehension thanks to the high occurrence of transparent lexical items (e.g. international and pangermanic terms that are familiar to the students through English) and of simple syntactic structures (SVO) as well as the absence of lexical or grammatical elements specific of a given language. In addition, the text itself has a self-explanatory force. Texts at level two require the inference of lexical correlations among the three languages at the level of graphemic and grapho-phonemic regularities (e.g. EN *hundred*, Du *honderdt*; Ger *hundert*) and at this level syntactic structures are more complex. The third level requires more sophisticated knowledge of the correspondence among languages.

The concept of the *Seven Thieves* (Klein & Stegmann, 2000), which is based on the premise that "no foreign language is totally unknown territory" (Eurocom)[12], also provided a basis for the selection and organization of the texts. The thieves, which are transference strategies, are the following: 1) international

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[12] EuroComprehension in the three main European language families: Romance, Slavic and Germanic languages. It is a programme intended to develop reading comprehension in foreign languages based on the knowledge of one of the languages of the same family (www.eurocomcenter.com)

and pangermanic vocabulary 2) functional words, 3) phonetic and graphemic correspondences, 4) spelling and pronunciation, 5) syntactic structures, 6) morphosyntactic elements and 7) prefixes and suffixes. For the first stages we selected texts that contained features that corresponded to Sieves 1, 3, 4 and 5 and devised activities that lead students to use these transfer strategies to extract meaning from the texts by focusing on linguistic relationships among the languages of the same family.

When texts did not match the first two levels of intelligibility and Sieves 1, 3, 4 and 5, we made some adjustments to them, among which are the following: a) substituting for non-transparent words, specific terms, and morphologically dissimilar terms, b) simplifying sentence structure, c) adding redundancy (by clarifying reference, ellipsis, etc). Some of these changes may be seen as instances of elaboration, rather than simplification of texts (Long, 1987). Elaboration was used as a resource for facilitating comprehension.

In keeping with Mc Grath's (2002) alternative to grading texts, grading the tasks that accompanied the texts was another possible alternative that the *juggling* materials designers needed to consider. This was achieved, for example, by means of designing tasks that aimed at checking global comprehension, rather than the detailed understanding of specific chunks.

Another very important *prop* we juggled with was text type. There are certain types of text whose very nature makes them more suitable for earlier stages of a reading course. This can be clearly seen in the following example. For the first task sheets we selected texts like tables of contents and lists of varied sorts, which have been labeled *colony texts* (Hoey, 1986). Their simplicity enabled us to gauge the degree of intercomprehension at level one (Reissner, 2007). These texts were employed for the first two tasksheets (see Appendix B). Since their "component parts do not derive their meaning from the sequence in which they are placed" (Hoey, 1986: 4), they allow for greater manipulation of the elements without altering their nature. This permitted exposing our readers to some basic characteristics of the noun and the noun phrase in the three Germanic languages as well as exploiting certain commonalities in terms of spelling, pronunciation and syntactic structure.

The value of art-related and visually-supported texts

By keeping the original structure and visual appearance of the selected texts, we attempted to preserve some of their authenticity. At the same time, the use of texts related to the arts (literature, films, painting, sculpture, etc.) because of their visual component and the shared knowledge on the part of the students proved to be of invaluable help. We provided what Cummins (2000) calls "context-embedded" texts and tasks, i.e., texts and tasks supported by the presence of an array of visual cues (see Appendix C). Illustrations not only facilitate comprehension but as a result also help build self-confidence and motivation. In fact research conducted to examine the role of audiovisual aids in acquisition has shown that they have a positive effect (See for example Romano Snyder & Colón, 1988).Therefore, we gave priority to texts that were accompanied by visual/artistic support that would help activate previous knowledge and would also encourage students to use their senses in order to extract meaning.

Conclusion

The word *juggling,* which derives from the [Middle English](#) *jogelen* (to entertain by performing tricks), has served to depict metaphorically the complex job involved in selecting texts in three Germanic languages for designing the materials for this course, which aims at the simultaneous development of English, German and Dutch. It is clear that the task of the *juggling* materials designer is not an easy one. Moreover, unlike the skill of toss juggling, which can become automatic through practice, as many other procedural types of knowledge, the task of selecting and grading texts for an intercomprehension course is unlikely to become automatic. It is a task that requires careful and constant weighing of many variables in order to make the right choices. This can ensure an adequate balance between authenticity and intelligibility.

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Appendix A

Grid for organising the bank of texts

Topic:...

Text: topic, type of text and source	Number of words	Reading strategies	Transfer strategies (Sieves)	Possible language focus	Activities & comments

# Appendix B

🇳🇱	🇩🇪
## Inhoud	## Inhaltsverzeichnis

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   1.3 Verblijf in Italië (1786-1788)
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4 Literatuur, een kleine selectie
5 Externe links
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	   1.1 Herkunft und Jugend
	   1.2 Studium und erstes dichterisches Schaffen
	      1.2.1 Leipzig
	      1.2.2 Frankfurt und Straßburg
	   1.3 Zeit des Sturm und Drang
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Fuente: http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goethe	Fuente: http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johann_Wolfgang_von_Goethe

Appendix C

. 🦅 **Activar** 🏳️ **Activate** 🇬🇧 **Aktivieren** 🇩🇪 **Activeren** 🇳🇱

En esta actividad vamos a leer datos biográficos de personalidades de los países de habla alemana, inglesa y neerlandesa. Relacionen con flechas los nombres con las imágenes y agreguen en el margen cualquier otra información que conozcan sobre estos personajes.
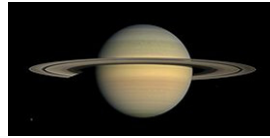
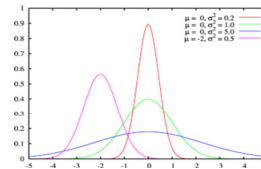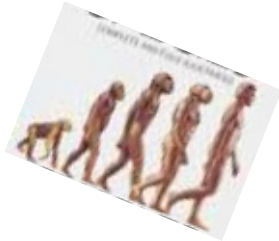**Andy Warhol**

Cees Nooteboom

Charles Darwin

Charles Dickens

Christiaan Huygens

Gustav Klimt

Johann C. F. Gauß

Johann C. F. von Schiller

Paul Verhoeven

Pieter Bruegel

Tom Tykwer

Steven Spielberg

Developing Intercomprehension in English, Dutch and German: A Methodological Model

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1. Introduction

This paper provides a part of the theoretical background to the workshop "The art of reading in three Germanic languages", conducted in the 35th FAAPI Conference, in which we demonstrated multilingual reading comprehension activities on the basis of texts related to artistic expressions. The activities demonstrated are being produced in the context of a materials design project carried out at the School of Languages, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba. The project focuses on the design of multilingual reading activities for the simultaneous development of elementary reading skills in three related Germanic languages: German, Dutch and English acting as a bridge language. In this paper we deal with the current state of the model under construction that seeks to account for the additional complexity posed by reading in unfamiliar languages such as German and Dutch, since these entail a different degree of difficulty compared to reading in unknown Romance languages like Portuguese, Italian or French. Researchers in intercomprehension in Romance languages pioneered the first multilingual reading materials which, due to their versatility, have experienced an increasing demand over the years. Our research has capitalized on the experience carried out by the German EuroCom project which aims at the development of multireading skills in Romance related languages. At the root of the EuroCom methodology lies the development of inferencing techniques called the Seven Sieves. The techniques learners apply in the reading process resemble the work of miners seeking gold through a process of fine searching, hence the name of "sieves". Students gradually "sieve out" the following features in the multilingual texts: (1) International Vocabulary, (2) Pan-Romance Vocabulary, (3) Sound Correspondences, (4) Spelling and Pronunciation correspondences, (5) Pan-Romance Syntactic Structures, (6) Morphosyntactic Elements and (7) Greek and Latin prefixes and suffixes (Jessner, 2008). In our context, materials have been produced by the "Inter Rom" research team for the development of reading in three Romance languages (Carullo et

al, 2007a, 2007b). On completion, our materials are meant to be a contribution to the novel field of Intercomprehension in Germanic Languages for Spanish speakers with an elementary knowledge of English.

2. Intercomprehension and partial competencies

The Common European Framework stresses the relevance of multilingual language development and acknowledges that a full mastery of foreign languages is a goal restricted to few people (Council of Europe, 2001). In line with this view, Intercomprehension, understood as "the processing of texts written in a language the learner might never have learned, but which is etymologically related to either his own or to another foreign language he has learned" (Hufeisen & Marx, 2004:145) is proposed as an alternative to the ambitious aim mentioned before. This contemporary notion of the development of partial competencies and the idea that this skill can be developed simultaneously in more than one related language will have an impact on foreign language curricula in the near future (Harper & Harmer, 2006). As any other competence, Intercomprehension is gradable so that different degrees of intercomprehension can be achieved. Klein & Stegmann (2000) describe different grades of intercomprehension (I, II & III) which are determined by the characteristics of the texts used. Determining factors are the number of canonical word order structures (SVO) present in the text, the presence of morphological case markers that may lead a reader to misinterpretation, and some text characteristics such as the self-explanatory strength of the text and the relative weight of the general sense of the text. Texts with a predominance of SVO structures and a reduced number of case marking morphology are suitable for an elementary (Grade I) degree of Intercomprehension, whereas those that include most of these characteristics are placed towards the end of the Intercomprehension scale (Grade III) (López Barrios, forthcoming). The texts used with the materials currently under development are mostly for Grade I.

3. Methodological models for the development of reading skills

The theory of reading followed is the interactive model according to which the reader's schemata interact with the information contained in the text in the construction of meaning. Eskey and Grabe state that "an interactive model of reading assumes that skills at all levels are interactively available to process and

interpret the text" (1988:224), i.e. top-down and bottom-up types of processing are at play when reading a text. In top-down processing the reader establishes relationships between the textual information and his background knowledge. This previously acquired knowledge is called schemata. Activating students' background knowledge before reading a text is paramount since effective comprehension does not just depend on simply decoding linguistic data. Moreover, "the ability to use this schemata, or background knowledge, is fundamental for efficient comprehension to take place." (Villanueva, 2006: 10). In bottom-up processing, the reader makes sense of the given text by concentrating on and interweaving words, sentences and cohesive devices to construct meaning. In Intercomprehension development both processes are fundamental: even though top-down processing cannot fully compensate for the very limited linguistic knowledge of the readers, it enables them to get the gist of the text provided it is accompanied by paratextual features and its layout has not been modified significantly in case the text has been shortened or simplified. Conventional methodological models for the development of receptive skills propose a theory of reading following an interactive model.

3.1. Methodological models for the development of reading skills in one L2

Methodological models for the development of receptive skills such as Harmer's (2007) refer to reading skills in one foreign language. This author claims that the basic procedure for implementing the interactive model of reading in L2 includes the use of two types of tasks. Type 1 tasks require the learners to read a text just for general understanding, without paying attention to specific details whereas Type 2 tasks encourage learners to read a text for specific or detailed information or for analyzing language features. Different types of activities such as brainstorming of ideas, pre-teaching of the key vocabulary items to be met in the text, class vocabulary development and recognition and discovery of morphosyntactic patterns, among others, form the basis of Type 1 and Type 2 tasks. Methods handbooks such as those by Harmer (2007), Brown (2007) or Gower, Phillips and Walters (2005) distinguish three stages in a reading skills lesson: before reading, while reading and post reading. The before reading stage involves the students' activation of prior knowledge and the teaching of some key vocabulary items students will find in the reading text. The while-reading stage proposes a smooth sequence for reading a text. It starts first with students trying to extract the general

meaning of the given text and then the second reading encourages the development of other microskills such as reading for specific or detailed information. The post-reading stage includes an activity which entails the integration of the reading skill with another skill or the analysis of language features through a text-related task. The models proposed by Gower, Phillips & Walters (2005) and Brown (2007) emphasize the fact that the way a text is read will depend on the aim for the reading of said text. A difference between Harmer's proposal and the others is that for the latter the purpose of the reading guides the process which may not necessarily start with skimming first. How much learners have to understand of the text will be determined or conditioned by their objectives for reading. In this regard, it is the reading purpose that determines the microskills.

3.2. Methodological models for the development of reading skills in several L2s

As said before, the models described refer to reading skills in one L2. However, building multilingual reading skills requires an approach integrating the new languages from a perspective of contrastivity and transfer. Carullo and Torre (2007, 2009) propose a didactic procedure for the simultaneous development of reading skills in French, Italian and Portuguese. They classify their activities into the following categories: activities that activate background knowledge, activities that foster noticing and discovery of language features, systematization activities and transfer activities. The activities promote not only the development of intercomprehension supported by different cognitive and metacognitive strategies but also involve the development of a receptive linguistic competence in the three languages from the point of view of contrastivity. Meissner (2004) states that various strategies are at play in the development of multilingual reading skills. Deduction, inferencing, analyzing contrastively and transfer are strategies that help learners explore and make meaning of the texts. Previous language learning experiences also aid the process of linguistic inference and transfer. The language learning strategies learners have constructed so far constitute their didactic strategic memory which influences the way learners process, access and retrieve information. Jessner (2009) also points to the crucial importance of cognitive and metacognitive strategies used in multilingual reading. The author states that the previous L2 learning experiences of the learners make them use different strategies than those used by monolingual students. This view is backed up by research evidence to suggest

that "metalinguistic and metacognitive awareness play an important role in the development of language learning strategies in multilingual learners and users" (Jessner, 2009:30). Evidence shows that multilingual learners exploit their prior linguistic knowledge gained through different language experiences to try to deduce meaning, make linguistic inferences and establish grammatical and lexical relationships between new information and background knowledge.

