

English language teaching in the post-methods era:

Selected papers from the 39th FAAPI Conference

Edited by Darío Luis Banegas

Mario López-Barrios

Melina Porto

María Alejandra Soto



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From the editors

The topic of this year's FAAPI Conference invites the audience to take a fresh look at the notion of Postmethod, which B. Kumaravadivelu contributed to set on the agenda of ELT researchers and practitioners as from the early 1990s. In a much quoted article, this author proposed a new framework to elaborate pedagogic courses of action based on a number of macrostrategies:

(a) maximize learning opportunities, (b) facilitate negotiated interaction, (c) minimize perceptual mismatches, (d) activate intuitive heuristics, (e) foster language awareness, (f) contextualize linguistic input, (g) integrate language skills, (h) promote learner autonomy, (i) raise cultural consciousness, and (j) ensure social relevance. (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, p. 32)

The contributions included in this selection of papers presented in this year's FAAPI Conference are all closely related to these macrostrategies, which we, in turn, have related to a number of themes: the context of TEFL in Spanish-Speaking Latin America, particularly in Argentina, Culture in TEFL, Materials development and CALL, Course development and evaluation.

The first group of papers deals with the local context of TEFL and the relevance of localization of curricula, materials and classroom practices. As an introduction to the strand, in a reflective article, Banegas discusses methods and postmethods in Argentina. Drawing on the works of Paulo Freire and Peter McLaren, the author offers a critical and liberatory view of pedagogy. From this perspective, he discusses the notions of methods and postmethods as colonial and postcolonial constructs respectively. Following Kumaravadivelu's parameters of particularity, practicality, and possibility, Banegas

reviews published research from different contexts and then narrows down the scope of the article to ELT in Argentina and the presence of coursebooks. The author includes several professional aims which highlight empowerment, context-responsive pedagogies, and socialising Argentina-based experience in ELT.

The following two papers look into the decision-making process of a group of teachers (Soto) and the impact of observation and reflection in initial teacher development (Cadario). Relying upon the work of Kumaravadivelu, Brown and other commentators, Soto reflects upon post-method pedagogy in the light of the local context. By reflecting upon concrete classroom data, the author analyses the methodological decisions taken by a number of secondary school teachers and makes a case for teachers as creators of their own contexts and of their own methodologies. Thus, the author advocates the implementation of teacher development and teacher education programmes that aid and enhance the adoption of context-situated, teacher-developed methodologies. With the aim to help students at Teacher Training College to get multiple and sustained opportunities for observing and reflecting upon their professional worlds, in particular at early stages of their studies, Cadario proposes a series of observation and reflection tasks whereby student teachers, mediated by other people in their communities of practice, will gradually develop an understanding of different ways of being and doing in the language classroom. Cadario argues that as they do, student teachers will start thinking about and developing their own ways of being and doing in their classrooms, developing their teacher identities in the process.

The last paper in this strand reflects one more feature of this year's FAAPI Conference: the first edition of the Latin American Congress of EFL teachers. In a collaborative writing project, two colleagues from Mexico (Homquist & González Rodríguez) and one colleague from Argentina (Gil Castro) deal with the role that exposure to English through advertising and film subtitles may have on EFL learners' interlanguage development. To this effect, they analysed advertisements and films found in Latin America and concentrated on two types of occurrences: English words from the field of entertainment and film subtitles. The authors conclude that English in advertising, entertainment, and technology may be considered as a valuable means to enhance the learning of English in the classroom through the use of tasks and strategies which integrate English with learners' L1.

The second strand is devoted to culture in TEFL, a theme that ties directly with the macrostrategies "raise cultural consciousness" and "ensure social relevance". In her paper, Melina Porto describes an online intercultural citizenship project about the environment in the primary English language classroom carried out in 2013/2014 between Argentina and Denmark. It is part of a network of projects coordinated by Michael Byram (Durham University, UK) that involves teachers and researchers in Europe, the US and East Asia. The project is framed within the theory of intercultural citizenship in the foreign language which brings together foreign language education and citizenship education. The project integrates the pillar of intercultural communicative competence from foreign language education with the emphasis on civic action in the community from citizenship education. In Argentina, the intercultural view of English language teaching and learning is taken into consideration in the proposed curricula for national and state foreign language teaching,

which give a central role to interculturalism. Given the importance that the intercultural communicative approach currently has in our context, Salcedo and Sacchi conducted a research study among primary and secondary school teachers to reveal what EFL teachers believe about teaching culture and the presence of culture in their courses.

A further strand centres on materials development, an area in which many of the macrostrategies that characterize post-methods approaches can be realized. Three papers are included in this group: one describing the production of materials for state-run primary schools (Cad), another which analyzes the treatment of vocabulary learning strategies in elementary level teaching materials (Helale, López Barrios & San Martín), and one on the writing and trialling of materials for a multilingual reading course (Lauría). The first paper presents materials developed by a group of teachers for the context of state-run primary schools with an all-day school programme (*Jornada Extendida*) aiming to encourage meaningful learning experiences that are connected to students' daily lives. Cad argues that the materials, available online, are graded and provide affordable contextualized resources. All the activities and topics revolve around local children's socio-cultural context and linguistic needs, thus taking care of the characteristics of the particular context. The promotion of learner autonomy through learning materials is the concern of Helale, López Barrios and San Martín. In particular, the authors focus on the relevance that strategy training bears to help learners increase and consolidate their lexical competence. To this end, a corpus of ELT coursebooks is analysed to gauge the extent to which vocabulary learning strategies are an integral component of popular teaching materials. Findings report on the different types of salient vocabulary learning strategies employed as well as on their main characteristics. In the last contribution in the strand, Lauría describes one stage of a

research project which aims at the simultaneous development of the ability to read texts in Dutch, German and English through specially designed materials. This topic relates to several of Kumaravadivelu's macrostrategies, in addition to the promotion of multiple literacies, language awareness and plurilingualism. In the article, the stage under focus is the materials development stage. The author describes text selection according to the criteria of authenticity, learners' needs, and cultural appropriateness among others, text elaboration through different strategies, and task design. The author also includes a brief account of the trialling phase of such materials and the promising results they offer.

The last papers in this collection mirror different aspects of postmethods pedagogy and relate to other contemporary concerns in education: the development of digital literacy and the use of post-course student survey results to improve course development and curricula and to tap into affective issues. The paper by Leceta and Castro springs from a research project on strategies and digital literacies in the acquisition of English pronunciation, whose aim is to determine whether pronunciation can be improved by means of an explicit and systematic training in learning strategies in relation to digital literacies. In the contribution, the authors describe the data collection instruments designed for this mixed research design that combines questionnaires that tap into the learner's strategic behaviour as well as tests to measure the impact of the blended learning experience on students phonological development.

The contribution submitted by Carrión Cantón, Pino and Carreras seeks to explore the use of ICT to promote formative assessment. Bearing the main principles of test construction in mind, the article argues for the use of technologies and social networks to

foster collaborative work, self-assessment and peer assessment among secondary school learners, keeping on a par with learner centred methodologies. The authors also advocate the use of ICT as a means to connect the classroom to the outside world, and to promote equal opportunities for all learners. In order to connect theory to practice, Carrión Cantón and colleagues describe a number of resources and provide a series of example tasks.

Last but not least, Mayol discusses the impact of learners' voices on the ESP teaching practices at Universidad Nacional de Misiones. This contribution may be seen as needs analysis and programme evaluation account primarily based on a survey completed by over 700 learners. Responses were condensed around three main categories: teaching methodologies, materials, and assessment. The author concludes that their experience with post-methods has resulted in highly context-responsive practices which have helped develop theories from practice.

All in all, the twelve papers included in this collection cover a broad spectrum of issues that bear a direct relationship with postmethod pedagogical concerns, and that, most importantly, reflect different aspects of the local teaching and learning context. This marks an interesting, and liberating, change in Argentinian ELT: the recognition of the relevance of the local context of practice (of the *periphery*) rather than the passive consumption of and attempts to make fit pedagogical practices characteristic of societies in the *central* nations.

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From FAAPI President

I am honoured again to write some words for the FAAPI 2014 Selected Papers. And we are already approaching the XXXIX Conference. At the same time, we have the pleasure of holding the First Latin American Congress of Teachers of English. So, in the emergent political scenario of a united Latin America, we are getting together to meet, share and think common issues in ELT. We find the land is fertile. So, here we go!

The topic of this year's conference is most alluring: "EFL Learning and Teaching in The Post Methods Era". Let us take time to stop and analyse what is understood by method, however known it is for all of us.

The well-trodden Direct Method left as a legacy the notion of "method" itself (Richards & Rodgers, p.14). It refers to a theoretically consistent set of teaching procedures that define best practice in language teaching (ibid, p.15) To cut a long story short, the constant attraction to "method" stems from the late 1950s, according to these authors, when foreign language teachers were falsely let to believe that there was A (my emphasis) method to remedy the "language teaching and learning problems." (Lange, 1990, p. 253).

Methods probably were so attractive as "the history of language teaching has been characterized by a search for more effective ways of teaching second or foreign languages" (ibid, p.viii). The role of grammar, accuracy and fluency in teaching, the role of vocabulary and other issues presided over the terrain of ELT.

Then, before the eyes of curious and dedicated EFL teachers, as if in a slideshare, different methods paraded, each one with the mirage-like clothing of the "ideal method":

from Total Physical Response, Competency-Based Language Teaching, Content-Based Instruction to name just a few, although there was one that seemed to come to stay: Communicative Language Teaching. This one expounds Communicative Competence, and in recent years it was compounded in Intercultural Communicative Competence. A globalised world seems to demand this added tag.

So, a new current of alternative methods outside of the framework of brand-names and approaches appeared on the horizon. Undeniably, the recognised methods and approaches have drawn on with them general principles that the inexperienced teachers need as the ABC of the profession. Once we become experienced and expert, routinised some facets of our activities “at the chalkface” (however obsolete the chalk appears in this new century, but it describes our daily duties), not only do we look for new outlooks on the profession but also apply some concepts or why not “theories” we have developed from our own experience.

The postmethod era has as its “fathers,” thinkers like Kumaravadivelu who coined the word and cited the emergence of a postmethod condition in the literature on teaching second/foreign languages. He claims that methods lack flexibility, and appears to be the author who discusses and critiques methods in the most comprehensive and detailed fashion. He recognises contexts are very real determinants of pedagogy.

We have also seen Dogme Language with Scott Thornbury, Jim Scrivener proposing “demand high” ELT detached from orthodoxy, and we continue searching for the ideal method.

We can conclude that such a thing is the Holy Grail. I daresay the ideal method does not exist. What we can do is to take a bit from different methods and approaches and with a thorough needs analysis of our reality, especially the needs of our students, think and plan consequently.

So, this FAAPI appears as an appropriate ambience to discuss methods, the post methods era, from the learners' and the teachers' perspective and teaching and learning under this new light. As Kumaravadivelu expounds wisely: "a methods analysis can be done... by analyzing and interpreting what has been written about methods, but a teaching analysis can be done only by entering the classroom arena where a method or a combination of methods is used" (2006, p. xvii). There is where the truth is unveiled.

Cristina Emilia Mayol, M.A.

FAAPI President

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www.faapi.org.ar
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Asociación de Profesores de Inglés de Santiago del Estero (APISE)

www.apise.org.ar
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The context of EFL

1 Of methods and post-methods: A view from Argentina

Darío Luis Banegas

Ministerio de Educación del Chubut, Argentina &

University of Warwick, UK

D.Banegas@warwick.ac.uk

1. Introduction

To talk about a post-method era is to acknowledge that at some point in our personal or collective career as teachers we were trained for a method or methods which we then implemented in our practices. To talk about methods, policies, and education includes politics and ideologies regardless of whether we are in more or less affluent contexts (see Khong & Saito, 2014). Pedagogies are also part of the politics of society as they help construct, deconstruct and maintain power relationships. Pedagogies are also part of our social fabric and therefore we need to work towards developing them to meet our contexts.

Paulo Freire believed that pedagogy had to be liberatory in the quest for challenging the status quo of dominant classes and social practices. In a review of Freire's conception of education, Beckett (2013) remarks that Freire's pedagogy for liberation is based on dialogue between teachers and learners and what they can do together as co-investigators of the social forces and context around them.

Similarly, Peter McLaren (1995) asserts that methods and monolithic pedagogies are features of colonialism (still alive and kicking through means more or less sophisticated) and that

critical pedagogies belong to a post-colonial period. With reference to post-colonial pedagogies, McLaren (1995, p. 231) conceptualises critical pedagogy as follows:

Critical pedagogy, on the other hand, brings into the arena of schooling practices insurgent, resistant, and insurrectional modes of interpretation which set out to imperil the familiar, to contest the legitimating norms of mainstream social life and to render problematic the common discursive frames and regimes within which “proper” behavior, comportment, and social interactions are premised. Critical pedagogy attempts to analyze and unsettle extant power configurations, to defamiliarize and make remarkable what is often passed off as the ordinary, the mundane, the routine, the banal. In other words, critical pedagogy ambiguates the complacency of teaching under the sign of modernity, that is, under a sign in which knowledge is approached as ahistorical and neutral and separated from value and power.

Under this view, a post-method pedagogy is envisioned as resistance for the inclusion of voices, for the incorporation of dialogue, and for the recognition of the forces which permeate formal education. What follows is my attempt to unpack these aspects.

2. Of methods and post-methods

According to Douglas Brown (2002, p. 9), “a method is a set of theoretically unified classroom techniques thought to be generalizable across a wide variety of contexts and audiences.” In his view, methods are prescriptive, overgeneralised and developed a priori in terms of place of implementation and actors involved in it. He adds that a method is quite distinct at the beginning of a course but it becomes less clear as such a course progresses. As a reaction to this notion of method, the author proposes a principled approach in which teachers’ classroom techniques are grounded on their context and well-established principles of language teaching and learning beyond a particular, prepackaged method.

From a distinctively critical pedagogy lens, Kumaravadivelu (2003) defines methods as colonial constructs conceptualised by theorists, not methods actualised by teachers in their everyday practices. As a sign of growth and challenge, he views postmethod as a postcolonial construct which is bottom-up and comes to place context, teachers, and the observed curriculum in a relevant place away from marginalisation.

More recently, Richards (2013, p. 18) offers a definition of postmethod in postmethod teaching:

This term is sometimes used to refer to teaching which is not based on the prescriptions and procedures of a particular method nor which follows a pre-determined syllabus but which draws on the teacher's individual conceptualizations of language, language learning and teaching, the practical knowledge and skills teachers develop from training and experience, the teacher's knowledge of the learners' needs, interests and learning styles, as well as the teacher's understanding of the teaching context (Kumaravadivelu, 1994). The teacher's 'method' is constructed from these sources rather than being an application of an external set of principles and practices. The kinds of content and activities that the teacher employs in the classroom as well as the outcomes he or she seeks to achieve will depend upon the nature of the core principles that serve as the basis for the teacher's thinking and decision-making.

As seen in the quote above, it is impossible to talk about postmethods without referring to Bala Kumaravadivelu. Kumaravadivelu's (2001, 2006) programme of post-method pedagogies is characterised by the following definition of pedagogy:

I use the term pedagogy in a broad sense to include not only issues pertaining to classroom strategies, instructional materials, curricular objectives, and evaluation measures, but also a wide range of historical, political, and sociocultural experiences that directly or indirectly influence L2 education. (2001, p. 538)

Post-method pedagogies are to be shaped by three context-driven parameters: particularity, practicality, and possibility.

As regards particularity, Kumaravadivelu (2001, p. 538) advocates that

any postmethod pedagogy has to be a pedagogy of particularity. That is to say, language pedagogy, to be relevant, must be sensitive to a particular group of teachers teaching a particular group of learners pursuing a particular set of goals within a particular institutional context embedded in a particular sociocultural milieu.

Such a definition of particularity lends itself to the need for developing local and localised pedagogies which respond to both teachers and learners in their context. Under this view and probably following a Freiran stance, Kumaravadivelu treats teachers and learners as co-explorers who establish a relationship based on dialogue. A notable example of this dialogue can be recently found in Rocha Pessoa and Urzêda Freitas (2012). These authors report the development of critical language practices at a language centre in Brazil. The aim of their experience was to develop language and critical thinking skills through the discussion of topics such as racism or sexuality.

Establishing a dialogue-based relationship with learners is paramount. So is dialogue among teachers and their totalising contexts. To this effect, we can encourage the use of a narrative approach among teachers to explore context. Barkhuizen (2008) suggests that narrative inquiry is a way to help teachers understand their context so that their practices are sensitive to their contexts. The author moves on to assert that when teachers talk about their practices over a period of time, they may start understanding their context at a deeper level and comprehend the significance of events in their professional lives.

The parameter of particularity can be realised through the development of materials. For example, a group of teacher-researchers (Barboza, Bognano & Cad, 2011) shared at FAAPI 2011 their experience with developing EFL materials for state-run primary schools in Córdoba. Their aim was to produce materials which responded to their local curriculum and, above all, their context. Another account is advanced in Barboni and Simón (2013) in relation to intercultural e-materials.

At a macro-level, particularity may be associated with larger projects and educational policies. In this respect, concerns in Latin America are more evident in the recent literature. In Colombia, Valencia (2013) calls for language policies which are bottom-up and context responsive. Similarly, in Mexico, Reyes Quezada (2013) hopes that EFL teachers develop methods which are directly responsive to their students' needs.

In turn, practicality should be understood as the relationship between theory and practice or professional/external theories and personal/internal theories. Practicality lends itself to autonomy, reflective teaching, and action research for the development of context-sensitive pedagogic knowledge. Last, the parameter of possibility is related to pedagogy as power inequality. Through possibility, we aim at empowering teachers and learners.

These three parameters are an invitation to look at our own contexts but they demand new roles for learners, teachers, and teacher educators at teacher education programmes. These three actors need to be autonomous beings who develop critical thinking skills and engage in social and liberatory autonomy. Teachers and teacher educators also have the role of becoming reflective practitioners engaged in teacher research and concerned with developing coherent

practices which recognise different voices and theories and work towards empowerment from and for their contexts.

3. Of trends and issues in ELT

As regards trends in Argentina, Paz and Quintero (2009) once delivered a provocative plenary talk at FAAPI 2009. The point of departure was their assumption that teachers are usually viewed as implementers and technicians whose job is to put into practice what foreign specialists advocate. We may agree that there are settings where adhering to *the latest trends* is a must. However, is it fair to say that those teachers carry out blind implementation?

In a substantiated publication, Abad (2013, p. 104) points out that

EFL teachers are not mere technicians who replicate prescribed curricula or who enact imposed policies, but autonomous professionals who exercise personal and political agency with varying degrees of awareness.

As a concluding thought to his chapter on methods and post-methods, Hall (2011, p. 120) suggests that “theory may inform teachers’ decisions, but (...) teachers will still be guided by their sense of what is and what is not plausible.”

Paz and Quintero (2009) wish to promote critical praxis from and for our Argentinian context as a way to resist imposed foreign policies and international gurus. We also have our own experts and *experts* going to places they have very little knowledge of. While we must agree that praxis, in Freiran terms, needs to be the Southern Cross of context-responsive pedagogies, we must also acknowledge the fact that imposing policies are not only foreign but *made in Argentina*. In this sense, there are agendas and power inequality operating both at international

and national levels. We should be aware of and celebrate the differences between an official curriculum and an enacted curriculum provided the latter is based on informed decisions and inquiry. I would like to see curricula and approaches which are bottom-up, context-responsive and focused on learners and teachers rather than on learning and teaching (see Banegas & Velázquez, in press).

I would like to close this section by drawing on Waters (2012). According to this author, ELT methods and trends are very easy to detect in the professional discourse through publications and conference. The same cannot be said from classrooms and the extent to which such promoted ideas correspond to practice.

The author makes the distinction between theoretical developments and practice. In his view the conceptualisation of a method as a monolithic entity and the notions of postmethod, appropriate pedagogy, and critical pedagogy mostly take place at a theoretical level but they have been with teachers for a long time in various ways. Conversely, some *traditional methods* are still found in practice together with innovative strategies, tools, and approaches.

For the purposes of comparing what ELT experts advocate in theory and what practice shows through coursebooks, Waters compares *Headway Intermediate* from the 1996 and 2009 editions. While some aspects did change at a minimum level, both editions still feature artificial dialogues, contrived tasks and situations, and practice activities which simply promote form over meaning. In the section which follows I wish to refer to coursebooks in the so-called postmethod era.

4. Coursebooks

Coursebooks are artefacts which are ideology-carriers. They are also a reminder that the ELT world is business and that coursebooks are commodities. Publishers, above all, want to sell books at any cost. Furthermore, many teachers want to use one coursebook that will save their lives. In this landscape, Gray (2013) calls for critical and interdisciplinary materials analysis which helps teachers and teacher educators see what lies underneath coursebooks.

Coursebook analysis may show that Water's (2012) division between ELT developments in theory and in practice is correct since these do not run in parallel. For example, Banegas (2014) highlights the differences between CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) in theory and how it has been deceptively included in global coursebooks with the aim of publicising innovation.

While coursebook analysis is usually the focus of several publications every year, studies on teachers' uses of them are scanty (but see Part 2 in Harwood, 2013). In my experience as a teacher educator, I usually tell my trainees that when we analyse a coursebook, we are looking at a dead tool. It is a teacher who will bring it to life in ways we cannot fully anticipate.

Forman (2014) goes beyond coursebook analysis and investigates how three Thai teachers at their local university treat the global coursebook in use. According to content analysis, the coursebook is characterised by consumerism, individualism, and a cosmopolitan and affluent lifestyle. One of the participating teachers acknowledges that her practices are coursebook-driven and adds:

I know what I SHOULD do for students, but I don't have TIME to create the activities or the environment that will make my students learn the language more. (p. 79)

Forman calls for teachers to intervene the coursebook instead of endorsing it blindly. The author believes that coursebooks need to feature both global and local contents, and that teachers may be the agents of change if they start co-developing their own materials. However, Forman knows that local teachers' development of materials is limited by large class sizes, teaching and marking loads, and low pay. These factors are obstacles in the road to informed and principled teacher-made materials which respond to Kumaravadivelu's three parameters of post-method pedagogies. Yet, such an enterprise is not impossible to achieve.

5. What I want to work for

Maybe this is a narcissistic and less academic way of closing this contribution, but I want to make sure that I do not just twit (Oh, I don't have Twitter, oh well, too bad) or facebook a revolution. These are my professional aims and by retirement (a long way to go) I wish I can say that I achieved some of them with the help of colleagues.

I aim at moving away from best practice to good practice. The former is Fordian, carries undertones of imitation regardless of context, and seems computational (the input goes in here, and here's the output). The latter is reflective, grounded on praxis and context and based on what is possible and practical in our classrooms. In 2013, Silvia Rettaroli organised a presentation on good practice stories at the FAAPI Conference in Buenos Aires and the audience enjoyed a powerful collection of narratives from/for the classroom.

I aim at making more connections between theories and practices in teacher education and professional development. I would like to see congruent practices in teacher education. I would like to see different approaches being enacted in our *profesorados*. Lecturing on them is not enough. And what happens once graduates leave our teacher education institutions? Have we ever heard of an approach developed by a practitioner still teaching? Do we really believe that teachers are mere implementers? How can we help teachers become co-authors of their own initiatives? How can we encourage them to give talks either face-to-face or through webinars?

I aim at developing methods and approaches with teachers and learners. I am not convinced by the idea of *a method* because nothing is pure. In relation to this aim, I would like to work towards approaches developed by practitioners and teacher educators in Argentina. I would like to see systematic examination of enacted curricula across Argentina. I would like to work with colleagues who wish to understand what they do and arrive at principled practices.

I aim at producing teacher-made materials. It saddens me to see Facebook groups whose sole aim seems to be sharing coursebooks in pdf format. Some may say that they are expensive and difficult to purchase in today's Argentina. But, if teachers make a profit or benefit from the work of others in the publishing industry, why would they refuse to pay? If they do not want to pay, then they should not use that coursebook and develop their own resources. The only way we can move from the global to the local and from methods to postmethods is if we become involved in the process.

I aim at spreading the works of Argentinian colleagues. Our country has notable educators who are in a position to write ELT methodology coursebooks. How many of us have read Braun (2011), Barboni (2012) or the [FAAPI Conference Proceedings](#) produced year after

year? To what extent do we socialise our local publications? How many of us cite Argentinian authors *together with* international authors? Readers should notice that I aim at collaboration, both national and international. I do not say *instead of* but *together with*. We do not need to close our doors. We need to add our own voices and let everybody listen to what we do.

Finally, I aim at creating spaces for the dissemination of our practices and research. In this regard I feel blessed with the birth of [AJAL](#) (Argentinian Journal of Applied Linguistics). Writing for an academic journal helps us think and share our professional trajectories in a sustainable format. AJAL is an open-access online journal and therefore anyone can read its contents. It is not only for academics or trainers but also for teachers engaged in sharing their classroom accounts and projects (for example see De Cunto & García, 2014; Quiroga, 2014). In order to keep AJAL alive, we need more contributions and contributors ready for the challenge of peer review.

6. Envoi

If we want to enact post-method pedagogies in our country, if we want to produce context-responsive approaches which meet the demands and motivations of our learners and colleagues, guess who's got to do something? You! All of us. Together. We have been working towards this for years. Perhaps we only need to make our efforts more visible.