3.3. A new proposal

At present we are developing a structure for the reading materials that, based on Carullo and Torre's model, seeks to account for the additional difficulties posed by reading in languages such as German and Dutch. For Spanish speakers these languages are typologically more distant than English and thus more complex in areas such as lexis, syntax and morphology. Drawing on constructivist principles, the reading sequence designed for our project includes activities that activate learners' prior knowledge (formal and content schemata) and build new schemata (Villanueva, 2006:11). Additionally, the model incorporates reading comprehension activities that consolidate the application of reading strategies as well as various language analysis activities leading learners to infer, discover, explore or formulate rules about the properties of the new languages. The multilingual texts provide exposure to the target languages and constitute the basis for the ensuing inductive contrastive analysis activities. The cycle is closed with activities that prompt the learners to reflect on the new information they have gained from the texts and to assess the success of the activities.

The model consists of the following activity types:
- Activation
- Global comprehension
- Selective comprehension
- Reading strategies
- Language discovery
- Personalization and informal assessment

Activation activities (*activate*) help learners make connections between their knowledge of the world and their linguistic knowledge to enable them to access the texts with confidence. Techniques to activate content schemata are those employed either in L1 or L2 teaching such as describing visuals, predicting, etc. One key aspect of activation activities is schemata building,

especially the introduction of the key multilingual vocabulary that will be essential for comprehension. For example, as preparation for a series of texts about the history of the Netherlands, learners are asked to brainstorm the vocabulary items that they expect to find in such texts. It is nearly certain that learners will come up with verbs such as conquer, declare independence, become independent, fight, etc. In this activity students mention these words in Spanish or English, depending on their knowledge of this L2. The instructor supplies the English equivalents unfamiliar to the learners alongside the German and Dutch equivalents.

Comprehension activities, skimming (*global comprehension*) and scanning (*search*) do not differ from those used in L1 or L2 teaching contexts. Because an elementary reading competence is aimed at in the materials under development, deeper layers of meaning are not explored, as these pertain to higher levels of intercomprehension (Grade II and above).

The development of reading strategies is the focus of the *Think!* activities. These make learners reflect on their application of cognitive, metacognitive and socioaffective strategies after solving a task. The standard classifications of strategies by Chamot and O'Malley (1994), O'Malley and Chamot (1990) and Oxford (1990) provide the theoretical background on which we base the strategic repertoire we are still in the process of establishing. Cognitive strategies include those that make readers focus their attention on text reception (microskills and resourcing strategies), elaboration of knowledge (top-down processing), as well as deduction or induction, inference and transfer (bottom-up processing). Metacognitive strategies make learners aware of their degree of planning of the reading task (advance organization, organizational planning) as well as of their degree of task monitoring and task achievement. Socioaffective strategies help learners become conscious of the advantage of resorting to questioning for clarification when necessary, cooperation with peers and self-talk in the success of task completion. Strategy instruction lies at the heart of intercomprehension development.

Both strategy awareness and use, as well as linguistic knowledge, are key elements in intercomprehension. However, while strategies are language independent, linguistic knowledge is language specific. In the case of related languages this knowledge is also to some extent language family specific. This means that whereas strategies are applicable across languages,

as Schoonen et al. (2003) assert for the case of writing strategies, limited linguistic knowledge in intercomprehension calls for a predominance of bottom-up strategies such as deduction or induction, inference and transfer, so as to compensate for the deficit in linguistic knowledge posed by the new languages. To assist learners in the development of their multilingual grammars and lexicons, language discovery activities (*Discover*) are proposed. These are set after comprehension activities have been completed by the learners, in consonance with Harmer's methodological model that we previously described. In our case, these text-related tasks prompt the learner's awareness of language features present in the text from a contrastive multilingual angle, comparing the feature in question in the three languages. For example, learners explore the 3rd person singular and plural forms of *be* in the present and past tenses in English, German and Dutch in the texts they read, identify them, and systematize them in a chart.

Finally, personalization and informal assessment are the aims of the *Closure* activities. Here learners are given the opportunity to relate the topic of the texts to their personal experience and are also often asked to assess their performance in the unit, allowing them to recognize areas of difficulty and also to make them aware of their progress.

4. Conclusion

Developing multilingual reading skills is a much more complex process than developing reading skills in one foreign language. Multilingual reading skills make significant claims on contrastivity as a way of approaching the texts and the use and interplay of different types of strategies such as transfer and inference. As in the conventional models for developing reading skills in one foreign language, the multilingual reading skills lesson begins with the activation of students' schemata, but it relies more on the additional supply of new key language in the three languages so as to enable the reading process. This is a key aspect in teaching multilingual reading skills, as well as the construction of a multilingual receptive grammar through the deployment of several strategies to deduce or infer linguistic relationships at a lexical, morphological or structural level, as these enable learners to make meaning and to discover the familiar in the unknown. Last but not least, capitalizing on the learners' repertoire of strategies and enlarging this repertoire with new ones is an important distinguishing feature in Intercomprehension instruction.

The development of partial competencies should not be regarded as a "consolation prize" for those who do not attain high levels of communicative competence in an L2. Developing Intercomprehension means becoming aware of languages and of one's possibility to access them without the urge of building a high degree of proficiency in each specific language, which is, indeed, a privilege of a minority. Becoming aware of one's multilingual potential enhances the self-esteem and opens up new windows of opportunity. Our teaching experiences so far have shown us that one does not need to be an expert in all three target languages to have partial access to them. This is important for the learners, as they realize that the instructors of the team-taught course often consult each other in class when their L2 knowledge is not sufficient to answer a particular question. Solving the activities designed by the research team gives us the possibility to test the materials ourselves and to experience the possible insecurity a learner may face when dealing with the texts in unfamiliar languages. This experience resulted in a change of attitude on our part, as we had to break free of the traditional view that a teacher should "know it all" regarding a particular language. This is one of the strengths of team-teaching and an empowering experience for our learners!

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2. A Room of One's Own

On Bernardine Evaristo's *The Emperor's Babe*

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The Emperor's Babe by Bernardine Evaristo is a highly enjoyable novel in verse. Evaristo is here successful in the difficult task of making verse an unobtrusive medium in contemporary literature. Poetry is not a favourite genre today if you have entertainment in mind: the most current form of writing and the most widely read is the novel in prose. However, Evaristo manages to avoid the modern association of versification with the serious. Her style is flexible and adaptable and conveys as much the most intimate and tragic feelings of the protagonist as moments of intense joy, all combined with light comic touches. The adventures of the character-focalizer, the young Zuleika, are infused with her moods that subtly go from the ironic and playful, to the bitter, the ecstatic or the solemn. The style is rich and powerful but the rhetoric avoids the danger of pomposity by the humorous twist that brings the writing back to sobriety.

The novel is set in London in the year 211 AD and is recounted by Zuleika, the daughter of African immigrants. In true chauvinistic attitude, her parents are concerned with her brother's future career and mostly ignore their daughter until she is old enough to be married off (or literally sold) in the marriage market. Until this moment comes, the reader follows Zuleika's adventures in the crowded streets of Roman London. The impressionistic style that characterizes the presentation of setting and character portrayal introduces the reader to the bustle and thriving activity of every-day life in the far-off Roman colony. The presentation is so lively and vivid that we feel we share in the life of both the poor who lived in the streets (like the early Zuleika when the family first landed in Britain) as well as in the life of the rich who enjoyed the luxuries of spacious facilities (as experienced later by Zuleika when her parents manage to marry her to an exalted patrician figure). Either walking along the narrow, dirty and crowded streets of London or racing out of town and into the nearby countryside in an open carriage, the reader is immersed in the local life with its smells, sounds and sights and shares in the character's youthful excitement.

The novel progresses from Zuleika´s family origins, to a description of her childhood and her later marriage by parental decision at the age of eleven to an obese older man. Her married life is plagued by growing dissatisfaction, unease, and failed personal ambition. She has the aspiration to become a writer but as a woman she can expect to have no aid or encouragement to accomplish a career in the arts. Female disadvantage is also made patent in comparison with the chances for education and advancement that her brother enjoys in spite of his poor intellectual endowments and his reluctance to learning. Zuleika, on the other hand, is never given the opportunity of choice although her husband is ready to offer "lessons in elegantia" (E.B. 17), which can contribute to satisfy his own social needs. A man among men, her tutor Theodorous shares the reigning patriarchal ideology and disbelieves of her talents. The critical description of his views in Zuleika's voice is a funny re-elaboration of Virginia Woolf's arguments in her essay *A Room of One's Own* where she highlights the harassment and deprivation that women have suffered. Erased from history and denied access to economic means, personal freedom and education, they have been confined to the private sphere of life where they have served "as looking- glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size" (R.O.O.37).

Zuleika's life takes an unexpected turn when she awakens to love and sexual fulfilment in her encounter with an exalted lover: the Emperor Septimus Severus himself (hence the title of the novel). However, this affair is as bright as it is brief: it illuminates her life for a short span and leaves her in complete darkness, a short time later when the Emperor suddenly dies. Simultaneously, Zuleika's husband learns of the affair and sends her to death to preserve his good name from dishonour. The issue of difference and discrimination in all its manifestations is central to the novel and our protagonist is inscribed as alien for being black, of foreign origin, low class and female. All the indexes that mark her identity interrelate so closely that the treatment of one invariably brings in the other/s. The construction of identity plays on the thin border line between identification and alienation. Self assertion can imply the exclusion of that which is not me. The more alien the other appears to be; the easier it becomes to make him/her into an intractable Other from whom we want to differentiate ourselves. The process of hypostatization that ensues can turn the other into a stereotypically negative object as Frantz Fanon so vividly describes in "The Fact of Blackness". To this must be added the identification of the coloured, the colonized and the

female that results from the metaphorical constructions that trace analogies between these unprivileged groups. As a black colonial female, Zuleika deserves little attention. However, since she is young and beautiful she is treated as a valuable object in social exchanges both by her family and by her husband though only as long as her market value is high. In spite of chronological transposition, the characters and situations are thus inscribed within the postulates of feminism and of postcolonial theory in the setting of imperial Roman Londinium. The fascinating reversal of historical, national, and racial perspective produces a striking picture of twenty-first century London in the frame of third-century Londinium. The contemporary theme of hybridity is also activated in the multicultural character of third century London with its mixtures of languages, nationalities and races. The portrayal of the hardships of immigration and diaspora that mark the protagonist's childhood with the family's migration from Khartoum to Londinium and the references to the unequal distribution of power between the sexes set an ironic parallel with the contemporary situation. Equally remarkable is the parallel denunciation of imperial and patriarchal injustice (in Roman and contemporary Britain) with implications in issues of class and race as well as of gender.

The Emperor's Babe reflects the postmodern condition in its subversive quality, made patent in a large variety of creative ways. As much in form an in content, the novel subscribes to the fall of the great metanarratives of the western world: progress in history, patriarchy, imperialism and racism are all put to question in a heterogeneous form that subverts the realistic construct from inside. If the novel can be read as a realistic portrayal of a girl's coming of age with its pains and joys, this is no doubt realism plus something else, sustaining the postmodern bias for double-coding (Jencks, 1987:288). In its mixture of the high and the low, the past and the present, the serious and the comic, poetry and narrative, history and fiction, this novel is de-centering and hybrid. This is made obvious in the varied population of Londinium where different ethnicities and colours intermingle and in the mixture of Latin and English as well as of contemporary youthful slang in the language used by the third- century characters. In this way, the novel allows for multiplicity, instability of meaning and the simultaneity of possible interpretations. Even when the reader has the tendency to side with the narrator- protagonist, especially one like Zuleika who has been evidently wronged by circumstances, the reader is left with the impression that there is always another side to an argument. No central, total answer (with its implication of

totalitarianism) is favoured by the structure of this postmodern novel.

Similarly, the treatment of history shows a postmodern perspective. The recreation of the ancient Roman past, without falsifications or sentimentality, and with the inclusion of a real historical figure in the person of the Emperor, gestures in the direction of the present-day consideration of history as narrative with the inevitable erasure of the border between fact and fiction. History, the novel seems to say, is recreated each time it is recounted. Events become in the telling. Simultaneously, the treatment of current issues in the context of ancient times debunks the modern conception of progress, showing that in spite of much advancement in technology and science, we are still debating existential questions that bear comparison with the worries of the early Romans. The use of anachronisms is especially significant as an index of the identification of both worlds. In their intrinsic hybridity, anachronisms bridge the gap between ancient and present times. Simultaneously, this use of language brings the ancient world closer to our own experience without distorting historical circumstances. For instance, contemporary designer labels (Valentino, Armani, Gucci) are used to refer to the clothes worn by the wealthy Roman citizens. Even if these trade-marks did not exist in Roman times, historians mention the fact that Roman citizens spent huge amounts of money on well-cut garments produced by professional tailors (Guhl & Kohner, 1997:240-249). Equally, a friend advises Zuleika to get a personal trainer or go to a gym and forget about her husband Felix. Even if the personal trainer is no doubt only a contemporary figure, the Romans valued physical exercise and the famous Baths were also partly gyms (Guhl & Kohner, 277) (Veyne, 1987:196). At other times, terminology used today to refer to international commerce is chosen to describe the management of the state by Severus (E.B. 144) or a company that sells slaves is described as a "multinational slave-trading agency" (E.B. 126). Such references remind us that, although international commerce was not then as powerful and tightly organized as today, the Roman Empire was a global world and international commerce with Africa and the East through Greece was vigorous and thriving. The final effect of the use of anachronisms is that the past and the

present are brought together and that Roman Britain becomes a close and vivid experience without violence being committed on historical veracity.