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2 Eclecticism in the “new” foreign language classroom: re-thinking practices and developing an awareness of context in teacher training college

Elisa Cadario

Universidad Nacional de Río Cuarto

elisa.cadario@gmail.com

1. The challenge of training post-method teachers

Long and well set paradigms about what a foreign language teacher should be and what her or his job is have changed enormously in the last years and teachers' roles and practices need to be re-examined and re-evaluated in the light of such changes. A new society and our 'new learners' in a globalized world call for teachers that are prepared to develop a whole fresh identity to cope with many diverse contextual realities and key concepts in teacher education programs nowadays seem to be flexibility, adaptability and contextual awareness.

The big challenge for us teacher trainers at university is to equip future teachers with the conceptual knowledge and competences that will allow them to take methodological decisions that suit the different contexts in which they will soon be teaching and do so without them having had experience in teaching yet. No doubt about it, sound theoretical foundations at many different levels are required for them to be able satisfy the needs, learning styles and 'likes' of

their learners and also their own teaching identities, but common sense and an understanding of the variables that construe the different teaching contexts appear to be ‘must have’ skills.

The ‘method-era’ seems to be over and giving way to a ‘post-method era’ in which teachers should not be trained in the principles and techniques of a new alternative method but on an alternative *to* method (Kumaravadivelu, 1994). The teaching method that can satisfy the needs of every learner and every teacher in every possible classroom around the world is no longer here for us and every method has to be re-evaluated in the light of specific teaching contexts.

A distinction of what is meant by the concepts of method and post-method is in line at this point. Kumaravadivelu (1994, p. 29) proposes that while a method is defined by “a single set of theoretical principles derived from feeder disciplines and a single set of classroom procedures directed at classroom teachers”, post-method is conceived as the development of a unique set of classroom practices by teachers themselves, tailored to their own identities, beliefs and teaching styles and, most importantly, designed to suit the specific contexts in which they teach. As Can (2010) proposes, while methods involve the presence of theorizers constructing knowledge-oriented theories, post-method involves practitioners doing, eventually, the same thing: constructing their own classroom-oriented teaching theories on principled grounds. The obvious conclusion could be then that offering trainee teachers a set of infallible techniques and successful all-purpose- all-contexts procedures or ‘teaching-formula for all’ will be of little or no help for them.

Nevertheless, teacher education programs need to make future teachers aware of the fact that post-method does not disregard the importance of possessing knowledge of existing

methodological approaches- the principles and theories underlying them and their formats- because it is precisely this knowledge gained in teacher development programs at university together with the specific social activities in which they engage in this cultural milieu which will make them consciously aware of their own beliefs and teaching principles and provide them with a solid initial starting point (Bell, 2008).

2. Thinking about what to teach and how to help trainees develop their identities in teacher training college

Future teachers need to gain access to a big bulk of theoretical knowledge and develop their critical thinking skills to be capable of putting theories, principles, teaching techniques and strategies under scrutiny in the light of the different teaching contexts they will face. No informed decision can be taken without sound theoretical foundations and only theoretically well-equipped future teachers are able to challenge many well-established teaching traditions. Well-prepared teachers should be ready to incorporate to their language lessons ‘forbidden techniques’ such as repetition or drilling because they understand their value if properly applied in certain contexts, or use the students’ mother tongue in the L2 classroom - a strategy ‘banned’ by many methods for a long time- because this is nowadays not only acceptable but also favored as a facilitator of learning in specific contexts. Post-method, eclectic teachers know that they do not need to follow a method ‘to the letter’ to profit from it, and they can see the value, for example, of offering their students the opportunity of getting meaningful input from different sources without fully following the principles of Krashen’s Natural approach.

More importantly, these teachers can identify the principles and techniques that match their teaching identities. It is, then, our responsibility as teacher trainers to offer our future

teachers sound theoretical foundations on pedagogical principles, motivation to search for their own teaching identities and help in the identification of the variables that construe the different teaching contexts in which they will develop their profession.

How to give future teachers the ‘tools of the craftsmen’ is the other big quest for teacher trainers. Situating the process of teacher development in an epistemological stance is essential to give our job direction. The epistemological stance of a socio-cultural perspective on teacher development seems to shed some light on our quest for direction in its definition of human learning as a social activity that is dynamic and situated in specific physical and social contexts (Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978). This concept is very important for teacher development programs because in contrast to cognitive learning theories based on positivist epistemological perspectives that define learning as an internal psychological process largely free from social and physical contexts, a socio-cultural perspective views higher level human cognition as originating in social life. In other words, the specific social activities which future teachers experience and in which they engage help them develop their cognition. From this perspective, teachers’ knowledge and beliefs are constructed through and by the ways of thinking and doing that are culturally embedded in the communities of practice in which they participate –both as learners and as teachers. The inevitable conclusion appears to be then that the appropriation of existing theories and practices as abstractions is not enough for a future teacher. Theories and practices need to be reflected upon, critically evaluated, reconstructed and recreated, transformed and adapted by being experienced in their ‘natural contexts’. From this ‘experiencing’, resources that are relevant to both individual teachers and students should emerge (Johnson, 2009).

Building on the socio-cultural epistemological stand, Johnson addresses the question ‘What does a socio-cultural perspective on human learning have to offer L2 teacher education?’ One of the arguments this author puts forward is that this perspective changes the way we think about what constitutes professional development. According to her, if we believe that learning is social, then, teacher education has to be re-defined. Part of this re-definition or re-drawing should involve looking at sites of ‘teachers learning teaching’ that lie beyond typical development activities such as course-book readings, lectures or seminars to develop approaches to teacher training that are more inquiry based (Johnson, 2009).

3. Identity and pedagogy: Reflective observation in teacher development

It seems to be a must that post-method teachers are reflective and critical if they are to become autonomous in the decision making processes that become visible in their practices and to develop sensitivity not only towards their students and teaching contexts but also towards their own identities.

If viewed from a socio-cultural epistemological stand, a natural conclusion could be that trainee teachers may be supported in the unfolding of their critical and reflective skills by being encouraged to get involved in different ways in their ‘natural contexts’. Recalling and reflecting upon their experiences as language learners, watching teachers working in different contexts, talking and exchanging ideas with them and with their peers and trainers and becoming consciously aware of what they see, think and feel with such experiences may be a starting point. By being observers in and of their natural contexts of professional development they can start shaping the skills they will need to cope with different teaching situations, identify problems,

think about solutions, and appraise alternative techniques and strategies to suit their individual identities.

4. A new try in the context of teacher training college in UNRC

The process of developing their identities as future teachers seems to be long and painful for our trainee teachers and activities that aim at helping them feel more like teachers and less like language students come as a surprise in the second year when I meet the groups for the first time in a short course aimed at introducing them to the context of a language lesson but such activities still come as a surprise one year later when we meet again in the Language Didactics course.

The idea behind this paper, shaped into a small set of activities or experiences designed to be used in the courses I teach - Pasantía I and II and General Language Didactics - is to help our students to see themselves as future teachers from the start. Of course the nature of the experiences should be designed in accordance with the knowledge and experience they gradually gain in the unfolding of their careers. Lacking theoretical knowledge about methods, approaches and techniques, we need to count on their experiences as language learners and on their intuitions in the early stages of their training. As they advance in the career the observation-reflection activities aimed at this objective can be more challenging in many ways, for example, more theory-based though still aimed at helping them develop their identities, and designing the teaching methods to reveal such identities.

How can we offer them the opportunities to interact with their natural contexts and to reflect upon what they see, feel and think? How do we guide them in the process? Will our trainees benefit from the experience? Under which conditions will such observations help them

shape their identities? The spaces can be created; the outcomes of the experience are still to come.

What follows is a small ‘bank of ideas’ to guide the experiences we aim at offering our trainees and to be used in different contexts of observation – primary and secondary private and public schools, ESP and general English courses at university and even the courses they are taking as ‘students’. Some of them have been timidly put into practice in the last two years and some others are still in the process of taking shape.

The “Reflecting on your experience as a language learner” or “Picturing yourself as a language teacher” tasks can be used at very early stages as short in-class reflection moments because they do not require theoretical knowledge from the students. Questions such as the following ones trigger very interesting and valuable responses.

Reflecting on your experience as language learners

- How do you feel you learned better when you were a language student?
- Can you recall an experience in which you feel you learned something valuable/easily? What did you learn? What did the teacher do? Why do you think such experience is memorable for you? Can you describe it?

Picturing yourself as a language teacher (Early stages)

- How do you picture yourself as an English teacher?
- Which are, in your view, the characteristics that a ‘good’ teacher should have?

As they advance in their career –in the Language Didactic course, for example-, the prompts for the observation-reflection experiences can be more detached from intuitions and more theory-oriented.

Picturing yourself as a language teacher (Later stages)

Thinking about Teaching Strategies

- Which teaching strategies, do you think, will always be present in your classes? Why?
- How do you think such teaching strategies will favor language development in your learners? You can think about general strategies or be more specific and refer to concrete situations regarding students’ ages, proficiency levels, etc.

Another observation-reflection activity could be developed as follows.

Picturing yourself as a language teacher (Later stages)

Observing and reflecting on concrete teaching situations

Carefully analyze the class you are observing: number of students, ages, time of the day, physical setting. If possible, ask the teacher about the objectives of the class/course. Take notes so that you have a clear understanding of the context.

Read the questions in your guide before the class starts. If you want, apart from answering the assigned questions, take notes of things that call your attention while observing and have not been included in the list. At home, write a short reaction paper to share your observations and reflections with us.

1. What language is the teacher presenting/practicing? How is she doing it? Can you briefly describe?
2. Would you follow the same procedures? Why? Why not? If not, what things would you do differently? How? Why?
3. Can his/her students follow him/her? How do you know?
4. Are the students enjoying what they are doing? Are they engaged? How do you know?

The formats for these observation-reflection activities are infinite and another example of a task that can be used is an adaptation offered by Jim Scrivener (2005) in which students are

invited to observe and reflect with the simple assignment of thinking about what they would 'borrow' from the teacher they are observing and what they would give him/her as a present.

Also, a variation to observing concrete teaching situations is the use of video clips that can be accessed for free and are easily downloadable from different websites. In this particular case the observation-reflection activity is also very enriching because, though the students watch the clips and work on their guides individually, their perceptions, feelings and reactions are shared and discussed with the group immediately after.

The data gathered in the observation-reflection activities can be immediately used as prompts to generate group discussions in the classes or individual verbalizations in the form of reaction papers. The results of the experience can be enriching for our students as they will profit from listening to their partners' views and feelings and re-reflecting on what they have observed in the process of writing. Moreover, the results of the experience can be far reaching for us trainers as by listening to our students or reading their thoughts we can detect areas in need of improvement. This can ultimately lead to changes in both, the contents we teach and in experiences we engage our students in.

5. Conclusion

I believe students at teacher training college should get multiple and sustained opportunities for observing and reflecting upon their professional worlds. Though the experiences proposed are, at the beginning, mediated by other people in their communities of practice, they will, hopefully, come under their own control as they gradually develop an understanding of different ways of

being and doing in the language classroom and, simultaneously, start thinking about and developing their own ways of being and doing in their classrooms.

It is clear that teacher development poses many challenges for us trainers and one of them is coming into terms with the idea that the contents we teach and the experiences we engage our students in need to be relevant for them in their search for their identities as English teachers and also in their search for the understanding of their contextual realities (local, socio-political, historical and cultural). I personally believe that simple, though relevant experiences such as the ones described, will impact upon the ways in which future teachers are positioned in their roles and also upon the ways in which they will give shape to the teaching practices that will ultimately reveal their identities in the contexts in which they live, work and learn. Obviously, the observation-reflection activities shared in this paper are really low impact if compared with the high impact of real workplace environments in shaping teachers' identities. As said before, the only ambition of this proposal is to be a starting point.

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3 Post-method pedagogy: Towards enhanced context-situated teaching methodologies

María Alejandra Soto

Facultad de Humanidades, Artes y Ciencias Sociales – UADER

masotton@gmail.com

1. Introduction

The history of the development of ELT Methodology is undoubtedly well documented. For decades now, researchers have singled out and described those approaches, procedures, and techniques (Anthony, 1963) which might better support effective teaching and successful language learning (see e.g. Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Richards & Rogers, 2001). These attempts have produced a long list of methods which have, at an earlier or later time, been rendered the most appropriate. In a similar vein, the implementation of any innovative teaching method has generally entailed the demise of previous ones.

This ever changing situation appeared to have reached a plateau, first with the advent of the communicative approach, and later with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methodology, umbrella term that encompasses an array of closely related methods, such as Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) or Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL).

The idea of a one-size-fits-all method, however, has also been deemed non-viable given the intricate relationship between method and context. Thus, in the post method era, the adoption of an informed or principled approach to teaching has been proposed as an appealing alternative

to method (Douglas Brown, 2002; Kumaravadivelu, 1994, 2003a, 2003b; Prabhu, 1990). Still, this alternative does not go without criticism.

There is no doubt that teachers tend to develop their own context-bound methodologies. However, it has been suggested that without proper teacher education programmes the post-method condition might entail the risk of ELT practitioners adopting some sort of “my-own-method” style, which might result in a "hybrid" (Akbari, 2008; Gholami & Mirzaei, 2013). In other words, the apparent freedom of choice that the post method condition seems to offer ELT practitioners often results in the adoption of a jumbled concoction of techniques, which might actually represent a screen concealing teachers' limitations both to implement eclectic, principled practices that contribute to the effectiveness of the language learning process.