The Emperor's Babe is equally notorious for its humorous touches, and the light ironic tone which prevail in the reader's mind over its darker shades. If the workings of power in human relations can bring about pain, life can also offer opportunities for mutual understanding, moments of tenderness and reciprocal pleasure. If sex can be spelt in terms of rape, death and hell, it can also be grotesquely funny or it can mean simply bliss; if death brings the irredeemable end, the shattering of hope, it can also be approached with humour even if it is our own. The positive, sustaining value of love is mostly present in the relationship between Zuleika, and her close friends Venus and Alba who, in spite of occasional squabbles and mutual jealousy sustain each other in good and bad times. Their meetings are mostly recounted in dramatic form, in dialogues full of pep, tenderness and good humour, together with frequent touches that reveal the personality of each of the characters with the use of verse never obstructing the vivid, realistic portrayal.

The hybrid quality of the novel with its echoes of the carnivalesque together with its choice of light comedy as a generic inscription to deal with serious issues contribute to the breaking of boundaries understood in Brah's terms:

> Borders: Arbitrary dividing lines that are simultaneously social, cultural and psychic; territories to be patrolled against those whom they construct as outsiders, aliens, the Others: forms of demarcation where the very act of prohibition inscribes transgression; zones where fear of the Other is fear of the self; places where claims to ownership – claims to "mine", "yours" and "theirs" – are staked out, contested, defended, and fought over. (198)

If most evils in the history of humanity can be ascribed to the erection of borders, *The Emperor's Babe* can be described as making a contribution in the direction of sustaining the opposite policy.

To conclude, reading Evaristo's *The Emperor's Babe* is an exhilarating experience that can reconcile the contemporary reader with a kind of verse that never estranges us from the characters or the vicissitudes they encounter. The novel has a very neat structure, framed by a prologue that alerts readers to

what is to come and an epilogue that confirms the readers´ perception of the empathy between writer and character. Evaristo manages what one of the poems in the novel ("Vivat Zuleika") proposes: to slip into the character's skin to come to know her "from the inside" (E.B.: 252). The use of an autodiegetic addresser no doubt contributes to the creation of an intimate atmosphere into which the reader enters to become one skin, one mind, and one heart with the child Zuleika who, in spite of the variety and depth of her life experiences, is only eighteen by the time both the novel and her life end. *The Emperor's Babe* has the rare charm of being both delightfully entertaining and historically instructive in its capacity to bring the ancient past to life.

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Unaccustomed Earth:

Striking Roots in New Lands

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Jhumpa Lahiri writes about the Indian immigrants in America and about the lives of first generation Bengalis and their alienated children; her characters fight between voluntary exile from two countries and two cultures. Jhumpa Lahiri chooses to introduce her latest collection of short stories *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008) with an epigraph drawn from Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter:*

> Human nature will not flourish, any more than a potato, if it planted and replanted, for too long a series of generations, in the same worn-out soil. My children have other birthplaces, and, so far as their fortunes may be within my control, shall strike their roots into unaccustomed earth. ("The Custom House")

Hawthorne's epigraph serves as a unifying thread for the eight tales Lahiri sets to write about, and it functions as a metaphor of what it means to be an immigrant in America and the contradictions experimented in growing up with a divided or multiple nationality. The purpose of this paper is to explore how Lahiri celebrates the interculturality which results from the immigrant experience and how she sees it as leading to cultural enrichment in the stories of the collection in general and in the title story in particular.

García Canclini in *Culturas Híbridas. Estrategias para entrar y salir de la modernidad* (2001) celebrates the processes of hybridization because they make it possible for the "multiculturality" to become "interculturality." Multiculturality implies that all cultures and civilizations are of equal value and should be treated and promoted equally within the same nation.

Homi Bhabha observes that "Discourses of 'multiculturalism', for example, function conflictually: they are strategies by which the dominant social formation seeks to control minorities but their acknowledgement of cultural differences also opens up spaces of resistance which are negotiated somewhere 'in-between' the conscious and unconscious levels" (Moore-Gilbert, 2000:451). Interculturality goes further than multiculturalism because it refers to the existence of a relation between people who belong to various cultural groups and it encourages interaction between these communities living in the same country. Furthermore, interculturality implies the production of novel cultural forms and practices through the merging of previously separate cultures leading to cultural enrichment.

The eight stories told by Lahiri celebrate the immigrant experience and show how this first generation of Indian-Americans succeed in establishing a dialogue between their culture of origin and the culture of the adopted country. Being in a new land they reinvent themselves by striking roots in the new territory. The stories all deal with the sense of displacement experienced by the first generation of Bengali immigrants while they attempt to adapt to the new culture. Madan Sarup in *Identity, Culture and the Postmodern World* (1996) wonders about the meaning of home for the immigrant. He argues that "a sense of place and belonging gives a person stability. But what makes a place home? Is it wherever your family is, where you have been brought up? The children of many migrants are not sure where they belong" (1996, p.1). This is evident in the short stories in this collection in which some of their characters do not feel at home where they live and cannot stop thinking of their roots; others feel torn between two different cultures, languages, and customs:

> One often hears the remark 'They have one foot in each camp'. These may be migrants who do not want to give up their own culture or assimilate with the new group. The borderline is always ambivalent; sometimes it is seen as an inherent part of the inside, at other times it is seen as part of the chaotic wilderness outside. (Sarup, 1996:7)

While the parents are still tied to the culture they have left behind and feel foreign in the land they have adopted, their children experience contradictory emotions: on the one hand, they feel torn between the Indian culture and the adopted homeland, and on the other hand, they adopt a value system that sometimes scandalizes their parents: they attend American schools, speak English and forget their own language; they refuse to wear clothes their parents want them to; they hide things from them; and they even marry American spouses. Bengali-American children complain about having to spend their holidays in Calcutta and they envy those kids that are not "taken to Calcutta every summer, they did not have parents who were clinging to another way of life and exhorting their children to do the same" ("Hell- Heaven", 75). Sometimes Bengali parents are ignorant of the prejudices encountered by their children: In "Only Goodness" (Lahiri, 2008) Sudha remembers how her parents did not know what she suffered as a child "Her parents had always been blind to the things that plagued their children: being teased at school for the color of their skin or for the funny things their mother occasionally put into their lunch boxes, potato curry sandwiches that tinted Wonderbread green" (143). In "Once in a Lifetime", Hema recalls how ashamed she was of classmates visiting her on her birthday and "glimpsing the way we lived" (237) Kaushik in "Year's End" tries to reassure his two stepsisters when they arrive in Massachussets but understands them because he can still remember his own feelings of displacement as a child.

Striking roots in a new land may mean marrying somebody who is not Bengali. Lahiri explores the difficulties mixed couples experience in a life together in some of the tales. Amit and Megan in "A Choice of Accommodation", find it hard to adapt to their different roles in the family and to their partners' past. Most of the times they find obstacles in getting the approval of their parents when they want to marry an American; in other cases, after they have challenged their parents, they end up marrying another Indian and they settle down neither in India nor in America but in a new country like England. This is seen mainly in the stories included in the second part of the collection called "Hema and Kaushik".

The acquisition of the new language also plays a very important role in these Bengali-American children; Madan Sarup (1996) expresses that "It is through the acquisition of language that we become human and social beings: the words we speak situate us in our gender and our class. Through language, we come to 'know' who we are" (46). In many of the tales written by Lahiri, the protagonists remember about the imposition to speak Bengali at home and how parents could not accept that they spoke perfect English and that they were forgetting their own language: "Deborah and I spoke freely in English, a language in which, by that age, I expressed myself more easily than in Bengali, which I was required to speak at home" ("Hell- Heaven", 69); or in "Nobody's Business" when Sang, the protagonist of the tale explains to her American flat mate that she is going to be called Sang Mashi "explaining that *Mashi* was the Bengali word for "Aunt". The word sounded strange on her lips. She spoke Bengali infrequently- never to her sister, never to her suitors, only a word here and there to her parents, in Michigan to whom she spoke on weekends" (191).

In the same way that the adults live the immigrant experience differently from their children, men and women see the new land in different ways. Sarup (1996) argues that as for men "immigration has provided them with a ticket to financial security and higher social status" (41), while for women, their life in India is associated with "the comforts and privileges of their pre-immigrant past" (41) making their adaptation to the new land more difficult. This is clearly reflected in the short stories of the collection where Bengali women are presented as homesick and lonely and they always long for the summer trips to India where they visit relatives, and where, for a while, they feel at home again. Not only do they wish they could go back to India but they also want to raise their children according to the Indian traditions.

It is interesting to notice that almost all the stories in this collection are told from the point of view of a character that belongs to the first generation of immigrants. By narrating their life stories, and sometimes, by telling other immigrants' experiences, the narrators meditate on what it is like to be an Indian immigrant in America. In the end, most of the

protagonists of the tales succeed in striking new roots in America only when they are able to defy their parents' expectations while they keep those traditions that bind them to their culture of origin; in "Hell- Heaven" the narrator admits that she has made peace with her mother because "she had accepted the fact that I was not only her daughter but a child of America as well" (81-82).

The title story of the collection, "Unaccustomed Earth", told from the point of view of Ruma and her father alternatively, tells the tension between the ideals of transplanted parents and of their American children. Ruma, pregnant of her second child, gives up her job as a lawyer and follows her husband to a distant city. Ruma's experience can be taken as an example of how new roots flourish in a new land. Although she has been born in America, she has always felt torn between the two cultures she inhabits. This tension is also evident in the contradiction she experiences of having to speak two languages; when she was a child she would only speak in Bengali to her mother; otherwise, she would use only English. When her father comes to visit her, the Bengali language makes her feel like a child again: "Bengali had never been a language in which she felt like an adult. Her own Bengali was slipping from her. Her mother had been strict, so much so that Ruma had never spoken to her in English. But her father didn't mind" (12).

When Ruma was at college she used to argue with her mother on what clothes to wear, how to behave and who to date. Now, in the new city she has moved in, she has come to understand her mother, since she feels as lonely as she must have felt when she left India to start a afresh in America. Although she is aware that she is repeating her mother's pattern by giving up her job for her husband's and children's sake, she cannot avoid doing it because traditions are stronger than her wishes and feelings: "Growing up, her mother's example — moving to a foreign place for the sake of marriage, caring exclusively for children and a household — had served as a warning, a path to avoid. Yet this was Ruma's life now" (p. 11).Even though she has married an American man, her native culture still binds her to traditions and beliefs she finds difficult to break, especially after her mother dies. For the first time in her life, when her child is born, "Ruma

feels forgiven for the many expectations she'd violated or shirked over the years" (27).

In spite of the fact that she has dropped many Indian habits, like wearing saris or taking her shoes off at home, when her father visits her, she cooks him endless Indian meals she has never cooked for her husband, Adam. Ruma does not want to disappoint her father's expectations and she behaves as the Indian daughter she is supposed to be; she eats with her fingers for the first time in months and serves her father as a submissive daughter. When her father announces his visit, Ruma is afraid he might want to stay and live with her. She believes she does not have a sense of duty for her Indian father and she feels guilty for that: "She knew her father did not need taking care of, and yet this very fact caused her to feel guilty; in India, there would have been no question of his not moving in with her" (6).

However, it is her father the one who surprises her, because he has become more Americanized than ever and he is neither planning nor willing to live with his daughter; he even looks like any senior American in his "baseball cap that said POMPEII, brown cotton pants and a sky blue polo shirt, and a pair of white leather sneakers" (11)

It is interesting to notice the role reversal experimented by the characters. Even if it is the parents the ones that are closer to Indian traditions, in this case, the father has succeeded in establishing a dialogue between the new adopted land and his land of origin before his own daughter. He remembers how he used to travel to Calcutta every year with his wife when the children were younger and how nervous and ashamed he felt every time they arrived in India. Those trips meant everything for his wife who longed for the time to visit relatives; while the older the children grew, the less they wanted to go back to India. Eventually, he frees himself from this tension;

> He stared out the window at the shelf of clouds that was like miles and miles of densely packed snow one could walk across. The sight filled him with peace; this was his life now, the ability to do as he pleased, the responsibility of his family absent just as all else was absent from the unmolested vision of the clouds" (8)

Although he belongs to the older generation of immigrants he is the one that teaches Ruma and her child the importance of starting a new life in America, and he succeeds in doing so when he insists to Ruma that she needs to go back to work and that he wants to live on his own. In that way, he frees Ruma from in built- expectations and lets her make her own choices without feeling guilty. In the same way, by planting a garden in her daughter's new house, he teaches his grandson how to strike roots in the new culture without forgetting his parents' original traditions.

To conclude, the short stories from *Unaccustomed Earth*, and in particular, the title story, show how the Indian immigrant and the first generation of Indian-Americans succeed in adapting to the new land and in building a new identity by establishing a dialogue with the two cultures that constitute them. Although many of the older generation immigrants seek to honor tradition by keeping customs and always looking back to India, the younger generations seek to explore new personal choices and ways of life. By adopting new customs without letting aside their origins they are able to strike roots in a new land, a land which offers itself as a fresh start.

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Anita Desai's *The Village by the Sea*: Trapped between Two Discourses or Inhabiting a Third Place?

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Can a post-colonial character, a writer and a novel be trapped between two contending discourses and thus be silenced? If so, *can any of them, as subalterns, speak*? (Spivak,1985). In *The Village by the Sea* (1982), a multilayered novel written in English and yet full of signs of Indianness, by German-Bengali writer Anita Desai, Hari starts an initiatic trip in search of his own individual and cultural identity and is at the crossroads between Indian tradition and Western modernity in post-independence India. Hari's in-betweenness synecdochally represents the liminal space of the non-native writer and the Indian English novel, since it is a site of struggle for the recovery of the voice of the formerly oppressed, displaced and dispossessed. Can the voice of a character, a writer and a novel be ever truly recovered? Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, an Indian postcolonial theorist and Marxist critic, is particularly concerned with this in her seminal essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1985), in which she explores the condition of the postcolonial subject as a "silenced" being who can not become the agent of discourse, since s/he is trapped between the voices of two contending cultures (coloniser/colonised; East/ West, etc). To develop her argument on the inability of the postcolonial subject to speak, Spivak analyses colonial debates on the practice of Sati, or widow self-immolation, in India to illustrate her point that the combined workings of colonialism and patriarchy make it extremely difficult for the subaltern, in this case the brown woman, to articulate a point of view.

"The British abolition of it [Sati] has been understood as the case of 'white men saving brown women from brown men'. Against this is the Indian nativist statement 'the women wanted to die'. These are examples of ventriloquist complicity. One never encounters the testimony of the women's voice consciousness: one cannot put together a voice" (Spivak, 1985:126).

Gayatri Spivak argues that these widows are burnt since Satis are absent as subjects, and she reads this absence as emblematic of the difficulty of recovering the voice of the oppressed postcolonial subject.

Yet, in a later revisionist essay in her book *The Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999: 296), Spivak questions her own tenets: "Between patriarchy and development, this is the subaltern woman's situation today […] within the two contending versions of freedom, the constitution of the subject in life is the place of the *differend*". Within this line of argument, Homi Bhabha (1994: 126), and Claire Kramsch (1993: 233), echoing his words, have asserted that subaltern people *can* speak, and that a native voice *can* indeed be recovered in an "interstitial" or "third place". As Bhabha (1994:127) puts it, "in the third space of enunciation, as the assertion of difference in discourse, the transformational value of change lies in the re-articulation of elements that are neither the one nor the other but something else besides, which contests the terms and territories of both". Indeed, this third place is "itself defined as a place of in-betweenness. We have to view the boundary not as an event but as a state of mind as a positioning of the subject in the intersection of multiple social roles and individual choices" (Kramsch, 1993: 26, 234). So were does voice lie in a displaced *sudra* (Dallapiccola, 2002: 178) such as Hari, in a German- Bengali writer such as Anita Desai and in an Indian novel written in English such as *The Village by the Sea*? Is voice silenced by being torn between two contending discourses or is it empowered by being inscribed in the in-betweenness of a "third place"?

The Village by the Sea (1982) delves into post-independence rural India's march towards industrialisation, its increasing westernisation, and the many tensions and crises this has brought into the life of the old and the new generations,

particularly within the agrarian population, or members of the *sudra* caste. The incoming factories initially appear to bring in new opportunities for locals, who soon see through the mirage of progress and acknowledge themselves as unskilled potential workers. This challenges who they are and who they want to become, both as individuals and as a culture. So, as Spivak proposes (1985: 121), "let us now move to consider the margins of the circuit marked by the epistemic violence of imperialist law and education supplementing an earlier economic text, men and women among the illiterate peasantry. On the other side of international division of labour from socialised capital, can the subaltern speak?" *Subaltern*, to refer to the economically dispossessed within capitalistic society, is a term borrowed from the work of Gramsci and adopted by a well-known group of Indian Historiographers, *The Subaltern Studies Group*, (Spivak and Guha, 1998: 20) seeking to recover the voices of the silenced peasantry, suppressed under imperialism. A study of the *The Village by the Sea* reveals how, when faced with the impact of modernity and the irreversible sweeping change in the form of a fertilizer complex, the elder and the younger *sudras* react differently. The former show considerable apprehension while the latter evidence gradual resilience. Yet, can the young generation, 'the subaltern of the subaltern', voice out this necessity to adapt to the changing times without betraying tradition? Can they possibly honour the past without betraying themselves and their future?

Just like the *Satis*, trapped in the dichotomy of whether or not to immolate themselves (Spivak, 1985), Indian younger generations, as portrayed in *The Village by the Sea,* are silenced by two contending discourses. Appropriating Spivak's terms, the children in the novel are trapped between the imperialist promise '**white men will save brown children from brown men**' and the nativist statement '**the children want to reject change**'. This paralysing duality is what keeps Hari throughout the first four chapters of the novel stagnant, silent and absent as a subject, since he is always in two minds due to the stasis that this generates: "What should he do? Should he take the part of the factory and try to find work in the new manner brought to them from the distant city? Or must he stand beside his fellow villagers and fight for the right of farmers and fishermen to earn

their living by the traditional ways?" (VBS: 99). Hari cannot find a discourse that could empower him to break free from "their dark, gloomy house and the illness and the hopelessness that surround them like the shadows of the night" (67). The introductory chapters in the novel (VBS: 1-102) connote this duality in the very texture of the narrative by means of foregrounding the vivid colours, pleasant sounds and lively movement of the village (7-9, 21-25, 32-33) and contrasting these with the dull colours, discordant sounds and lack of movement of Hari's house (5, 7, 66, 71). Even nature appears to be in sympathy with Hari and his apparently inescapable condition.

Thus, at this point, dwelling *on* the village merely *by* the sea, trapped in such binarity, becomes useless to Hari, and he starts inwardly articulating his own discourse "everything belonged here, everything blended together—except for himself…he could not settle down to belonging. He had to soar up in the sky instead of being tied to the earth" (VBS: 59). The only way out of postcolonial duality for Hari is to inhabit an "interstitial" or "third space of enunciation" (Bhabha, 1994: 5), and to apply the Indian integration of opposites (Keay, 2002: 54) to come up with a new hybrid discourse of his own that would allow him to speak out his mind: **'brown children can save brown children without wanting to reject change'**. This is evidenced in his decision: "he would have to go to Bombay, a rich city, a great city with people who had jobs, earned money and made fortunes" (VBS: 68). As Kramsch puts it (1993: 234), "growing into one's own is by essence recognising the faultlines in the social fabric. This also means acknowledging differences within oneself and giving voice to feelings of being forever betwixt and between, no longer at home in the original culture". Hari's enlightening decision may come as no surprise in the novel, and how it works, since his exile is subtly hinted at throughout these chapters by the resourceful use of motifs such as the "pariah floating kites" (VBS: 18-19, 59), the "birds flying out of the shadow" (4, 59) and the "roaring sea and wind" (4, 18, 60), which connote the novel's central theme of adaptation to the flow of change for survival.

However, upon his arrival in Bombay, Hari will be recurrently trapped between conflicting discourses and will try to articulate

his own voice out of them. Yet, two instances are central to the story and pivotal to his identity (re)construction. One is Hari's looking forward to seeing "the *Kala Ghoda*, the black horse" (VBS: 116) in the central square of Bombay, which he imagines as "great black horse as a kind of deity, a god" (118) only to find that "it was taken away when the British left. The people of Bombay did not want to see a foreign ruler after independence, not even a stone one". This leaves him "in gravest disappointment, for he would dearly have liked to see the emperor upon his horse" (119). It is worth mentioning that *Kala* means 'black', but it is also used to refer to time, fate and destiny. Besides, it is the name of *Shiva*, the destroyer of evil (Dallapiccola, 2002:107). This play of the signifier may metaphorically suggest that the meaning of Hari's life, and his culture's, will be resignified. Indeed, the emblematic empty pedestal symbolically stands for decolonisation. Hari's initial reaction to the *Kala Ghoda* points to how starving *sudras* are completely unaware of the true breadth of their changing reality. Yet Hari is not trapped for long in the dichotomy of whether or not to pine for the conqueror, since as Homi Bhabha (1985: 32) rightly observes, "the colonial presence is always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference". This will soon have an effect on Hari "even the empty pedestal began to look ominous, the absence of he Emperor's statue began to look a kind of message to Hari" (VBS: 135).

With the missing statue, the novel comes to connote the end of paralysis for Hari and his people as a whole. And this is reinforced by the sweeping winds of change that will start blowing and which will be materialised in the coming of the *monsoon (*181-186, 193-197, 215). This is precisely when Hari's life starts flowing, since he starts working at the *Sri Krishna* Eating House and is apprenticed to a watch mender, Mr. Panwallah. Yet since nature in the novel is fused into character and theme, the pattern of the ceaseless monsoon winds and rain will also be used in order to convey the incessant thoughts and the tumult in the mind of Hari, once again trapped in a dichotomy: "Now his head filled with the thoughts of that first night in Bombay […] should he keep the watch-mending he was learning from Mr. Panwallah and with saving the money to take home? Or should he take part in that fairy tale of world of cars, servants, holidays,

money and freedom?" (VBS: 194). Yet against Hari's duality, there emerges a supplement, a further "third space" that grows in the interstices between cultures. And as the monsoon comes to an end, so will Hari's confusion and doubts: "So Hari the fisherman, Hari the farmer will have to become Hari the poultry farmer or Hari the watch-mender" (VBS: 209). Hari seems to be already assimilating the lesson that Mr Panwallah will soon teach him: "Learn, learn, learn –so that you can grow and change. Things change all the time, boy, and if you want to survive, you'll have to change too" (210-211). So Hari's decision to "come back home when the monsoon is already over, after Coconut Day" (213), or *Shravani-Purnima*, a ceremony to propitiate god *Varuna*, responsible for maintaining the universal order (Yule, 2004: 59) will signal that there will be cultural continuity and order despite change. Thus, the "text articulates the difficult task of rewriting its own conditions of impossibility as the conditions of its possibility (Spivak, 1985: 124). And within this new order, and new cycle, the ´subaltern´, in this case Hari, will truly have a voice that will allow him to constitute himself as a subject. "He knew **he could make choices and decisions** now. He had known he belonged to Thul and that he would go back. It was wonderful **to choose what you would do in life, and choose he would**" (VBS: 212).

The question now arises whether or not the author and the novel are trapped between two contending languages and cultures. The answer will depend on how language, symbols, particularly those conveying Indianness, and narrative technique are read. At this point it, is relevant to discuss how the novel works, how as shown so far, "the post-colonial construction of language is not a simple binary contestation but a centrifugal process of coming into being" (Tiffin and Lawson, 1994: 42). As Gayatri Spivak (1999: 271) rightly observes, "a text must traffic in a radical textual practice of differences" for the subaltern to articulate their voice in the historical fabric. Even though the novel is written in Standard English, it is not *about* people speaking English. We know that Hari speaks "Hindi or "Maharati" (VBS: 147) and that in Bombay he cannot understand those speaking "Tamil" (148). Indeed, the two people who actually do speak English at times, Sayyid Ali and Mr. de Silva, are both marked in the novel as "the *Sahib*" (176, 140), an English speaking

person (Yule, 2004: 315). In fact, the novel appropriates English to provide a literary representation of Indianness that will inscribe cultural difference. This further shows in the lavish use of untranslated Hindu terms, some of them explained in the glossary at the beginning of the book, others, particularly those foregrounding distinctiveness, left unexplained inviting the reader to do extra-textual research. These unglossed words are metonymic of the untranslatability of cultures and of languages as sites of struggle and difference. *The Village by The Sea* actually retells the story of people who are referred to as *bai* or *bhai* (VBS: 22-5) in *Thul, Alibagh, and Gurajat (24), or in Goa, Marashtra* and *Gowalia* (145); some of them living in *zopadpatti*s (186) wearing *dhotis, saris, turbans* (117), while eating their *chapatis* (24), or treating themselves with *jalebis* (225) on *bullock carts, cycle ricksaws, hand-carts* (115). It also portrays a multicultural India that practices Catholicism (54), Parsism and Hinduism (214); worships *Rhada, Krishna, Rama, Sita*, *Nala, Damayanti (38), Ganesha (215), Lakshmi (249);* celebrates Coconut Day, or *Shravani-Purnima,* (214*) Diwali* (237, 246-49) and performs *pujas (*1-3, 260*).*