In the context of the above discussion, this paper looks at the main tenets underpinning the notion of the post-method era and addresses them in relation to the outcomes of a small scale survey. By reflecting upon data gathered through an online questionnaire, the presentation looks at the methodological decisions taken by the participants and analyses them in terms of available literature on the topic.

Finally, this paper makes a case for teachers as creators of their own contexts (Wedell & Malderez, 2013) and of their own methodologies, and advocates for the implementation of strategies for teacher education (TE) and development (TD) that aid and enhance the adoption of more context-situated, teacher-developed methodologies (Bax, 2003; Wedell & Malderez, 2013).

2. The death of methods, the birth of pragmatic eclecticism

Back in 2002, Douglas Brown claimed that methods were "no longer the milestones of our language teaching journey through time" (p.10) and provided some possible reasons for their

apparent demise: namely, their prescriptive nature, the mutual overlapping of the principles sustaining them; their general lack of empirical validation; and their not always overt connections with linguistic policies and ideologies.

From this author's perspective, therefore, methods are dead. Teachers no longer need to rely on a fixed set of procedures externally imposed on them and can rely on their own beliefs and assumptions regarding language teaching and learning. In other words, by relying on data gathered in the classroom, teachers are able to make informed choices that involve an understanding of the learners' needs, of their linguistic strengths and weaknesses, as well as an insightful knowledge of the possible variations in the learners' socio-economic and cultural milieu.

On the other hand, research carried out in 2007 led Bell to claim that methods still pervade teachers' practices. The study results show that teachers tend to favour the adoption of an *eclectic* approach to language teaching, which they relate to the notions of teacher autonomy and context sensitivity (2007, p. 140). Briefly put, an eclectic approach would grant teachers the opportunity to choose among the already available methods in order to introduce those classroom procedures that are seen as most conducive to language learning in one specific learning situation. In Bell's words, teachers' "(pragmatic) interest in methods is determined in how far they provide options in dealing with their particular teaching contexts" (2007, p. 142).

However different the above-described positions appear to be, the conclusions that both Douglas Brown (2002) and Bell (2007) draw are somewhat similar: the historical conception of method as a list of cure-all prescriptions is no longer applicable to all classroom contexts. Thus, the central tenet of the discussion is the need to transcend the rigid notion of method.

3. A review of the postmethod era

According to Prabhu (1990), the complexity of the language teaching environment prompts teachers to engage in critical decision-making to find solutions to the problems that this complexity gives rise to, problems which can no longer be grappled with the adoption of a unique method. Such decisions must be grounded on some solid teacher education system, which may allow for the timely and effective implementation of any chosen methodology. Thus, teachers should develop "a sense of plausibility about teaching" (p.172), rooted in real teaching which involves the revision and change of practices and an understanding of the type of teaching that practitioners carry out.

It was Kumaravadivelu (1994), however, who went beyond the traditional notion of method and introduced the idea of a "postmethod condition", concept which stresses the importance of providing teachers with a broad didactic framework based on recent theoretical positions. Such framework should, according to this author, help empower practitioners with

knowledge, skill, and autonomy so that teachers can devise for themselves a systematic, coherent, and relevant alternative to method, one informed by principled pragmatism (1994, p. 27).

In further developing his theory, Kumaravadivelu (2003a, 2003b) argues that the post-method condition encompasses the pedagogic parameters of particularity, practicality and possibility.

The parameter of *particularity*

(...) requires that any language pedagogy, to be relevant, must be sensitive to a particular group of teachers teaching a particular group of learners pursuing a particular set of goals within a particular institutional context embedded in a particular sociocultural milieu (2003a, p. 34).

Whereas the second parameter – *practicality* – relates theory and practice and "aims for a personal theory of practice generated by the practicing teacher", the main goal of the parameter of *possibility* is

to empower classroom participants so that they can critically reflect on the social and historical conditions contributing to create the cultural forms and interested knowledge they encounter in their lives (Kumaravadivelu, 2003b, p. 544).

Kumaravadivelu's macrostrategic framework (1994) and Brown's principled approach to language teaching (2002) are not the only suggested alternatives to methods. Among other suggestions, Stern's three-dimensional framework (1992) and Allwright's exploratory practice (2003, 2005) also attach relevance to: a) the role of teachers as reflective practitioners, and b) research originated in teachers' situated practices.

In a nutshell, then, the postmethod condition claims that teachers should be able to adopt, adapt and/or develop their own theories and practices in their given contexts.

4. Exploring the local context

In 2008-2010 I co-conducted a series of INSET workshops on behalf of the Consejo General de Educación (CGE) in Entre Ríos, which aimed at exploring teachers' beliefs about the epistemological basis of foreign language teaching and teaching methodology. The ensuing data showed two main findings: a) that teachers believe that language is *for communication*, and b) that the most suitable methodology for such purpose is CLT (CGE, 2008, Documento 2).

Bearing the above findings in mind, in order to explore English teachers' preferred methodologies in the local context, I designed an online survey, which consisted of three main parts: 1) some demographic information (including language teaching contexts – type of school,

levels taught, etc); 2) two open-ended questions about the perceived needs of the participants' learners (similar to Wedell & Malderez, 2013, p. 127); and 3) specific 4-point Likert-scale questions about methodology (including materials selection, instructional content and presentation and practice, teacher and learner interaction, etc.).

The instrument was piloted, amended, and distributed between two main groups of teachers: a) my personal mailing list and b) the local teachers' association's Facebook group (N=76). This was done in the hope that virtual circulation of the questionnaire would encourage spontaneous participation. In addition, teachers were invited to collaborate anonymously. Despite these measures, response rate was very low (N=14). Among these participants, 11 have been in the profession for less than 10 years; out of these 7 have taught English for less than 5 years.

Naturally, with such a small sample size, caution must be applied. I would like to highlight that by implementing this questionnaire, it was not my intention to conduct research in the strictest sense of the word. The data I here present relate mainly to Sections 2 and 3 in the questionnaire and are meant to illustrate some of the points I would like to make in relation to the postmethod era and teachers as creators of their contexts and methodologies.

4.1. Some insights from the questionnaire

Firstly, following Wedell & Malderez (2013, p. 127), I asked teachers to name three situations in which they expect their learners to need English. Figure 1 summarises the answers obtained.

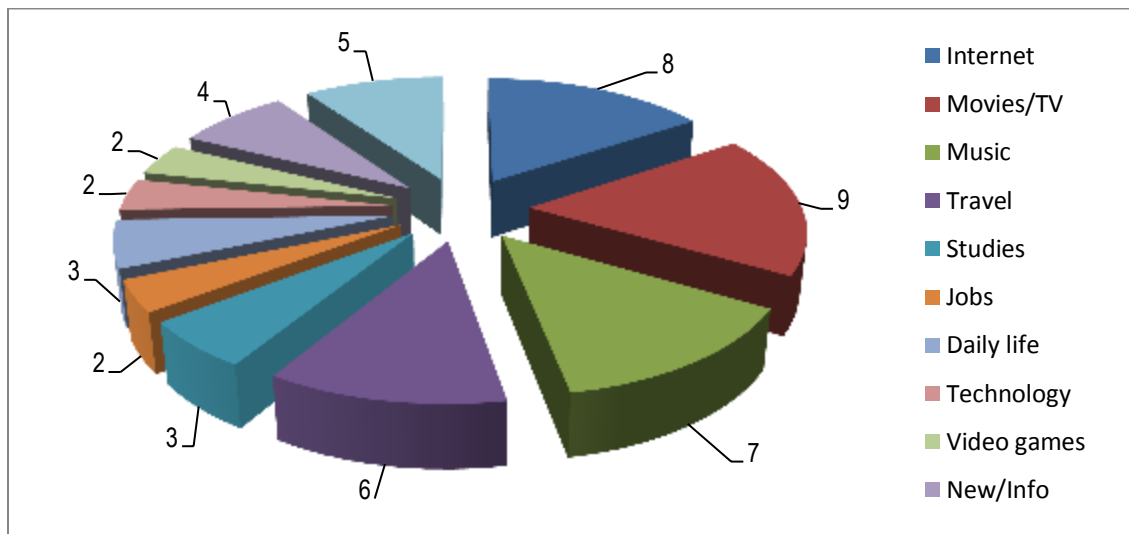


Figure 1. Perceived learner needs.

A closer look at these data shows a significant recurrence of needs related to *entertainment*, i.e. using the Internet, playing online games, listening to music, watching movies or films, and such like (54%).

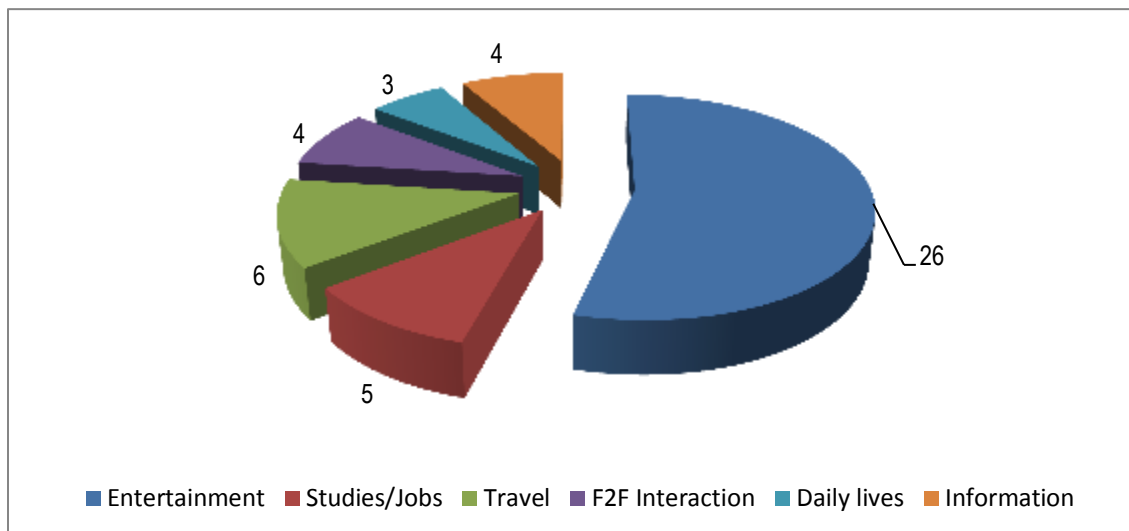


Figure 2. Perceived learner needs: Entertainment vs Other.

Data also show that in order to cater for those needs, teachers tend to choose a variety of methods, a number of which would fall into the "communicative" category (e.g. CLT, TBLL, CLIL), as Figure 3 shows.

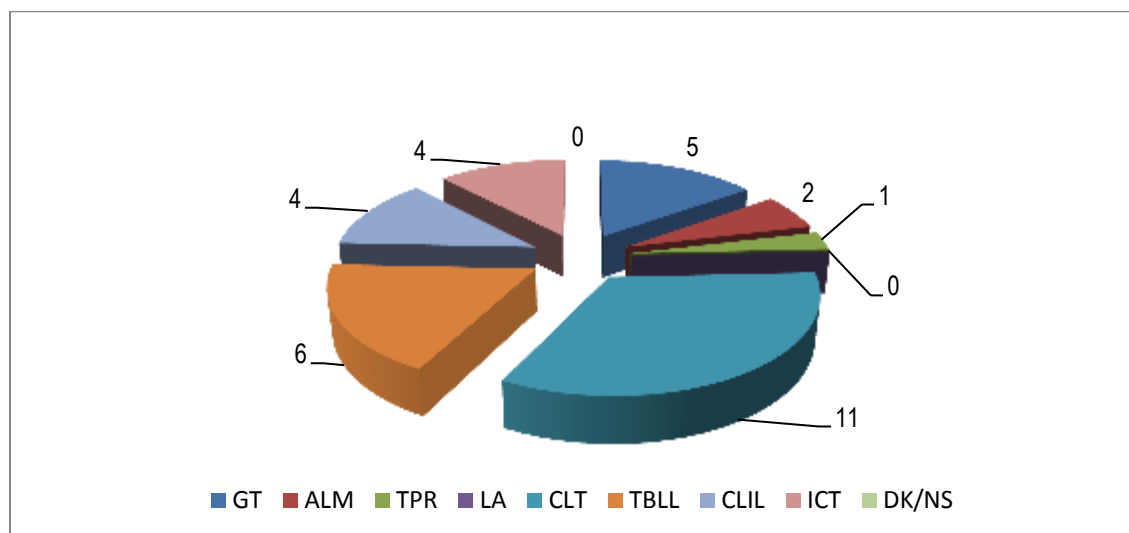


Figure 3. Teachers' preferred methods.

Figure 4 illustrates more clearly that CLT and related communicative methods (CLIL & TBLL) are still accepted as the dominant paradigm (64%).

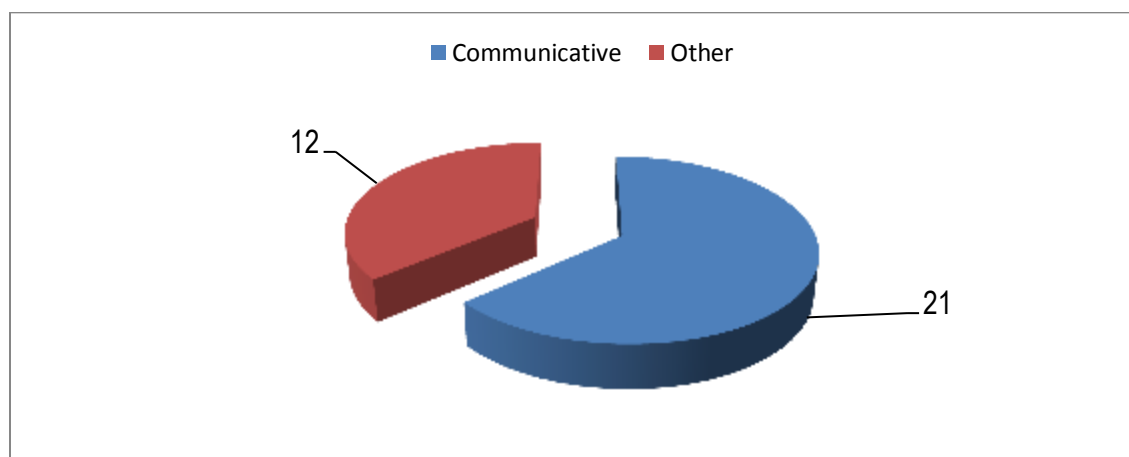


Figure 4. Teachers' methodological orientations.

Yet, teachers seem aware of the importance of being eclectic. As one participant states:

I don't use just ONE method. The use of them varies depending on the situation, the course, the level, the purpose of the lesson, etc.". What is more, one subject claims that Grammar Translation is "(L)argely demerited, I believe the GTM can be exploited in the classroom positively.

Part 3 in the questionnaire looked at data related to course organization in terms of the main focus, patterns of interaction, tasks and materials selection. The most relevant findings are summarised on the following figures.

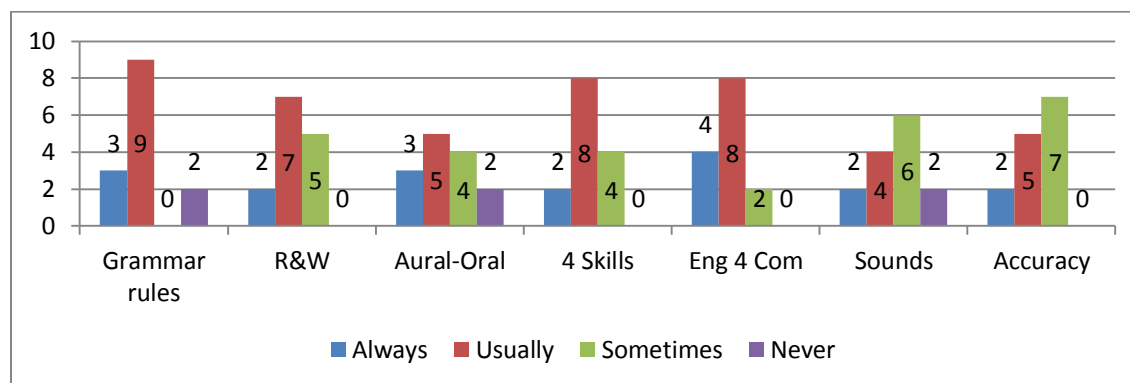


Figure 5. Course focus.

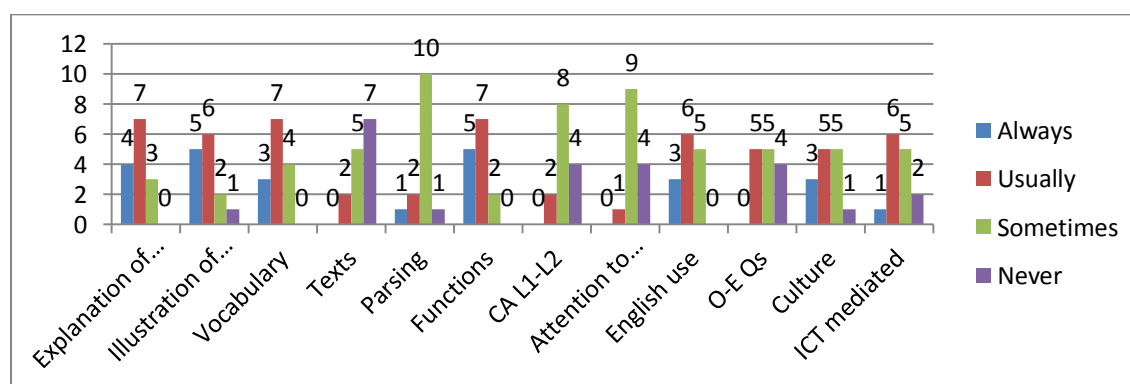


Figure 6. Instructional content & language presentation.

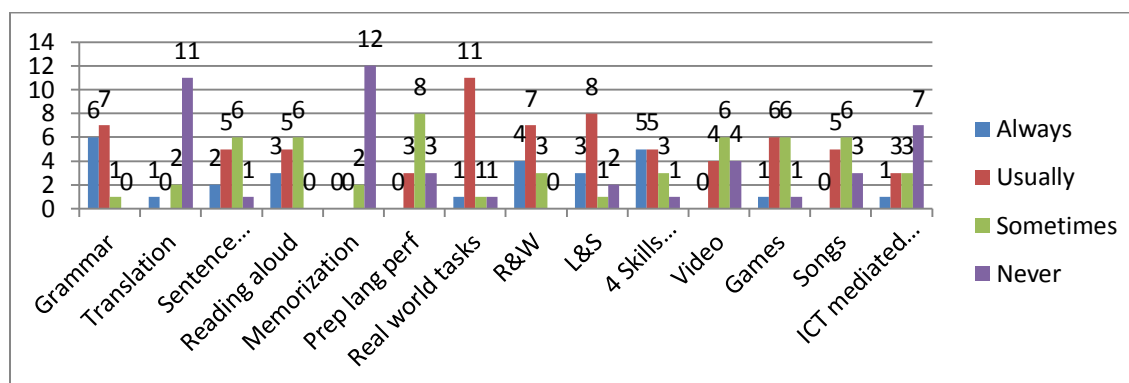


Figure 7. Language practice.

It is interesting to note that despite the predominantly communicative perspective adopted and the place that the development of the four macroskills and language functions seem to have, grammar still keeps the most relevant place in the participants' lessons, with 78% (N=11) of the participants focusing on grammar and 92.8% (N=13) favouring the practice of grammar patterns.

Similarly, although the patterns of class interaction seem to show some variety, the presence of the teacher is still quite dominant, as the next figure illustrates.

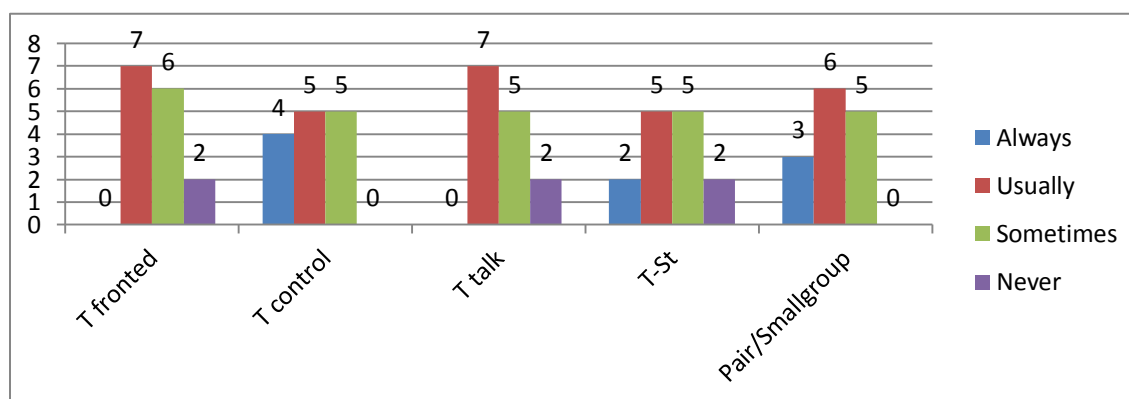


Figure 8. Class interaction patterns.

Given that most participants agree to adopting a CLT methodology, it is rather surprising to find that only 50% of the teachers (N=7) seems to engage in T-S interaction patterns regularly, which

might be related to the fact that 50% of the teachers acknowledge a predominance of T talk in their lessons. On the other hand, all teachers seem to attach importance to S-S interaction, with 64% assigning pair and small group work frequently.

In terms of materials selection, results are mixed and show both the use of textbooks produced by well-known publishers and the creation materials by the participants themselves.

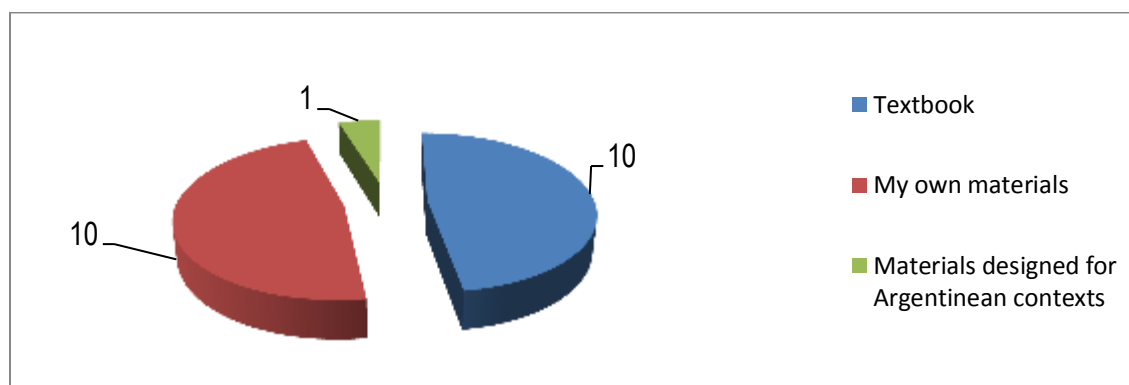


Figure 9. Materials selection.

When asked to further elaborate on their choice, some of the participants' answers are:

- (N)ot precisely an specific textbook but a mixture of lesson from every available source.
- I use a textbook as a guide but I usually select what is that I think my students can take full advantage of.
- I also design my own material. For example, extra practice, songs, video sesions, tests, etc.
- I complement the book with digital exercises taken from well-known ELT websites, Youtube videos or Powerpoint presentations to introduce new topics / vocabulary.

As aforementioned, even though the results of this survey are by no means generalisable given the very small population, they do provide an indication that the few teachers participating in this small scale study seem to be complying with a number criteria associated to CLT. In Wedell and Malderez's (2013: 125) words: a) the idea of language as a tool for communication (appropriate use of systems and skills); b) an understanding of language learning as involving input / output, interaction, meaningful appropriate use; and – less overtly – c) an idea of learning from a social constructivism / socio-cultural view.

However, a series of questions related to the findings arises. If most teachers agree that learner needs relate to entertainment, and less so to communicate with other people:

1. Up to what extent does CLT draw upon the cultural context where the teaching and learning processes take place?
2. How useful or relevant is it to implement a CLT methodology in the context in which teachers develop their practices?
3. Do they make an informed, critical choice of their textbooks, standing from a solid theoretical perspective?
4. Are teachers ready for pragmatic eclecticism?

If teachers are yet not prepared for the postmethod era,

5. Should they be criticized for opting for a ready-made solution to their increasing classroom problems (i.e.. ready-made textbooks)?

For teachers to make informed choices, they must first know what the options are. In theory, this might be simpler for experienced teachers who might have undergone different teaching

situations in the course of their professional practice, who might have experienced different methodologies, and who can be said to possess extensive knowledge of their teaching contexts. In practice, though, it is quite likely that this is not always the case.

Next, there is the case of the novice, more inexperienced teachers, like most of the subjects in this study. I believe that it is in this situation where the risk of falling into an “eclectic blending” (Prabhu, 1990, p.167) becomes more real.

5. Implications for TE/TD

Research has placed much attention on people as products of their contexts and on those external factors that impinge teaching and learning. However, people are not only influenced by their contexts but *create* it (Wedell & Malderez, 2013). One could wonder, therefore, to what extent are teachers such as the ones who helped me to elaborate this paper trained and / or supported to make right on-the-job decisions; or, to what extent are practitioners assisted in giving a voice to their beliefs so as to make better choices to create their teaching contexts?