Besides language and local imagery, Indian texture and style also convey theme and articulate Indianness. There are two layers of meaning in the novel, that of the surface structure, or plotline written in English, and that of the deep structure with its many linguistic allusions and Indian references, which operate as the very points of entry into cultural meaning. Yet the novel's narrative technique works on an "interstitial place", and this is precisely what re-signifies and re-semanticises the text, shifting the emphasis from the external to the internal world, or what lies beneath. As Anita Desai puts it, "reality is merely the one tenth visible section of the iceberg that one sees above the surface ocean; and truth, the remaining nine tenths of it that lies below the surface" (Ray, 1978: 5). This is conveyed by the fusion of man and nature, the integration of opposites, as already discussed when analysing Hari's trip, and above all, by the use of circularity, which strikes the keynote of the novel: there will be cultural continuity despite change. This is powerfully connoted by the novel's ending with the same cultural practice, the *puja,* an act of worship for preservation and well-being (Dallapiccola, 2002:157), with which it starts. The *puja*

is initially practised by Lila— since her ailing mother and drunken father are *silent, absent* subjects— but it is finally performed by the mother, suggesting that tradition will not 'fall apart'. Moreover, the mother *speaks* at this point*,* since she storytells the origin of ancestral legends and cultural practices and, in doing so, she (re)inscribes them. In her appropriated space of enunciation, the mother *speaks* of *Diwali,* (VBS: 248) the festival of the lights (Dallapiccola, 2002:62), in which the worshipping of gods and goddesses, such as *Lakshmi*, the Goddess of Prosperity, Luck and Wealth (ibid: 122) and *Ganesha,* the god of Wisdom and the giver of success in all undertakings (ibid: 80), and her narratives the (hi)story of her nation. *Diwali* also coincides, in the novel, with Hari's homecoming, whose name actually means "fire", the "sun" and "lightning" (92), connoting the beginning of a new cycle of life for the family and for decolonised India as a whole. Hari's return has also been anticipated in the non-linear, actually circular, path of his journey which has been signalled by the motifs of the "spiralling kites" and "migrating birds" (VBS: 179, 252-7) and reinforced with the recurrent images of the "watch" and the "wheel turning" (210, 211, 257), which for time, progress and fortune. Besides, the strong presence of Sayyid Ali, the ornithologist, first in Bombay, and then in Thul, studying the behaviour of "migrating birds during the monsoon" (VBS: 178), metaphorically stands for India´s necessity to understand that young generations may need to fly away during the harsh times to be able to survive, only to come back strengthened and renewed.

The Village by the Sea is dense with cultural signifiers which reveal, or unveil, the absence which lies at the point of interface between two cultures. As the author puts it, there is a "fictional level and a non-fictional level underneath her novels" (Ray, 1978:5). Hari, and his outer and inner trip, synecdochally stands for the second generation that has to be displaced to forge a new hybrid identity within a dismembered decolonising country; and his parents represent the first generation that needs to rearticulate subjectivity after years of silence. Both generations change from darkness, stasis, binarity and silence to light, action, in-betweenness and voice. Needless to say, this starts to unfold as from the turning point in the novel: the missing **Black Horse** or, better put, Indian independence and decolonisation,

and comes full circle when the sweeping **monsoon**, symbolising the destruction of the old system and the birth of a new India, brings in the role reversal of all characters, and paves the way for **Diwalis and pujas,** or cultural continuity to take place. As Anita Desai (Ray, 1978: 5) herself puts it, "artistry is the use of imagery to carry theme forward, to unite structure, to create the feeling of wholeness, seeing a novel as a pattern or a design". Anita Desai's appropriation and hybridisation of English enables her to articulate Indianness by means of conveying "the Indian holistic conception of nature, the universe and the human being, and the Indian belief in transcendence through change, particularly in the circular integration of opposites" (Keay, 2004: 113). Through her narrative technique, Desai positions herself within the borderlands of language and culture, a "third place" in which the 'subaltern *can* speak', a space of enunciation which dialogically articulates cultural difference inscribing hybridity.

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Evaluating and E-valuating in the Literature Class: a Many-Sided Task

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The process of change occurs when teachers articulate to themselves and others what they want to change and why, when they identify the factors that inhibit change, and when they develop strategies to implement change over time.
Karen Johnson (1999: 143)

General considerations

We assume that teaching and learning always involve some form of assessment —and in most formal contexts also some form of evaluation—, and we see evaluation as a socially situated practice informed by and mediated through the context where it occurs. Our focus of attention is the teaching of literature in higher education —teacher training college, translation or B.A programmes— in the context of present-day Argentinian culture. We understand *evaluation* as the judgment of the worth of a procedure, a process, a programme, conducive to grading, *assessing* as the gathering of information which is relevant for the learning process, and *feedback* as comments made on the particular qualities of somebody's work, with advice on what he or she can do to improve (Askew, 2000). We are not concerned with discussing issues such as summative or formative assessment, product or process evaluation, influence of assessment on learning, or feedback in general terms, since they have received considerable attention in recent years in the field of foreign language acquisition (Cfr. Bruner, 1997; Pachler, 1999; Haywood, 2000; Askew, 2000; Byram, 2008). For the same reason we are not exploring the shift of pedagogy involved in the adoption of information and communication technologies either.

Evaluation by administrators and tenure committees is also beyond the scope of this presentation, and so are institutional evaluations of isolated courses or of Departments and the evaluation of an institution by an external agent. In this paper we are interested in the way in which feedback, assessment and evaluation can be made to work side by side in order to contribute to a more thorough understanding of the students' achievement and to fairer grading.

In traditional literature classrooms, which were dominated by narratives of the evolution of national literatures and the description of some theories and literary texts, assessment was exclusively in the teacher's hands, was focused on the student's productions and usually equated with credit giving, but not oriented to gathering information about other aspects of the teaching and learning processes. As a rule, evaluation consisted in a brief exposition on a topic either chosen on the spur of the moment from syllabus content or prepared in advance by the student and followed by a series of questions made by the head of an examination board. These questions aimed at retrieving information related to literary history or to criticism. Depending on the student's performance, which entailed meeting the teachers' expectations in the conceptual and in the linguistic fields, a grade was awarded. At its best, the ability tested was basically that of understanding literary, theoretical and critical texts, but very often only the ability to retrieve content (plots or historical facts) was privileged. Though the importance of those abilities for future teachers, translators or researchers is undeniable, we think that literary studies calls for other abilities: carrying out an *explication du texte*, generating reading hypotheses and validating them, placing a new text against the background of the literary and cultural tradition, relating the literary text to subjective experience, evaluating the ethical and aesthetic dimensions of a text, understanding and explaining particular uses of language against the backdrop of social discourse and producing critical texts. No doubt, the nature of these abilities, of necessity, calls for new evaluation processes and tools.

If our objectives when teaching literature entail the encouragement of translating information into knowledge

(Muwanga-Zake and Wycliffe, 2008: 286), the development of critical thinking, the furthering of abilities to establish social networks that lead to the creation of an academic community, and the fostering of academic skills within the field of literary studies, our pedagogy needs to cater for instruments which will assess the attainment of those objectives and grade accordingly. And, if to us evaluation is "an expressive, social process that manifests in an assessment practice that expresses social and cultural reality" (Magnusson, 2001: 91), then those instruments should not only measure the degree to which our students have reached the goals we set, but also the degree to which the course provided what it intended to provide. It is also necessary to consider that currently teaching does not take place only on campus, but also on-line —solely, or as part of blended learning proposals—, and that as a consequence assessment and grading tools need to be adapted to this new environment. In the context described we identify two agents (the teacher and the student) two objects (the student's productions and the course), and we recognize different combinations and forms in different environments.

The Students' Perspective

Students' role as agents involves three closely interconnected activities: appraisal of the teacher's performance, self-assessment and peer evaluation/assessment. Concerning the first, the validity of student evaluations of teaching is a controversial issue because of the various factors that may influence their assessments. Yet, they remain the most common source of data at the moment of evaluating a course or a teacher's performance (Wolfer & McNown Johnson 2003). According to McKeachie (1997) and Pike (1998) evaluations of teaching have two primary purposes: administrative decision making and teaching improvement. In our country, a student's participation in tenure committees is an instance of the first function and has a crucial impact on a teacher's academic career. In the framework of our literature classrooms, student evaluation is basically put to serve the second purpose and aims at developing critical thinking and independent judgment.   Valuable as they are, student assessments of teaching confront teachers with, at least, two problems: the teachers themselves should offer students

instruments to identify problematic areas and should revise their practices in the light of the information gathered. The first issue indicates the convenience of collecting data while the course is on, so this assessment instance has a formative dimension. Concerning the second problem, and considering the shortcomings identified in the ratings of teaching behaviours (Magnusson, 2001), we advocate for student ratings of the attainment of educational goals. On this point McKeachie says that "student ratings of their attainment of educational objectives not only provide better data for personnel committees but also stimulate both students and teachers to think about their objectives —something that is educational itself" (McKeachie, 1997: 1223).

Students become assessing/evaluating agents when attributing value to the course, to the teacher, or when assessing themselves and their peers. We disagree with the view that considers peer evaluation is necessary to ensure the equitable distribution of grades (Cfr. Mathews, 1994), and think it is rather a necessary element in the social construction of knowledge. If learning takes place in teams, why should the team be excluded from the evaluative gaze? In a democratic environment students should be invited to assess activities carried out by the other class members, and also to evaluate their own performance, again as part of a process in which all agents reflect on their learning and on the criteria that could be followed to assess it. For a start, in literature courses students may edit each other's writing and express their opinion as to the writers' power of argumentation; they could also circulate their portfolios for the rest to comment on them. The process may be completed with the students' appraisal of their own efforts and attainments in terms of the objectives set by the course and by themselves. Peer evaluation may be formative or summative, but in no way overlooked or underrated.

The Teacher's Perspective

Though the teaching of literature in higher education has changed greatly in the past decades. and though moving from a history-centered curriculum to theory-informed proposals constitutes a major improvement in our teaching practice, there is still a long way to go if we wish to contribute to the education

of critical teachers, translators and researchers. In order to inform our teaching with the latest developments in the field of literary studies, we should not only examine the issue of interpretation but also think about the textual features by means of which we communicate within the field —the language through which literary histories, theories and interpretations are constructed. Peck McDonald draws attention to the importance of teaching "how critical texts may be organized, how arguments may be warranted and substantiated, or the underlying rationale for choosing what to cite, where in one's text to do so, and how to choose from the explosion of material in print that which is relevant for citation" (Peck McDonald, 1994: 6). Also, considering that in literary studies it is important to foster the creation of learning communities, to educate in those abilities which students need to develop in order to operate within the field of literary studies and as educators, and to cater for different forms of evaluation in order to assess different aspects of the learning process, we would like to make a number of considerations which we assume will contribute to giving coherence to our teaching and evaluation practices.

If we think of teaching as a contextualized, social process, the activities we design will perforce entail reading and writing as contextualized, social practices. Students' reading of literary texts and their ensuing critical writing, therefore, develops as a dialogue with the texts, their peers and their teacher; this means that the assessment of students' attainments in reading and writing will involve not only consideration of their grammatical and lexical knowledge, of their analysis of textual data or of the degree to which their writing is thesis-driven, but also of the extent to which they address their community in their writing, and they read as members of that community. Their reading experience and their writing production may be organized in academic journals and critical portfolios (*Cfr.* Delmastro, 2005) which may be commented on during a final oral exam, an activity which helps integrate the process into the product.

Sharing with our students the rationale underlying our evaluative practices is central to this process, since it allows them to see how we construct the object of our assessment. If

our students generally ask what the exam is going to be *like*, it is because they —and also we— still see the final exam from a technical, psychometric perspective rather than as a stage in the construction of an object. Students also ask *what contents* are going to be evaluated, but they do this with a view to organizing their study material, not with the problem of object-building in mind (*Cfr.* Celman, 2002).

On-campus, off-campus and blended education: their impact on evaluation practices

Concerning the media, we distinguish three learning environments and consider the way they impact teaching practice and, consequently, evaluation. One is the traditional on campus, face to face interaction, in which teachers or students organize a lesson, contents are discussed, certain tasks carried out, and then assessment takes place according to institutional regulations. These regulations generally allow for take home or on site tasks, for midterm exams and for final examinations which may be completed in a written or an oral format. These forms of assessment and evaluation —the tasks and the exams— are often carried out only by the teacher, and generally consist of team presentations, text analyses or the answering of a number of questions.