Accepting the post-method era, adhering to a pragmatic eclectic approach, or developing principled practices, all demand skills from teachers other than a sound content knowledge and pedagogical training. Akbari posits that the principles that permeate teachers’ practices should also aim at “providing a more comprehensive context for language teaching in terms of its social engagement and political accountability” (2008, p. 642). Thus, the unreflective or uncritical acceptance of a postmethod era might lead us to overlook the issue of teacher education and training, as well as to ignore “the social, political, and cultural realities of language teaching contexts and the limits within which teachers operate” (*ibid.*).

Understanding practitioners and supporting their learning through adequate mechanisms of TE and TD must necessarily look at whether teachers are able to know why they do what they do (Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Wedell & Malderez, 2013).

Achieving this entails: 1) grounding teacher learning and reflection in classroom practice; 2) addressing teachers' existing knowledge & beliefs so that they can theorize their practices; 3) providing opportunities for teachers to extend their subject matter knowledge; 4) offering adequate time for reflection, collaboration, and continued learning; and 5) treating teachers as learners in the way teachers are expected to treat their own learners (Borko & Putnam, 1996).

The heavy emphasis placed on context and the particulars of different teaching and learning situations necessarily draws attention towards the nature of TE and TD. One might wonder, for example, how relevant local TE programmes are in the light of the postmethod perspective, or to what extent PRESET and INSET programs are suitable to meet the postmethod condition, or whether such programmes have moved towards the postmethod direction in the last 20 years or so.

Giving teachers the proper degree of choice and autonomy that might lead to appropriate (situated) methodologies is certainly an upside of the post-method era. On the other hand, adopting a postmethod, pragmatic pedagogy demands serious, constant work on (I)TE. As Akbari (2008) puts it:

Missing from post-method is how teachers are prepared to perform their duties as post-method practitioners because post-method heavily emphasizes teacher qualifications (p.642).

Clearly, this claim relates directly to language policies and decisions that lie outside the classroom itself.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to reflect upon postmethod pedagogy and the implications this has for TE and TD. By looking at some concrete classroom data, I have tried to illustrate the fact that the adoption of a pragmatic pedagogy based on context-driven practices should not overlook the demands such approach imposes on teachers.

Much of the discussion related to postmethod pedagogy centres round the theorizer-practitioner dichotomy. I believe that this should also be put into some perspective: in our ever-more-complex teaching context to teach and theorize is not only difficult but also beyond what many teachers at grass roots levels might render part of their duties. Hence, providing teachers with solid TE & TD programmes is the key towards the implementation of enhanced context-situated teaching methodologies.

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4 English in advertising and entertainment: A stepping stone to language education

John P. Holmquist

Tecnológico de Monterrey, campus: San Luis Potosí, Mexico

johnholmquist@itesm.mx

Liliana González Rodríguez

Tecnológico de Monterrey, campus: San Luis Potosí, Mexico

Ana Clara Gil Castro

Universidad Nacional de Cuyo, Mendoza, Argentina

1. Introduction

Teaching in today's world is in constant competition with media advertisements, entertainment, and social media for the attention of the students (McLanahan et al., 2008). Ironically, international advertisement in non-English speaking countries is introducing the English language to people around the world via media (Crystal, 1997). For example, Nike Corporation does not present its products to Latin American with the slogan, "Sólo hazlo." It maintains the English motto, "Just do it." In nearly every case, printed advertisement placed words and phrases in highly relevant pictorial environments of context.

International advertising campaigns and local campaigns are placing a large number of English words and phrases before the public. Past research of advertising across Asia, shows that over 65% of printed international advertising uses English words and phrases (Holmquist & Cudmore, 2013a, 2013b). Current research across Latin America (Mexico, Panama, Chile, and Argentina) shows this amount to be a little lower, 57%, but it is hypothesized that this difference is because of many words being spelled identical or similar in the English and Spanish languages (Holmquist & Gil, in press). This reviewed research has found that the most common English words used in international advertising are understood 60% of the time, based on context (Holmquist & Park, 2010). This percentage is expected to be close to the same in Latin American countries, but needs to be examined in future research. If this percentage holds true for Latin America, (60% of 174 words and phrases) the average person in these countries has an English vocabulary of at least 105 words gained from none academic media sources.

To understand the amount of English language presented to the Latin America population outside of the classroom, this paper searches for common uses of English across the Spanish outlets of advertisements, entertainment and technology in Mexico, Argentina and across Latin America. A final area that is reviewed in this research is the common presentation of English spoken in movies with Spanish subtitles.

2. Methods

The methods section of this research is divided into four parts: entertainment English words, subtitles in movies, review of past research, and considerations for educational application. After

the results were gathered, they were reviewed for the functionality of the use of the findings for teaching purposes.

2.1. Entertainment

The study examined 174 of the most common written English words or phrases currently used in social entertainment and technology that were gathered in Mexico and Argentina. These words were listed and reviewed for accuracy of context of where the words were presented. This research was done by two college level bilingual academic researchers. One expert reviewed the English words in Mexico and the other one reviewed the English words in Argentina.

2.2. Movies

The study examined 52 movies shown in Mexico and Argentina over a six month period (1 January – 20 June, 2014). The number and percentage of movies are presented with the Spanish language dubbed over the English was counted. The movies presented with subtitled Spanish with the original English were counted.

2.3. Review for context

The English found in the above research was reviewed for proper or improper context use in the Spanish language markets, entertainment, and technology. This was completed by directly translating the word into Spanish and review the syntax and semantics for proper understanding of the word or phrase.

2.4. Review of the results for teaching purposes

Once the above methods were complete, they were presented to a group of subject matter experts, to find best practices for teaching purposes of the findings. This review is separate from the results of the above research and therefore will be presented in the discussion section.

3. Results

3.1. Entertainment

Appendix 1 shows a list of the 174 most common written English words or phrases currently used in social entertainment and technology gathered in Mexico and Argentina. All but 8% (14 of the 174) of these words and phrases were used in proper or functional contexts.

In movies, television, and technology nearly identical results were found in Mexico and Argentina. English words were used to replace Spanish translation for common phrases, such as “bye” and they were used in technology to replace finding new Spanish words for the new English technology words such as “blue tooth” or computer “memory.”

3.2. Movies

The review of movies showed that nearly all the movies were presented in English with Spanish subtitles or with the option to watch the movie dubbed. The exception to this was animated children movies. 33% of children movies and 06% regular Hollywood movies were presented only dubbed in Mexico and 20% of children movies and 03% of regular Hollywood movies were presented as dubbed in Argentina.

4. Discussion

4.1. Entertainment

The original plan for this research was to collect the 50 most common English words and phrases. The use of English in entertainment, technology, and even common communication in these two Spanish language countries was so profound, that 174 English words and phrases were gathered in place of trying to find a significant difference in the common uses of these words and phrases. The proper use and functional context of nearly all of these words and phrases was not hypothesized by this research. Most of the 14 words used out of context are names of products and do not need to be unlearned for their use in speaking English, but the original mean can be taught from the functionality of the product. Examples of this include “Subway” sandwich and “Red bull” drink. If you buy a subway and a red bull, you are asking for a sandwich and a drink. This is the same in English. People in a Subway shop are not seeking an underground train and a bovine painted red. Yet, the names of the products can be used to help teach the original meanings. Why is a subway sandwich called a subway? The shape? Why is a red bull drink named red bull? The energy that comes from the drink? Etc.

4.2. Movies

With nearly all the movies, outside of children’s movies, presented in English with Spanish subtitles, the population of Mexican and Spanish movie goers are exposing themselves to the English language on a regular basis. This is an excellent source of hearing English syntax and accents outside the classroom. The focus of this paper is on the use of English presented in marketing and written entertainment, but the presentation of movie entertainment is a very

relevant presentation of the English language to mass population. One-line statements, as early as Dirty Harry stating, “Make my day” in 1983 and the Terminator’s 1984, “I’ll be back” (Dirks, 2014), are commonly quoted by Spanish speakers in the original English. This practice places movies with subtitles as a good example of English being introduced outside of classroom.

4.3. Review for context

Similarly to the review for context in entertainment, the findings for context used in marketing and past research found that nearly all English words and phrases (92%) were used in correct context in Spanish phrases. It is worth noting that entertainment used the English words and phrases as substitutes to Spanish words and phrases, particularly in popular and new technology context. English words and phrases in marketing were used primarily as product names and catch phrases in a pictorial setting for context.

This high context marketing, entertainment, and even everyday use of English in common Spanish communication and technology can therefore be used as a starting point for language education. The findings showed that with the context of social situation, the majority of the English words are correct. Most English words from technology are recognized as adopted words into the local language in the studied samples. Therefore, the English words from advertising and technology are being adopted into the common understanding and lead to the understanding of the words and phrases.

5. Conclusion

Teachers with an understanding of the English in the Spanish environment can build lessons around English in advertising and media. This paper concludes with three types of uses of English in advertising, entertainment, and technology as means to enhance the learning of English in the classroom. These are introductions, exercises, and reviews.

5.1. As a starting point

For this paper, introduction is defined as a starting point for teaching English from the words and phrases the students already know. Introduction to English can be done in two ways from this research. The first is from pointing out the English students already know from media, technology, and entertainment. Examples of this are asking students what they know from the current media and to translate these words and phrases or presenting the common words and phrases as an introduction to new sections of vocabulary. The second is to show similarities between English and Spanish word types. The comparison of English in marketing across Spanish language markets and Asian language markets brought out the point of the large number of same or similar words in the English and Spanish language. Examples of these are *animal* is the same in English and Spanish, *special* in English is *especial* in Spanish, and most words ending in *-tion* (such as *exclamation*) in English are close to the same in Spanish, but ending in *-ción* (such as *exclamación*) in Spanish. The English words ending in *-tion* and the Spanish words ending in ending in *-ción* has already been presented. An additional example of this is basic nouns such as *paper*, *aluminum*, *plastic*, *oxygen*, and *carbon* with the close translations of *papel*, *aluminio*, *plástico*, *oxígeno*, and *carbón*.

5.2. Exercises

For this paper, exercises are defined as in class examples and practices for the students. One type of exercise is to take a phrase, commonly used, break it up and put the words in a different context. The common motto “Just do it” can be used as an exercise example. What is the meaning or translation of “Just do it”? What are the translations of the words “just”, “do”, and “it”? What is the translation if you only have “just it”? What is the translations of “just one”, “do one”, and “it is one”?

5.3. Reviews

For this paper, review is defined as a way to reinforce what was taught in the classroom. Examples of this include hunting for English vocabulary in marketing and media, using popular subtitle movies and videos to hear and practice accents, and reviewing relevant English words and phrases in written advertisements and media.

In all of these cases, it is up to the teacher to be aware of the current uses of English in the media and in the population of students. This knowledge by the teacher will allow the instructor to integrate the popular culture of marketing, entertainment, and technology and capture students’ attention for the betterment of their education.

6. Future research

This study has shown that English is very often presented in the Spanish media. This is enough to build introductions, reviews and exercises to teach English. Past research has shown that in Korea 58.5% of the English words in advertising are understood by the masses (Holmquist & Cudmore, 2013a). This same data is important to find for the Spanish speaking populations to have a base-line of what is actually understood when the English words and phrases are secluded outside context.