On-line environments are new to our educational system and have not yet been exploited to their full potential, but promise to become in the near future a favorite medium. They cater for the same possibilities: students can make a video of a presentation, submit an essay where they analyze a literary text or answer a number of questions via Skype. In fact, all the activities which are carried out on site may be adapted to the on-line campus. Teaching, learning and evaluating in virtual environments end up being different form face to face interaction only in terms of synchronicity. One of the advantages offered by Web-based courses is the emphasis they lay on reading and writing, which works in the direction of the attainment of the objectives generally set in present-day literature courses. Education within the human sciences is inextricably tied up to writing, something which has always

been acknowledged within the field of philosophy but not so much within literary studies, and which has resulted in a certain neglect of the teaching of academic writing within the discipline. As Peck McDonald already stated back in 1994: "Literary studies, the academic homeland of textual studies, has, perhaps, been even less aware of its own textuality. Absorbed by the interpretive problems of literary analysis, literary scholars have often treated their own academic texts as transparent —or as transgressing unspecified conventions" (Peck McDonald, 1994: 6). Considering that on-line courses encourage writing and that writing plays a central role in the construction on knowledge, we think it is most recommendable to explore the possibilities offered by a third environment, that of blended education —the combination of on-campus teaching and Web-based teaching which tries to capitalize on the advantages offered by each and to compensate for their disadvantages. On-line and blended courses allow for activities which are difficult to carry out in the traditional classrooms: collaborative writing though the use of wiki texts, team work in the construction of glossaries, sharing sources and opinions in forums, designing power point presentations, putting together short videos. On-line and **blended learning** will also contribute to the use of IT, an objective that needs to be attained if we want our students to think in terms of life-long learning, which is most likely to be carried out by means of on-site and of on-line courses.

The Social Construction of Evaluation and Assessment in Literature Courses

Evaluation and assessment in the Literature class is as complex and multidimensional as in other subjects of the curriculum, and its specificity derives from the purposes, aims and contents we invest the subject with. The nature of the academic activities included in Literature courses calls for forms of evaluation and assessment which will appraise to what extent students are able, among other things, to carry out an *explication du texte*, to write thesis-driven essays, to reflect on the way in which a text interacts with the canon, and to relate the literary text to their life experience. The activities and instruments we select to assess/evaluate are neither good nor bad in themselves: their

effectiveness will depend on the function we put them to serve and on their specific context of use, which means taking into consideration real institutional constrains and demands alongside the type of knowledge we need to assess. Assessment and grading tools need to be adapted not only to the new contents of Literature courses, but also to new environments, namely to on-line or blended learning courses, but the same as with evaluating and assessing tools, the use of technology *per se* is no guarantee of successful assessment.

We think that sharing with our students our rationale and making them evaluating agents makes it possible to socially construct the object of evaluation. We also think that some of the activities which are provided by IT technology, such as glossary-building, wiki-writing and presentation design, together with the writing of academic journals and critical portfolios which may be carried out in on site courses, provide us with non-traditional tools of evaluation which allow us to assess precisely that which makes Literature courses slightly different from other higher education courses: our students' ability to understand that the literary field does not only contain artistic texts to be understood and admired, but also critical responses which need to be well articulated if they want to successfully communicate their contributions to their academic communities.

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From Learner to Prosumer: Interactions between Art and Literature from a Connectivist Perspective

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Nowadays, there is widespread agreement in our country that ICTs need to play a key role in education to cater for the needs of the information society, the global economy and the labour market, which means the education of teachers-to-be should equip them to introduce them in their classrooms (Landau 2002). A number of measures have been taken to enhance the technological infrastructure of Higher Education institutions, but it remains to be seen whether they will be effective in improving the quality of learning.

Cobo Romaní (2009) reviews the findings of a number of studies carried out mainly in the European Union regarding the impact of access and use of ICTs on students' learning, especially in primary and lower secondary education. Some of his conclusions are:

1. there is no correlation between the level of ICT access and the percentage of ICT use;
2. the frequency of ICT use among students does not determine their academic performance;
3. the impact on education and training has not been as great as expected;
4. there is a lack of coordination between the adoption of technology in the classroom and the embracing of flexible and innovative teaching-learning strategies,

which leads him to state that the need today is for "*educators who are able to create, connect, enrich and transfer knowledge among people*". He goes on to characterise the term *e-*

competencies as a meta-competency, constituted by the interaction of e-awareness, technological literacy, informational literacy, digital literacy and media literacy. His recommendations in terms of teacher training include developing the know-how to pedagogically embed the ICTs in classrooms with higher levels of critical thinking and understanding of the relationship between technology and education, as well as engaging in casual use of ICTs to better integrate other resources to the student's formal or informal learning environment and sharing best practice and other experiences between colleagues.

The Department of Higher Education from UNESCO Paris (2004) advocates that teachers-to-be, throughout their educational programme, should have hands-on experience of a variety of technological resources so that they can explore creative uses of technology to implement in their own teaching practice. They should be able to see their professors model such uses in content areas rather than "learn about" resources in one particular subject.

However, the danger of what Sancho Gil (2002) calls "*the supremacy of artefacts*" should be borne in mind. If techniques, tools or resources are employed without the proper didactic and curricular contextualization, old pedagogic practices will continue to be reproduced, and technological applications will be underpinned by factual principles of knowledge representation.

Connectivism, in my view, provides the proper theoretical framework for the effective implementation of ICTs in education. As a theory of learning it focuses on the establishment of networks. It defines knowledge as "*a particular pattern of relationships*" and learning as "*the creation of new connections and patterns as well as the ability to maneuver around existing networks/patterns*" (Siemens, 2008). Knowledge is then deemed "fluid", dependent on the context of the interactions, and technology is considered crucial in its distribution. The current abundance and changing nature of information require the collective efforts of a network to impose meaning on chaos.

It thus follows that the integration of social network sites (SNS) to education can go a long way to achieve the above mentioned goals. SNSs are 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). As they are based on the peer-to-peer model (P2P) in which all members play the roles of server and client, they can provide an excellent environment for learners to "*create their own content, take control over their own learning, and reflect on the process to gain further insight*" (Dieu, Campbell & Ammann, 2006). Furthermore, such networks can create a context for interaction which, as opposed to the organised nature of the classroom, mirrors the "real world" in its heterogeneity, complexity and unpredictability.

In contrast, educational institutions have traditionally favoured Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs), and Instituto Nacional de Formación Docente has set up Red Nacional Virtual de Institutos de Formación Docente, which equips each state-run Higher Education institution with a VLE. Some of the features of VLEs, as suggested by Santamaria (2010) and Lubensky (2006) are the asymmetric power relations they establish, their homogeneous nature and the restriction of their access to a certain class during a certain period – which means students "lose" their production once they complete the course. In my personal experience, even though the one provided by INFD does offer good opportunities for forum interaction and a reliable communication interface, its visual component is extremely limited and it prevents student-to-student interaction. As Lubensky (2006) puts it, "most VLE implementations tend to perpetuate the traditional instructivist models of education".

In 2009 I decided to start a SNS on Ning Network, where I brought together four Literature classes I teach in two different institutions (one private and one state-funded), in addition to the four individual "classrooms" hosted on each institution's VLE to supplement physical classroom work. I then repeated the experience in 2010. Ning hosted the sites and enabled users to create a highly customisable network in terms of appearance, privacy and web visibility, where subgroups could be set up, and all members' blogs were brought together. In addition, all members were able to upload and embed photos, audio files and

videos both from their own computers and from social sites, and personalise their pages, even adding widgets – all free of charge. Penenberg (2008) discusses the rationale behind the network. Unfortunately, this particular SNS has now changed its policy, so that all services need to be paid for, as reviewed by Stevens (2010). Other SNSs remain free – or at least have a free limited version – which I am currently exploring for future work.

The first obvious asset of a SNS is the ease with which images, videos and audio files can be shared. I contributed some at the beginning of the year, then I asked students to find material related to one particular topic, and eventually they started contributing voluntarily, whenever they found something they believed could be interesting for the rest. That is how we acquired a picture of the dust jacket designed by Vanessa Bell for the first edition of *To the Lighthouse,* a cartoon version of Roald Dahl's *Revolting Rhymes* based on the original illustrations by Quentin Blake and *The Great Gatsby* audio book, for example. Students posted comments on each other's contributions, and in some cases even uploaded personal photos which added a new, "social", dimension to the SNS.

Blogging is typically an individual, independent activity. But integrated to a SNS a blog becomes social, and networks can be formed through the interactions among members. Discussions sparked off by bloposts are different from discussion forums in that they arise from the students' own entries instead of being determined by the teacher. In addition, by choosing whose posts to comment on, students start to develop their own learning network (Dalsgaard, 2006).

In my project, each member kept a blog, including myself. My blog was used to present topics which would otherwise not have been addressed in class, but which helped to enrich and expand issues by combining links, videos, images and/or slideshows and inviting some comment from the students. Let me exemplify through "George Eliot and Henry James: painterly comparisons". The text of the post goes:

> In his discussion of the changes in the novel at the turn of the century, Bradbury (1997, 19) compares the work

of George Eliot and Henry James to different schools of painting: "Eliot's *Scenes from Provincial Life* followed the manner of past figurative Dutch genre painters: James' *Portrait of a Lady* was done in the fashion of a Whistler or a Sargent, followers of Impressionism."

followed by illustrations from Dutch genre painters, Whistler and Sargent, and links to further discussion of their work, and the invitation:

Can you find points of contact between the painters and the artists? Tell us below.

Responses by students included comparisons between choice of characters in Eliot and in Dutch genre painting, and James's use of point of view as a narrative device with the Impressionists' use of unusual visual angles.

The students' own blogs were used for some compulsory activities, such as keeping a reading journal, and in some cases they took advantage of them to contribute extra material. On discussing Postmodernism, a number of videos, slideshows and articles were offered to 4th year students for them to write a post commenting on the main features of Postmodernism reflected in the ones of their choice or contributing others they considered related, thus linking, for instance, Pop Art, Second Life educational environments and contemporary films to literary features, and exploring cultural productions from a broader perspective. The element of choice from a larger set encouraged the reading of classmates' posts to examine different realizations of the task.

One extremely successful use of blogging combined the creation of visual materials with reflection on the creative process. In the case of 2nd year, after dealing with narrative and lyrical poetry, students were asked to design a personal anthology (individually or in pairs) consisting of at least three poems or extracts from long poems, and including the selected poem, an image or group of images suggested by it and a comment explaining why that

poem and that image had been chosen. A list of possible tools was provided, and realisations included Power Point presentations, films made on Movie Maker, "books" on Bookr (http://www.pimpampum.net/bookr/index.php?id=9810) and Prezi presentations (http://prezi.com/tcinl1ahuksg/assigment-3). In this extract from one student's post it is clear how she was able to relate a medieval text to contemporary life:

> The last extract, the one from "The Wife of Bath's Tale", I chose it because I agree with what the old lady says as regards poverty. I included a picture of a little aborigine girl from a refugees' camp drawing in the ground. It's amazing to see how despite the awful conditions under which they live, some people never lose their hope and happiness and live their lives in a simpler way. And as the extract says: "truly poor are they who whine and fret and covet what they cannot hope to get." (M.Z. – 2nd year)

All students were extremely eager to check out and leave a comment on others' productions. See for example these comments on the Prezi anthology:

> Incredible!!! I love your presentation, it's original, you've worked on new software!!! I'll try this in the summer -I suppose I'll have more time!!! It's very interesting how you developed different views of the same theme: Love! Congratulations!!! (E.D. – 2nd year)

> Wonderful presentation! I would like to use the computer as you do! Congrats! Interesting points about different kinds of love (S.W. – 2nd year)

One assignment for 4th year asked students to transform a novel analysed in class into a trailer or at least a visual representation

of the text, and to post their rationale and aims. A number of tools were suggested, but otherwise they were free to choose. See this post on *To the Lighthouse*, which accompanied a film made up of a collage of images with ingenious transitions:

> Through this mini video we have tried to show that an image can say more than thousands of words and that images, as well as paintings, can be "read" and interpreted. The series of black and white pictures represent the passing of time, decay and destruction, while the staircase, the presence of Mrs Ramsay in the house. We have chosen to emphasize Lily's perspective at the end of the video since we believe she is one of the most powerful characters. Besides, the last painting, shown after the closing phrase of the book, stands for what we believe Lily may have painted – a memorable image of a charming lady, a portrait of Mrs Ramsay. The accumulation and repetition of certain images create the feeling that the world is made up of diverse feelings and sensations and we are only passive observers, bombarded by these impressions. (C.G. and J.N. – 4th year)

It can be seen that in the environment of this SNS, students themselves became active creators of content, which was shared with classmates so that they could profit from it in their learning process. They all played the role of server and client, or "prosumers", in Tofler's words. Asynchronous communication took place among members of the same and different classes, which provided authenticity, and assignments posted became public, which gave the class the opportunity to see different perspectives without feeling they were "cheating" but rather collaborating, by referring back to them in their work. Clearly,

students who had already developed e-competencies on their own were keener to explore new tools, but by the end of the year, everybody had tried their hand at one digital literacy activity at least, and it was precisely those who had no previous experience who were proudest of their achievements.

A number of issues remain to be worked out, however. One is the question of educating students about fair use of copyrighted material available on line, which I have not tackled conscientiously. A further consideration refers to how time-consuming these activities are for the students to carry out and for the teacher to provide feedback on. In addition to the heavy workload to be completed outside class periods, it is easy to lose sight of students' (and teacher's) comments as this SNS does not provide a tracking system of the kind available through a VLE. Directly related to such aspects is assessment: on the one hand, how to integrate the work produced into formal institutional policies; on the other, how to grade the multiplicity of variables present in students' contributions without being unfair to those with limited digital literacy skills at the start of the course. Furthermore, if assessment does not reflect the full extent of the effort required, some students may simply reduce their participation when burdened with other duties. Similar concerns are mentioned in Moayeri (2010), and it remains a challenge to tackle them.

On the whole, however, I consider that SNSs mesh well with both a connectivist approach to learning and with the development of e-competencies. In addition to being motivational, work on a SNS complementing a physical classroom empowers students to create content which moves beyond the purely textual to integrate image and sound. It also encourages them to collaborate and to reflect on their own and their peers' productions to gain further insight; in other words, to build collective knowledge. One of the 2009 students summarized it in this way:

> I believe that the most enriching aspect
> of this class can be summarized in the
> word DIVERSITY- diversity of materials,
> diversity of activities, diversity of
> means to carry them out, diversity of

opinions, and diversity of responsibilities – I mean that we are not ´forced´ to work, we are all given the same possibilities to learn and to facilitate our studies, but each of us works differently and consequently, each of us is responsible for her own progress or failure. The fact that there is diversity in the class allows us to work independently and makes us more autonomous and self-confident. (M.E.L. – 4th year)

In short, by offering teachers-to-be a hands-on experience of flexible and innovative strategies integrating technology and education, we can contribute not only to their own learning in the present but also to their professional practice and continuing development through interaction with networks of colleagues in the future.

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3. Teacher Development & Teacher Education

Effects of Telecollaboration through E-Forums on Language Learning and Motivation[13]

Pamela Arrarás

This is a summarized version of the original research paper. You can read the full study report, and see the data as well as samples of the research instruments at:
http://tiny.cc/arraras2010faapi

Rationale for the study

The relevance of this study lies in the scarcity of specific research that deals with the following three aspects:

I.   Research involving the use of e-forums as tools for telecollaborative and computer mediated communication in language learning. Most of the research on asynchronous tools involves e-mail.
II. Research that involves students at the secondary level. Only two of the studies reviewed involved students of that age.
III. Research involving the effects of many-to-many collaboration where both students are learning each other's languages. Of all the research studies reviewed, the only instances of similar collaboration were Belz (2003) and the E-Tandem network, but they both dealt with one-to-one e-mail interactions instead of forum work.

Through this study, I hope to help shed some light into these issues and contribute to the body of knowledge regarding the use of computer mediated communication and telecollaboration for language learning.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of online communication with students from other countries in motivation and language learning. The specific research questions to be answered were the following:

1. In the frame of Burden & Williams' definition of motivation, does telecollaboration through e-forums *motivate* the students? If so, how?
2. What are the observable effects of this particular project in the students' language learning skills and performance?
3. What are the similarities or differences (if any) between the conclusions reached by previous research on the use of e-mail for language learning telecollaboration and the present study?
4. What insight can be gained from this experience regarding organizational aspects of projects of this kind?

Research paradigm

The frame for the present study is action research as defined by Wallace (1998): "the systematic collection and analysis of data relating to the improvement of some aspect of professional practice." Although my study contains some elements of quantitative research that were carefully chosen in order to provide better collection and triangulation of the data, the general approach falls within the qualitative approach to research.

Description of the study's research design

I have used the characteristics of primary research mentioned by Brown (2004) as applied to this case to come up with a bulleted description of the most important features of this research study:

- Data type: quantitative (questionnaire, grades) and qualitative (feedback slips, forum contents, interviews).
- Data collection methods: non-experimental. No control group. Survey research.
- Data analysis methods: statistical as part of the process, but overall interpretive.
- Intrusiveness of the study: leaning towards non-intervention.

Students did the project subject of this research as part of their regular course of studies.

- Selectivity: non-selective. All the students who participated in the project were included in this study.
- Variable description: definition of variables according to their emergence along the data analysis process.
- Theory generation: hypothesis forming. Following the principles of grounded theory.
- Reasoning: inductive
- Context: natural. The study was carried out in the classroom.
- Time orientation: mixed. Study was carried out in a relatively short period of time but there were factors considered longitudinally when feasible.
- Participants: relatively small sample size: 30 students.
- Perspective: Emic. Researcher tried to understand the point of view of the participants and to examine how the interpretations drawn from their research relate to those views through practices such as member checking. (Brown, 2004).

The Study

1. Context Description

The telecollaborative project involved two schools, one in the US and one in Argentina. For practical purposes, only my classes in the Argentine school were part of the study, but the teacher and students at the American school were aware that the information in the forums would be used for research. The American classes were much larger in number, with over 70 students participating in the project. The study was carried out at the Escuela de Educación Media 1, in Villalonga, a small town in the South of the Buenos Aires Province, in Argentina. I teach five different classes, two of which were part of this study. The age of the students ranged between 16 and 18 years old.

1.2. The project

The main objective for this project was to give students in both countries the opportunity to communicate with native speakers of the language they were learning at school and learn about the culture of the target language. At the same time, they would be

acting as native speaker models for each other, as the project was to be done in both languages, English and Spanish. This is one of the principles behind E-Tandem learning, which we borrowed. We thought that communication would be more successful among equals; that is, there was not a relationship of learner-expert, but quite the opposite, all students were experts *and* learners at the same time. In practice, this meant that students had to write both in the language they were learning and in their own language. The online platform had two forums, one for communicating in English and one for communicating in Spanish. The online platform itself was password-protected, both for security reasons and because the America school requested that their students' information remained private. For practical reasons, we used one username and password for all students. However, this caused confusion if students forgot to sign their messages, therefore we paid special attention to that and reminded them frequently about having to say who they were. For students in Argentina, participation in the project was given a grade, so it could be considered compulsory. However, the requirements were minimal: only one post in English and replying to two other students' messages in the Spanish forum. Before starting with the project, I did an intercultural awareness activity with my students in order to heighten their attention to the fact that they were communicating with people who might have a different perspective on many things.

1.2.2. Rationale

I decided to use forums because they are one of the tools considered "many-to-many" CMC, which in practice means everybody can communicate with everybody else. This was very useful as it allowed flexibility, without compromising the project if some students decided not to participate.

Two different forums according to the language were set up instead of only one to try to avoid the "Lingua Franca effect" (O'Dowd, 2008). This is the tendency that people have to resort to using with more frequency the language in which students are most proficient. The activities had a very "linear" progression in my mind that later on I found out was not followed at all, but

the reasoning behind them was simple. Each class had to do the same:

1) Language learners post their message in the L2 forum, writing in their L2, and include two questions for the native speaker students to answer.
2) Native speaker reads your message and replies, answering your questions. They do so in their L1, which allows them more freedom to express themselves and answer your question fully.
3) Language learner reads and reply, again in the L2.

At the same time, each student had to go to their native language forum and read the messages there, choosing which ones they wanted to reply to, which is what is mentioned in step 2. The rationale behind it was borrowed from the Cultura model, where students write only in their L1 in order to fully express themselves.

Findings

1. Motivation

In order to "measure" motivation, I analyzed all the data looking for evidence of Williams & Burden's three features of motivation: choice, effort and persistence, and classified it accordingly. The findings indicate that the majority of the students were highly motivated and that their motivation differed according to their level of English, with students who only received English instruction at school and students who had graduated from language academies showing the highest levels of motivation.

Regarding *choice*, the forum statistics indicated that 28 out of a total of 31 students had participated in the forums. Out of the three that did not, I knew that one of them had dropped out of school and another had had family problems, so out of 29 possible participants, there were 28 who had chosen to do so, giving a 96,5% of participation. This preliminary interpretation of the data indicated that if measuring motivation by *choice*, the project had been highly motivating. In order to corroborate this

statement, I decided to include an item in the questionnaire that asked them about degrees of motivation.

But as I started analyzing the data from the forum in order to measure *persistence* and *effort*, a very important variable emerged from the data: the level of English of the students, that is, whether they only had classes of English at school, and therefore an elementary level of English, or if they were attending English classes at a language academy and had an intermediate level of English. It also turned out to be important to distinguish among those students who were *still* attending classes and those who had finished the previous year and were *no longer* attending classes but had achieved a high intermediate level of English and could not pursue a higher level of English because there were no teachers available in town who taught classes at the advanced level. I suspected that a further category of importance for measuring motivation would therefore be that of students who *used to* attend English academies but who had dropped out without finishing. Therefore, another item was added to the questionnaire about level of English. The results from both items on the questionnaire showed that the activity was most motivating for those who attend a language academy, followed by the students who only had English classes at school, and then the ones who have finished. But since only one volunteer fit into the former category, more analysis is needed.

The information from the forum regarding total number of interventions was used to measure *persistence* and therefore corroborate the results from the questionnaire. In order to identify which students attended language academies, I had a list of those who had told me at the beginning of the school year what level of English they had, which I used to color code the spreadsheet. None of the students who had dropped out of the language academy had volunteered that information and therefore I was not able to identify them in the forum. In the anonymous survey though, the students did mention if they had dropped out of classes at a language academy. After analyzing all that information, it could be concluded that the most motivated seem to be the students who have finished attending classes. However, if the results are disaggregated by classes, we could

see if dropout students are disaggregated, the level of participation of students who attend English at school only would be the highest.

Finally, there was the issue of why students who had already finished English at a language academy showed such a high level of participation as compared to those who were still attending English classes. It was understandable that both would be motivated, since they had already chosen to study English on their own time, but why this group showed to be more motivated was not still evident. After an interview with one of the students who had graduated from the language academy, the reason found was that this project presented them with a chance to practice their English with a level of challenge that they did not experience during classes at school. In the case of the students who had dropped out of the language academy and had shown the lowest level of motivation, one of them was interviewed and he said that "it was ok", and that it would be more motivating if other media such as Facebook were used and if the activities were fun and "make me laugh".

To sum up, the project was considered highly motivating; almost every student took part in the project and the levels of participation were acceptable taking into account that the project took place during the last month of their senior year. This coincides with previous research on telecollaboration, and extends those findings to such projects with students of a younger age than those generally involved in the other studies.

2. Effects on language learning skills and performance:

In general, all students perceived that the project had had an impact in their language skills in one way or another. The highest scores were those of vocabulary and use of dictionaries and other resources, which along with evidence from the interviews leads to believe that students did a lot of reading which is not possible to get data of, as the forum did not record individual access.

The students' perception of progress in learning to use dictionaries and other resources was not affected by their level

of English, which makes sense as that kind of skills is not generally developed by merely attending language lessons, but the fact that the students' perceptions show no difference is in itself telling. 80% of the students felt they had made progress in writing. This was the highest percentage of all, and as also the dropout students group had given high scores to this area in the Likert scale, I decided to use the scores from their writing tests from different terms to see if those perceptions corresponded with higher grades. The projects took place at the end of the first and third term; therefore, if the project had had a positive impact, it was possible that the students' scores in writing would go up in the coming term. The average of all students' scores is as follows:

First term	Second term	Third term
8.46	8.76	9
Average of all writing scores		

Writing scores were chosen for close examination as they had been mentioned by the students to be the skill they had noticed the most progress. Further research is needed in order to verify if there is a causal relationship between participation in this kind of project and better language performance. Higher scores, however, are not the only benefit of telecollaboration. The following examples are connected to language learning skills that were mentioned in interviews and feedback slips:

Communicative competence: One student manifested she tried to use a more formal register when communicating in Spanish with the American students as she realized that slang was probably difficult to understand for them.

Intercultural awareness: Several students mentioned that they liked the project as they were able to "see things for ourselves" and "learn about how another culture is firsthand". They also said it helped them dispel prejudices.

<u>Learning strategies</u>: Students manifested using several learning strategies. Data was tagged and classified according to Chamot (1994) with these results:

- Self monitoring: A student mentioned that she tried to write better after reading how well the other students wrote in Spanish.
- Self management: A student mentioned that they found that they had to be able to do things by themselves, as the teacher "is not inside the computer with me" and they had to find ways to get the message across.
- Compensation strategies: once the students discovered they could post pictures, they used them to compensate for their lack of descriptive vocabulary. They included photos of their schools, themselves, etc.

Some of the items mentioned that should be further researched in coming studies include that 64.3% of the students mentioned always re-reading their messages before posting them. (Self-monitoring) and consulting with their peers while writing the messages (cooperation).

To finish this section, I would like to say that these interpretations and findings are merely the beginning of the next cycle. If anything is to be said of these results, is that they are not universal truths, and that the true value that they hold is that they are the key to doing things better next time.

Conclusions, or Lessons Learned

The present study has been my first attempt at serious research. After such a long period of hard work, it is surprising how it feels as if this is just the beginning. It is one of the unique characteristics of action research to provide the researcher with a new beginning once all data has been collected, carefully analyzed and conscientiously interpreted. In this case, this study has given me many useful lessons about what to do, what not to do and how to go about doing telecollaborative work in the classroom, so that I can go back next week and start planning the new connection (as a matter of fact, I already have).