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Appendix

Common English words in Mexican and Argentina Entertainment and Technology

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1) GadgetsSI | 61) Bowling-SI | 119) Sport center-SI |
| 2) gym , SI | 62) World Cup-SI | 120) After hour-SI |
| 3) moviesSI | 63) Sonido surround -SI | 121) Break-SI |
| 4) Tablets SI | 64) Home theater -SI | 122) Party-SI |
| 5) Smartphone..... SI | 65) Elite -SI | 123) Fast food -SI |
| 6) Widgets.....SI | 66) Full time-SI | 124) Skate-SI |
| 7) What's app.... SI | 67) Part time-SI | 125) Snowboard-SI |
| 8) Inbox...SI | 68) Stop-SI | 126) People-SI |
| 9) Playstore....SI | 69) Rufting-SI | 127) Free -SI |
| 10) App store...SI | 70) Running-SI | 128) Style-SI |
| 11) Drugstore....NO (1) | 71) Trekking-SI | 129) Sex-SI |
| 12) Minimarket....SI | 72) Wine-SI | 130) System-SI |
| 13) Hangouts.....NO (2) | 73) Mountain bike-SI | 131) action-SI |
| 14) Software...SI | 74) Rollers-SI | 132) Flash-SI |
| 15) Music hall.... SI | 75) Box-SI | 133) Orders to pets : sit , down -SI |
| 16) Wedding planner...SI | 76) Beats-SI | 134) Exit-SI |
| 17) Make up...SI | 77) News-SI | 135) Playboy-SI |
| 18) PowerAde.....NO (3) | 78) E book-SI | 136) Personal Trainer -SI |
| 19) Hardware....SI | 79) World center park-SI | 137) Fitness-SI |
| 20) Email.....SI | 80) Camping-SI | 138) Body pump -SI |
| 21) Coach....SI | 81) Pen drive-SI | 139) Body mix -SI |
| 22) Open mall.....SI | 82) CD (English pronunciation) - SI | 140) Power jump-SI |
| 23) Web site.....SI | 83) Outlet -SI | 141) Soft-SI |
| 24) Hashtag....SI | 84) Store-SI | 142) Always-SI |
| 25) Trendtopic....SI | 85) Spot-SI | 143) Rock& roll -SI |
| 26) Mozilla Firefox .NO (4) | 86) Magazine-SI | 144) hit-SI |
| 27) Windows.....NO (5) | 87) Technology-SI | 145) play list-SI |
| 28) Affair.....SI | 88) Cutter-SI | 146) Clip-SI |
| 29) Toxic....SI | 89) Fake-SI | 147) Plus-SI |
| 30) Impossible is nothingSI | 90) Default-SI | 148) travel-SI |
| 31) Live...SI | 91) Family game-SI | 149) High definition-SI |
| 32) Outlook.com ...NO (6) | 92) Play station -SI | 150) Sexy-SI |
| 33) Download...SI | 93) Bowl -SI | 151) Seven up- NO (12) |
| 34) UpdateSI | 94) Mixer-SI | 152) latin lover-SI |
| 35) Short , JeansSI | 95) TV (English pronunciation) - SI | 153) Cross fit - SI |
| 36) Moon festSI | 96) Cool-SI | 154) Metrobus- SI |
| 37) Creamfields.... NO (7) | 97) Hot-SI | 155) Fuck you -SI |
| 38) Ultra mega festival ...SI | 98) Primer-SI | 156) rent a car -SI |
| 39) State in trance.....SI | 99) Light-SI | 157) Chance-SI |
| 40) SorrySI | 100) Classic-SI | 158) Red bull -NO (13) |
| 41) BeachSI | 101) Zoom-SI | 159) Pink -SI |
| 42) Delay.....SI | 102) Swing -SI | 160) Coffee-SI |
| 43) Play -SI | 103) Swinger-SI | 161) SexToy-SI |
| 44) Soundhound -SI | 104) Gay-SI | 162) Sex Shop-SI |
| 45) Touch screen-SI | 105) Ladies-SI | 163) Staff-SI |
| 46) I'm lovin' it -SI | 106) Night-SI | 164) Mastercard-SI |
| 47) Subway -NO (8) | 107) One million--SI | 165) Master chef :p -SI |
| 48) Main stage - SI | 108) Cupcake-SI | 166) Shit-SI |
| 49) Tickets -SI | 109) Farmacity (city)-SI | 167) Vintage-SI |
| 50) Layers- SI | 110) Dry-feet -SI | 168) Irish pub-SI |
| 51) Sale -SI | 111) Performance -SI | 169) Crazy-SI |
| 52) Off -NO (9) | 112) Love-SI | 170) Western Union- NO (14) |
| 53) VIP -SI | 113) Men-SI | 171) Direct TV- SI |
| 54) Summer -SI | 114) Women-SI | 172) Fresh-SI |
| 55) Spring-SI | 115) Winner-SI | 173) Sensation-SI |
| 56) Winter-SI | 116) Closed-SI | 174) Money- |
| 57) & (and) -SI | 117) Open-SI | |
| 58) All in or nothing (adidas) -SI | 118) Open minded-SI | |
| 59) Country -NO (10) | | |
| 60) Pool -NO (11) | | |

Culture in TEFL

5 Foreign language teaching and education for intercultural citizenship

Melina Porto

Universidad Nacional de La Plata and Conicet

melinaporto2007@yahoo.com.ar

1. Introduction

This article describes an online intercultural citizenship project about the environment in the primary English language classroom carried out in 2013/2014 between Argentina and Denmark. It is part of a network of projects coordinated by Michael Byram (Durham University, UK) that involves teachers and researchers in Europe, the US and East Asia. The project is framed within the theory of intercultural citizenship in the foreign language classroom (Byram, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014; Lai & Byram, 2012) and it is the only set in the primary school context. Furthermore, developments in Latin America in this field are scarce and the study intends to fill an empirical gap.

2. Theoretical framework

This project is based on the characteristics of intercultural citizenship education described in Alred, Byram and Fleming (2003, 2006), Byram (2008, 2010, 2012, 2014) and Lai and Byram (2012). Within this framework, Alred, Byram and Fleming (2006), Byram (2008), and Zajda, Daun and Saha (2008) report empirical cases in different

countries worldwide except Latin America. Cases in Central and Latin America are reported in López (2008, 2009) and López and Sichra (2008) but the focus is on intercultural bilingual education, with a special interest in the situation of indigenous languages. This investigation presents an experience in Argentina.

The concept of *education for intercultural citizenship in the foreign language classroom* (Byram, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014) brings together foreign language education and citizenship education. It integrates the pillar of intercultural communicative competence from foreign language education with the emphasis on civic action in the community from citizenship education. The relational aspect, i.e. getting involved with *Others*, is important as students become intercultural speakers or intercultural mediators (Alred & Byram, 2002; Byram, 2009). At the same time, the focus on Others highlights a comparative perspective, in this case in communication among students with different languages and also a comparative perspective in ideas, values and beliefs among the students involved. Finally, criticality is important too (Barnett, 1997; Johnston et al., 2011). Criticality involves students in examining their own thoughts and actions, as well as those of their peers, reflexively and analytically.

A project in the foreign language classroom becomes an intercultural citizenship project when:

- students from two or more countries work together in an international project and develop a sense of international identification among themselves;
- students challenge their own assumptions and naturalized views and ways;
- students develop a new way of thinking and acting – called ‘international’ and
- students engage their critical thinking skills, in particular at levels involving not only thought but also action.

In this conception, the development of certain abilities or skills, called intercultural citizenship skills, is important and involves the skills of comparative interpretation (comparing, contrasting, relating, de-centring, perspective-taking, interpreting), consciousness-raising (observing, describing, analyzing, discovering), and critical thinking (involving critical reflexivity). When this criticality involves critical action in the world (i.e. different forms of civic and political engagement) it becomes critical cultural awareness or *savoir s'engager* in Byram's Model of Intercultural Competence (Byram 1997, 2009). The questioning and challenging of one's national perspectives is essential here and it occurs when students work cooperatively in international partnerships.

Critical thinking or criticality (Barnett, 1997; Johnston et al., 2011) is an explicit intended outcome. Following Barnett (1997), it can be achieved in three domains:

- 1) Propositions, ideas and theories: this means what the students learn as the content of foreign language instruction. In this project, it involved information about the environment and how to take care of it in daily life.
- 2) The internal world: it involves analysis, self-reflection and evaluation with regard to one's values, views, presuppositions, etc. Students distance themselves from their own positions (de-centring) and become aware of different perspectives (perspective-taking).
- 3) The external world: this refers to critical thought demonstrated in civic or political actions in the community. It involves a radical change in thought that is evidenced in critical action.

3. Project “Green Kidz: Intercultural environmental citizenship in the primary EFL classroom in Argentina and Denmark”

Participants were fifty 5th and 6th form Argentinean children (aged 10-11) at *Escuela Graduada Joaquín V. González, Universidad Nacional de La Plata* and twenty 7th form Danish children (aged 12-13) at *Randersgades Skole, International Profile School of Copenhagen*. *Green Kidz* (spelt with z) refers to an environmental movement created by a group of students at *Randersgades Skole* after the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in 2009 and represents the Danish antecedent of this project. The Argentinean antecedent is the project *Separación de Basuras* implemented at *Escuela Graduada* since 2005.

In terms of environmental citizenship, this project aimed to encourage children to explore and reflect on environmental issues both locally (in the children's communities) and globally, challenge taken-for-granted representations of the environment, engage in trash sorting and recycling practices, contribute to improving the environment in their local communities, and make their family, their network, their community and people in general develop environmental awareness. There were also linguistic and intercultural aims such as acknowledging linguistic diversity (in English, Spanish and Danish), developing research skills, analyzing critically (audio) visual media images, texts and practices, engaging in intercultural dialogue with others, and developing values such as respect, mutual understanding, social awareness and openness.

In their EFL classrooms, the children in Argentina and Denmark identified green crimes in their schools and in their communities and they drew or video-taped these crimes. They engaged in a trash analysis mini-project in their schools, which involved them in listing, classifying and sorting out the trash in the waste bins in their schools, and then compared and discussed results using a wiki that we called *Worldgreenweb*. They carried out a survey among family members and friends about their environmental habits. They also analyzed critically (audio) visual media images and texts, produced in Argentina and in Denmark, in order to gain awareness of the power of the media in each country in creating stereotypical images of environmental issues that may influence attitudes and behaviours.

In a dialogue phase, the Argentinean and Danish children collaboratively designed posters to raise awareness of environmental issues by engaging in online communication using Skype and the chat in the wiki. Working in groups of mixed nationalities, they decided on the purpose, content and language(s) of the poster. As a result, an international identification emerged.

As a final step, the children in each country took action locally by carrying out some civic actions in their communities. For instance, the Argentinean children created videos and songs and shared them in a facebook page of the project (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uysvpqx2vN0>, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8zTlOCskmo8>, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DjgTR6QeetQ>, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGE9oq3hTdo>), designed by themselves; they were interviewed by a local journalist and the collaborative posters appeared in the local newspaper

<http://www.eldia.com.ar/edis/20131121/Alumnos-Plata-Dinamarca-abrazan-medio-ambiente-laciudad2.htm> ; and they designed a banner which they hung across the school street. In Denmark, the students put up the posters in their school and their community; they contacted the local newspaper *Øbro Avis* and shared information about the project, <https://www.facebook.com/osterbroavis>; and they created videos and songs (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LxR-9hNBG4k>, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dIXLddVLdCs>, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8usDFI6lEmA>), among other initiatives.

3.1. Analysis and findings

Conversational and documentary data were collected. Conversational data comprised Skype conversations, chats in the wiki, class discussions and group interviews. Documentary data comprised the collaborative posters, student productions (songs, videos, drawings, etc.), reflection logs and the Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters (AIE) (Byram et al, 2009), a resource designed to encourage people to think about and learn from intercultural encounters, which the Argentinean children completed in Spanish at the end of the project. Data were analysed qualitatively following the guidelines and procedures in Corbin and Strauss (2008), Hatch (2002) and Cohen et al. (2007), in particular using content analysis, defined as “the process of summarizing and reporting [written] data – the main contents of data and their messages” (Cohen et al. 2007: 475). Confidentiality and ethical issues were taken care of following the guidelines in Corbin and Strauss (2008), Cohen et al. (2007) and De Costa (2014). Parents signed consent forms and pseudonyms are used here. Data extracts appear *verbatim*.

Findings show that an international identification between the Argentinean and Danish children emerged, that they developed the skills involved in intercultural citizenship, and also that criticality was possible in this primary school context, even in its ultimate form of civic engagement - illustrated through the actions in the local community mentioned before. I will focus on each aspect at a time.

3.1.1. An international identification developed

During the online communication phase of the project, an international identification emerged, which means that the children temporarily abandoned their identifications as Argentinean or Danish and worked in cooperation with their international peers. It was revealed linguistically in the use of first person plural forms in all data types (posters, AIEs, chats in the wiki, Skype conversations, interviews; highlighted in bold here). For instance, in his AIE Lionel expressed: “todos **tenemos** un mismo objetivo: cuidar el medio ambiente”. Other examples appear in Data extracts 1 and 2.

Data extract 1

DEN: so **we** think that transport is bad for the environment
(...)
DEN: like cars, trains and planes
ARG: yes, to use more bikes
DEN: yes
ARG: in Spanish: **usamos** las bicicletas
(...)
ARG: in Danish?
DEN: Lad **os** tage **vores** cykel [Let's take our bikes].
(...)
DEN: Lad **os** cykle [Let's cycle].

(Chat in the wiki, October 2013)

Data extract 2

No estaba conciente de que lo que **teníamos en común** y les puedo asegurar que no **somos** tan distintos **tenemos muchas cosas en común**

(Valeria, AIE, December 2013)

3.1.2. Intercultural citizenship skills

The skills involved in intercultural citizenship (observing, discovering, describing, analyzing, comparing and contrasting, relating, interpreting, perspective taking, de-centring, critical thinking, and reflexivity) (Byram, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014) were observed recurrently in all data types. Processes of comparing and contrasting occurred simultaneously in the languages involved in the project (Spanish, English, Danish; Data extract 1 is an example: “usemos las bicicletas”, “lad os cycle”) as well as in the Argentinean and Danish perspectives among the children and also in the texts used as triggers. For instance, the Argentinean children learned phrases in Danish such as *spar på vandet* which means *don't waste water* and by the end of the project they had created, collaboratively with their Danish peers, a comparative chart with key language about the environment in Spanish, English and Danish. As for the comparative perspective in texts, in both countries they analyzed critically texts produced in Argentina

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jT_bhUcjMT8,

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eAn3jhn2_k4

And in Denmark

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xsDxOx7PUP0>, <http://vimeo.com/69160394>). Text

here refers to any ‘text’ that can be ‘read’ and ‘interpreted’, in a variety of sign systems

and mediums, including print, non-print, visual, digital, multimodal or others (Hagood & Skinner, 2012). The Copenhagen Climate Adaptation Plan shown in this last video (<http://vimeo.com/69160394>) was particularly timely and mobilizing among the Argentinean children as La Plata had been devastated by heavy flooding a few months before. In their AIEs the children also reflected in a comparative mode: “me fui dando cuenta que teníamos algunas diferencias como la edad (...) ellos hablaban mucho mejor y fluido” (Estela). This data extract simultaneously illustrates the skills of observing, discovering, describing, analyzing and relating involved in intercultural citizenship. There was also an emphasis on becoming conscious of working with others (the relational aspect involved in intercultural citizenship; Byram, 2008, 2012, 2014), which this comparative perspective encouraged.