I hope the present study helps build the present body of knowledge on the use of e-forums for online language learning in general, and telecollaboration in particular. I believe forums have been overlooked for a long time; e-mail was the norm and it is sometimes hard to "think outside the box". E-forums have many advantages when it comes to coordinating and monitoring a telecollaborative project at the secondary school level. Among them, I would like to mention:

a. The ability to monitor the contents of communication without being intrusive. E-mail is considered a private means of communication. Checking students' e-mails could be seen as rude, and students might resent being monitored; students are always reminded that their correspondence is read by someone who is not the intended reader (O'Dowd, 2008). E-forums, on the other hand, are "public" in that the writer knows the whole class will be able to access its contents and adjust his/her discourse accordingly.

b. Ability to password-protect the contents. There are other many-to-many CMC tools, such as wikis. E-forums, however, are one of the few that allows the possibility to block the content from the open public. This is extremely important when working with underage students. Privacy issues and safety issues are very important for schools all over the world.

c. Expanding the reading material for all participants. When communicating by e-mail, each participant can only get as much practice reading as his/her partner chooses to provide. Through e-forums, each participant can choose to browse through many different discussion threads, and comment in as many of them as he/she pleases.

d. No one-to-one relation needed in class numbers. This is a huge organizational advantage; many e-mail projects struggle when one class is bigger than the other (Belz, 2004), with the consequences being that either one student is paired up with two or more students from the opposite group. Another problem comes up when one of the partners drops out of the class, or decides not to participate leaving his/her partner without an e-pal to write to.

e. Low technological demands. Compared to other many-to-many communication such as chat rooms, e-forums are very low-tech. The contents are not "heavy" unless students start uploading pictures; a regular internet connection can handle navigating a forum decently.

f. They are asynchronous. This is a great advantage when communication is intended with a class from a different time

zone, as it is almost always the case. The larger the time zone difference, the bigger the advantage.

To finish, I would like to include some recommendations for other teachers interested in doing telecollaborative projects such as the one described in this study:

I. Spend time training yourself in the technological tools you are going to use. Choose tools based not only on your skills, but those of your peer at the other school, the skills of the students, and the technological capabilities of both schools and groups of students.

II. Do not assume that your students will be able to handle the project just because they are supposed to be "digital natives". The skills required for language learning are very different from the ones they have developed for social use.

III. When looking for partner classes, pick a colleague who shares your same technical skills, overall objectives for the projects, and is willing to spend time on it. See the appendix for a list of reliable websites to look for partners.

IV. Assign enough time for each stage of the project, and make sure you include time *before* and *after* the telecollaboration itself in order to prepare the students and later allow them to process and reflect on what they have learned.

V. Decide on how you will assess the project and make sure that you set a minimum number of interventions for each student in order to promote interaction. For example, you could establish that each student has to post three comments and that each comment needs to address another student's questions as well as posting new questions to keep the conversation going.

VI. If the other group is learning your students' native language, decide on a method to ensure that both languages are used in the forum. Separating forums is a possibility, but students tend to participate in their L1 forum most. Another possibility is requesting that 50% of each message is written in each language, as the E-Tandem Network recommends. Finally, if you're mostly interested in developing your students' reading skills, Cultura's model of only L1 writing might be suitable

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The Chilean EFL Education and Its Challenges

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During the early 90's and with the end of the military regime, several insufficiencies were detected in the Chilean Educational System. This led the Government to propel a programme oriented to create initiatives and challenges to overcome a huge gap produced between public and private education (Arellano, 2001). Under this, an integrated set of changes was proposed as it follows:

1. Programmes for educational improvement and innovation.
2. Professional development of teachers.
3. Reform of curricula.
4. Full-day classes.

Amid these innovations, there still was a necessity of developing the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in the country. In this light, the idea of making Chile a bilingual country, based on the imperative need of gaining access to the Information Society, was added to the new challenges that the globalised world presented. Despite the fact of being geographically isolated from English speaking countries, Chile has developed an urgent need for its people to learn this language. Arellano (2001) ex-Minister of Education, pointed out the achievements and difficulties that the instruction in the English language has implied.

> Notwithstanding the positive impact represented by this progress, however, the poor results obtained by the vast majority of students in comparison with international standards are worthy of note. Over 60% of the pupils in Chilean schools fail to reach the levels considered desirable for the eighth grade. (Arellano, 2001:90)

Because of this situation, the Chilean Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) has taken into consideration the development and design of the Chilean National Curriculum in relation to the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). In order to achieve this purpose, the *English Opens Doors Program* (PIAP Programa Inglés Abre Puertas) was created in 2003. This plan

intends to reach an instrumental level of English among students who finish high school. The programme has also established several targets within the following ten years: the creation of national examinations for students (SIMCE), in-service training courses for EFL teachers, and a set of specific procedures for evaluating the way in which the foreign language is taught in our country. However, the efforts made by the government have not been efficient enough to solve the problems in teaching/learning English as a foreign language.

In relation to Arellano's appreciation of the Chilean reality, in 2004, the National Government looked for evidence of the English proficiency level in the country before carrying out the abovementioned improvements. As a result, the University of Cambridge ESOL Examination was put in charge of applying an English Proficiency Test, which tested students who were in 8th grade of primary and 4th grade of secondary school, having a total of 11.000 students from 299 schools sitting the exam throughout the country. The results obtained from the test were appalling. In general terms, Chilean students were not able to reach the *Threshold/ALTE2* level set in the standards; only a minor percent of students was in *Waystage/ALTE1* level, and a vast majority had to be located amid the *Breakthrough, Lower breakthrough* and *Pre-breakthrough* levels, being the last two especially created to evaluate the Chilean reality.

In simple words, although there were no other evidences existing before this test was applied, the results showed a negative situation in the EFL Chilean reality in general. The vast majority of the students showed little command of the language, and after having spent eight years learning English, it seemed that the way in which it was being taught was scarcely effective. In this sense, the Senior English language teaching consultant for the MINEDUC between 2003 and 2006, Mr. Andrew Sheehan (2009), pointed out the following:

> (…) The results were a disaster, but not a surprise. Almost all the students were completely off the official, international scale: (…) less than 6% reached the target set by MINEDUC, and only 5% of the 4º Medio students reached the target. (para.3)

Consequently, causes and possible ways to face the current reality towards EFL teaching had to be developed.

As some irregularities have been already detected, the MINEDUC published the Curricular Adjustment for Teaching English (2009). Through this document it was officially declared that students' needs were oriented to a Communicative Approach.

> Learning a foreign language is a progressive building process that implies the exposition, reiteration, exercising, expansion and enrichment of oral and written experiences in the foreign language. It also implies the enhancement of the abilities of students to identify, foretell; relate, synthesize and infer information. (p. 1)

These adjustments took into consideration several aspects as: geographic situation, context, teachers' training; classroom hours for the subject in the school, curriculum and number of students. Harmer (2007) suggests that EFL students should focus on the communication of real messages and not only on grammar-controlled messages.

In addition, the current Minister of Education, Mr. Joaquín Lavín (2010) has pointed out that the existing national curriculum to teach English is not designed to learn the language properly. An example of this is the lack of tutoring at earlier stages than fifth grade. Also, most of the teachers who are teaching English to children are not specialised.

In response to the needs Chile still has to develop the English language appropriately, a number of current drawbacks must be taken into consideration. First of all, issues; such as, the lack of specialised teachers of English in the primary and secondary school system turns up as an urgent need to be accomplished. Secondly, there is a poor and practically nonexistent set of standards in order to measure the performance of English language teachers, fact that is not taken into account within the national curriculum. Besides, it is necessary to mention that by 2011, English will be a requirement for the SIMCE test. In this way, about 240.000 students of third year of high school will be evaluated through the *Toeic Bridge* exam, which seems a good intention of involving students with the goal of bilingualism; however, teaching methodologies have not had big changes since 2004. This might lead to similar results to the ones obtained in that very year.

Thirdly, pre-service teaching programmes for EFL teachers seem to be outdated in relation to the current needs the country has (Sheehan, 2009). Oppositely to what many people might assume,

not only motivation towards facing a foreign language concerns the students, but also teachers may have motivation problems since many can feel stuck in their own language proficiency level. The truth is that a teacher must be always confident about his knowledge, the contents that are taught by him and the development of classroom management strategies. In this sense, there is evidence that confidence to teach subject matter influences the teaching outcome (Bandura, 1997, p.11). It is widely known the challenge that teaching a foreign language involves; moreover, when students do not learn, teachers are the ones to blame. For the aforementioned reason, teachers must always evidence ontological security and let their students notice their authority in the classroom. In the same line, taking control over pressure and other unfavourable situations is an excellent idea; however, teachers need to find a balance between this authority and the right of students to express themselves, even if this implies admitting mistakes and weaknesses on their side.

Fourth, language teaching implies having different students, who feel identified with diverse learning styles. Hence, using a single approach might not be the best idea to come closer to each student. In this sense, the over usage of the grammar-based approach has been a constant problem within the Chilean system. "Grammar is like a terrible sickness or plague in Chile. It seems to affect everyone and there is not cure – just a vicious circle which repeats itself with each new generation of English teachers" (Sheehan, 2009, q.10).

Grammar-based teaching is still being a matter of discussion among educators. The truth is that the demands of the Knowledge Society call schools and universities to grow students who are more able to communicate than placing the subject in its correct place. Galloway (1993) assures that the Communicative Approach is born in response to the dissatisfaction around audiolingual and grammar-translation methods. Communicative linguists claim that the abovementioned methods are not realistic, since they are not intended to know how to communicate social language, gestures, or expressions, but instead students suffer a loss of communication in the culture of the language studied. At the same time, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approaches offer a number of advantages than can potentially reinforce and provide good chances of language acquisition, as they are learner-centred. Following this thought, Richards & Rodgers (2001) listed some characteristics that place communicative

approaches as an innovative way of teaching foreign languages, in order to develop the competences society demands:

1. Language is a system for the expression of meaning.
2. The primary function of language is to allow interaction and communication.
3. The structure of language reflects its function and communicative uses.
4. The primary units of language are not merely its grammatical and structural features, but categories of functional and communicative meaning, as exemplified in discourse. (161)

As a result, the inclusion of the CLT practices turns up as a contribution to solve the educational problem Chile faces in English Language Teaching (ELT).

Fifth, bad behaviour, lack of motivation against the subject and a general spoilt children's attitude are the most recurring problems teachers deal with. Past generations were educated under the assumption that learning a foreign language was not as imperative as it is nowadays in our country. Hence, the fact of having an unsupportive home environment can be counted as a relevant interfering factor in the class. Students find no reason why should they learn a foreign language. Lopez (2009, p. 3) assures that the family environment of students sets the first motivation towards languages; there is a big difference in learning motivation when children are provided with dictionaries, music in another language, or when they are congratulated for having good marks. This situation will surely have an impact on how relevant a foreign language for students is, and consequently, it will impact the performance of the student in the learning process. In other words, the teacher will depend on the attitude of the student towards the subject. Manzaneda (1997, p.11) concluded that the most effective teachers are those who evidence a good methodological development, but, at the same time, are able to think about their students' needs and adapt their lessons according to them. Plus, it has been also demonstrated that students who have boring, unmotivated and unmotivating teachers will react negatively (Sheehan, 2009, para.16).

As a response to the situation presented throughout this paper, an innovative initiative towards the teaching of English in the South of Chile has turned up. Based on the educational context of the city of Valdivia, the project DID-S-2009-16 *"Inglés actuando*

el Lenguaje" is an attempt to create an effective acquisition of the language in an enjoyable setting. Having the support of the Universidad Austral de Chile (UACh), a group of researchers, composed by teachers and undergraduate students belonging to the English teaching training programme have been implementing Communicative Teaching Practices (CTP); plus, active use of the Natural Approach (Krashen, et al., 1981, p.99) complemented by the inclusion of drama, games and the Total Physical Response method (TPR) (Asher, 2006, p. 321-331) (in the local reality. In order to achieve this, a number of 8[th]graders of four different schools were selected as the subjects of study.

Initial results have shown that students feel more comfortable learning the language and demonstrate an enhancement in their performance in the class through the implementation of CTP. Additionally, the adequate management of anxiety levels and the awareness of the affective filter in the student are also taken into account (Krashen, 1985, p. 3-4). In this sense, the usage of CTP can strengthen the teaching practices carried out normally in the Chilean classes, encouraging the student's production and interaction in the target language, as well as, the variety of approaches and authentic communicative situations in the class.

Wessels (1987, p.11) suggested that teaching based on drama techniques proposes a teacher that allows learners to take responsibility for their own learning. This must be done in such way that the teacher can take a less dominant role in the classroom without losing the respect of the class or losing control. At the same time, the teacher must be enthusiastic and have a meticulous planning and structuring, so that the students are provided with a constant supply of stimuli. These elements will keep them active and alert (p.15). Regarding the students, Wessels assures that "in drama we have a *unique pedagogic situation*, where a teacher sees himself as teaching but the participant does not see himself as learning" (p.16). In our context, Contreras (2002, para. 4) mentions that activities based on drama open different possibilities for the self-knowledge and the development of expressiveness of the body and soul.
To sum up, the implementation of communicative practices can potentially contribute to the current state of the art in Chile. As more teachers take part in teaching of English as a foreign language, a number of challenges turn up on the way: however, creating little improvements in the system and updating old-fashioned teaching practices can solve somehow the number of problems a nation under development faces towards English language teaching, always bearing in mind that education must

take into account the learner's perspective and interests. Once again, the role of the teacher is very important, as they are responsible for developing expertise in their profession; nonetheless, this is not accomplished only by the fact of doing the job, but also by reflecting upon their experiences. It is advisable for every EFL teacher to look for professional development programmes, in order to improve the quality in which their students are educated. Hence, the MINEDUC must provide opportunities and rewards for teachers who are willing to enroll and take advantage of these chances.

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