An intercultural citizenship project of this kind, however, does not aim to highlight difference only. These skills (observing, discovering, describing, analyzing, relating, comparing and contrasting) are instrumental to the discovery of what brings people together in order to create a sense of bonding that transcends geographical boundaries. For instance, Carmen realized that despite the differences she had observed during the project, she had a lot in common with the Danish peers (evidence highlighted in italics) (“A **ambos nos** gustaba la Coca-Cola...No fue difícil **ponernos de acuerdo** con la idea para trabajar **teníamos las mismas ideas**”). Similarly, in the interview, Catalina expressed: “Yo pensé que hacían cosas re diferentes a las que hacíamos nosotros pero cuando empezamos a hablar **hacíamos las mismas cosas**”. In the AIE Carola wrote: “Ellos y nosotros intentábamos saber lo que **nos** gustaba *ubo varias cosas que tuvimos en común (...)* las cosas que **teníamos en común** por ejemplo la *música*”. This bonding was also revealed in the international identification illustrated before, also reflected in these extracts and highlighted in bold.

The project also allowed children to de-centre and place themselves in the shoes of their peers. For instance, the Argentinean children attempted to understand how their Danish peers might have felt during the project and in their AIEs they expressed (evidence in italics): “*Yo creo que ellos se sintieron nerviosos* por que se reían de algunas cosas que decíamos” (Carmen); “Me sentí *emocionada, para mí ellos sintieron lo mismo*” (Mailén); “*no mostraban tanto entusiasmo* [como yo]. Porque *estaban normales*” (Carola). De-centring in turn led to perspective-taking and Catalina for instance realized that the Danish children were not as different as she had thought initially (“*Yo pensé que hacían cosas re diferentes* a las que hacíamos nosotros *pero cuando* empezamos a hablar *hacíamos las mismas cosas*”). De-centring and perspective-taking also encouraged criticality. In her AIE Valeria said: “Me parece que *todos aprendimos de sus cosas, escuela y gustos y ellos aprendieron eso de nosotros*”.

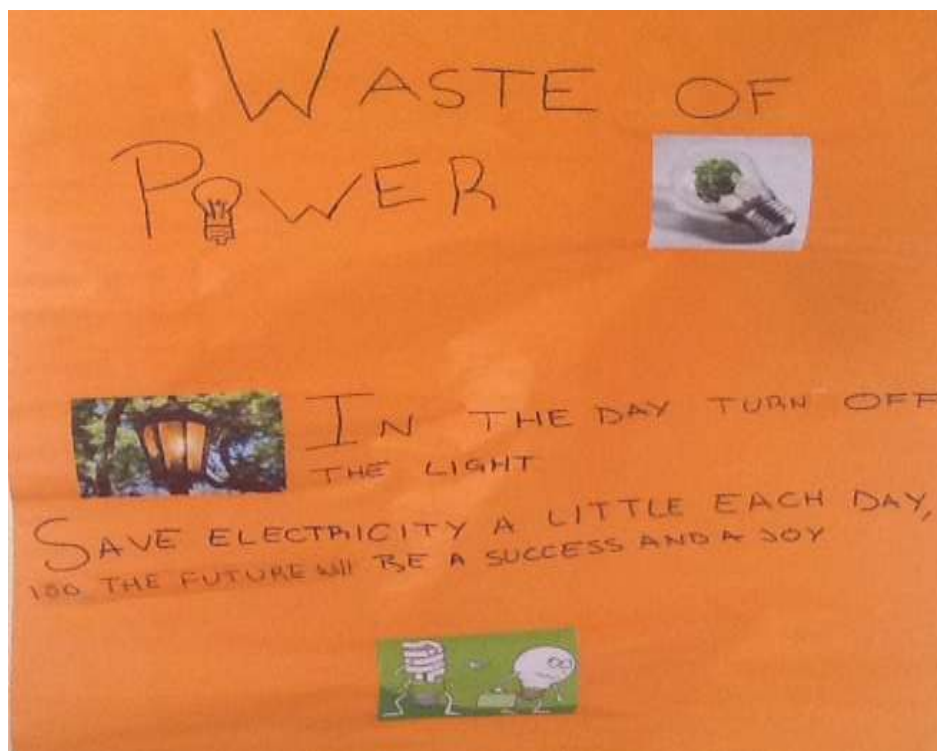
3.1.3. Criticality and critical cultural awareness

As mentioned before, following Barnett (1997), criticality involves three dimensions - observed in this project. One is propositions and ideas, which refer to what the children learned as the content of EFL instruction, in this case information about the Danish peers as Valeria showed in her AIE (“Me parece que *todos aprendimos de sus cosas, escuela y gustos y ellos aprendieron eso de nosotros*”) and also information about the environment and how to protect it. Another dimension of criticality is the internal world, which refers to critical thinking revealed through self-reflection, analysis and evaluation (“no estaba conciente de que ... y les puedo asegurar que...” in Data extract 2 above). The instances of de-centring and perspective-taking illustrated before (“Yo pensé que...pero...”, Catalina, AIE) are an example too. Finally, the external world is

the third dimension of criticality and it refers to what the children did as a result of their thinking and learning (i.e. critical action), in this case the civic actions in the local community referred to earlier. Criticality in this third and highest dimension can be seen as critical cultural awareness in Byram's (1997, 2009) view as the children created a community of action outside their schools to engage in concrete actions to protect the environment. The civic actions in the community mentioned before are the ultimate, and most significant, form of engagement. But there are others at lower levels such as changes in attitudes, beliefs and individual behaviour (Houghton, 2012). For instance, in their AIEs some children expressed: "Después de todo lo aprendido *me re interesa* hacer algo por el planeta *porque es necesario cuidarlo*" (Carmen); "*Decidí que* en el día de la tierra *iba a organizar* una recolección de basura y una planta de árboles en una plaza cerca de mi casa, *mientras tanto* reciclo la basura para ayudar" (Estela).

Critical thinking was an intended outcome of this project and this is important because Barnett (1997), Byram (2014) and others point out that this is usually associated with higher education but not primary, and in this sense this project shows that criticality is possible in lower levels of education. The following poster in Data extract 3 offers further evidence.

Data extract 3. Poster about the environment



In this poster the children convey a ‘green’ message, which they embrace as their own, and they speak directly to their reader by using imperatives (“turn off the light”, “save electricity”). This direct address to the reader is a way of involving the audience in their environmental ‘campaign’ and emphasizing the commonalities that bring them (designers of this poster and audience) together, in this case their care for the environment. Criticality and reflexivity can be seen for instance in the observation that green changes do not have to be big (“a little each day”). The final reflection (“the future will be *a success and a joy*”) illustrates the importance of attitudes, emotion and affect in intercultural understanding (Sharifian, Rochecouste & Malcolm, 2004) and language learning (Dewaele, 2013). This dimension was also illustrated before in several AIE extracts: “Yo creo que *ellos se sintieron nerviosos*” (Carmen); “Me sentí *emocionada*” (Mailén); “no mostraban *tanto entusiasmo*” (Carola).

4. Conclusion

This article describes an online intercultural citizenship experience in the primary EFL classroom between Argentina and Denmark carried out in 2013/2014. Through a comparative perspective involving Argentinean and Danish texts on the environment, and the children's views and experiences on the topic in their national contexts, they developed an international identification as a group, which was different from their national identifications. The project is an empirical investigation of intercultural citizenship in the primary EFL classroom and fills a gap that exists in this field in Latin America. The primary school focus is also innovative, in particular because criticality was evidenced in the highest level described by Barnett (1997), transformatory critique in action, usually reserved to higher education. In this project, this level involved not only a refashioning of traditions and what is taken as common sense but also criticality in action, i.e. the civic forms of engagement revealed in the actions in the community described.

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6 The role of culture in the EFL classroom: A study of teachers' beliefs and practices

Natalia Salcedo

Universidad Nacional de Río Cuarto

natysalcedo@hotmail.com

Fabiana Sacchi

Universidad Nacional de Río Cuarto

fsacchi@hum.unrc.edu.ar

1. Introduction

For some decades now, foreign language teaching has been moving towards a post method condition which has allowed teachers to consider a wider array of options in their teaching practices. Among the current teaching options in the field, there are approaches which consider language as inextricably connected to culture and which incorporate culture as an integral part of language programs (Byram, 1997, 2008; Kramsch, 1993; Sercu, 2005). This understanding of language teaching considers that learning a language cannot be separated from learning about the cultures of the people that speak that language. Byram (1997) argues that if culture is an integral part of the language curriculum, students can learn to critically compare their own culture to the target culture and understand different world views.

These new understandings of language learning have influenced foreign language curricula in different parts of the world. In the United States, the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* (1996, 2006) include culture as one of

the five integral elements of language learning (Communication, Culture, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities). In Europe, the Council of Europe developed the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (2001), which focuses on the development of intercultural awareness. In Argentina, this intercultural view of English language teaching and learning was taken into consideration in the proposed curricula for national and state foreign language teaching, which give a central role to interculturalism. However, the fact that national foreign language curricula currently emphasize the teaching of culture, it does not necessarily mean that all language teachers are adopting such views on language learning and teaching.

Since the 1980s, the field of foreign language education has investigated the role of teacher beliefs in language teaching in an attempt to understand what lies beneath teaching practices (Barcelos, 2003; Borg, 2003; Pajares, 1992; Peacock, 2001; Polat, 2010). There are many definitions of teacher beliefs and Pajares (1992) has characterized beliefs as a messy construct. In this study, we use Polat's (2010) understanding of teacher beliefs as "an inter-dependent complex system of experiential, affective, cognitive, and meta-cognitive repertoire of perceptions, perspectives, ideologies, knowledge, theories, and principles that are somewhat related to teachers' decision-making and instructional practices" (p. 196) because it is a comprehensible definition which is in line with current research that understands teacher cognition as a complex system which encompasses a wide array of knowledges and ideologies. At the same time, this definition pays attention to the wide variety of cognitive and social aspects that impact teachers' beliefs and to the role of beliefs in teaching practices.

Even though there are studies which have investigated the relationships between teacher beliefs and the teaching of culture in the foreign language classroom (Byrd et al., 2011; Young & Sachdev, 2011), to the best of our knowledge no study to

date has investigated this relationship in our context. The present research study was conducted to find out what English-as-a-foreign-language teachers in Río Cuarto, Córdoba, believe about teaching culture and the impact of such beliefs on their teaching practices.

2. Research design

A mixed methods research study was designed to explore teachers' beliefs about culture, the teaching of culture, and their training to teach culture, among other aspects. An *ad hoc* 22-item beliefs questionnaire was administered to 25 elementary and high school EFL teachers in Río Cuarto. To further explore the teachers' beliefs, four of them were selected as focal participants for the qualitative part of the study, which included a semi-structured interview. The quantitative data were analyzed using inferential statistics and the qualitative data using interpretive analysis.

2.1. Participants

The 25 study participants were selected using convenience sampling (Dörnyei, 2010). The main criteria that all the participants needed to fulfill were to be in-service teachers in elementary or high schools in Río Cuarto. The researchers, EFL teachers themselves, made a list of EFL teachers in public, semi-private, and private schools that they had access to and invited them to participate in the study. 35 elementary and high school EFL teachers were contacted and given a letter (in person or via email) in which they were asked to participate in the study. They were informed that the questionnaire was part of a study carried out in the context of a research scholarship funded by the

National University of Río Cuarto. Out of the 35 teachers originally invited to participate in the study, 25 teachers decided to participate and signed an informed consent.

The four focal participants for the qualitative part of the study were also selected using convenience sampling. A balance in terms of school contexts and teaching levels was considered, and participants worked in public and semi-private schools in elementary and high school contexts.

PARTICIPANTS	Gender	Female	23
		Male	2
	Teaching level	Elementary	11
		High school	14
	School	Public	9
		Semi- private	14
		Private	2
	Experience (in years)	Less than 5	5
		Between 5 and 10	10
		Between 10 and 20	4
		More than 20	6

Table 1. Study participants

FOCAL PARTICIPANTS	Gender	Female	3
		Male	1
	Teaching level	Elementary	2
		High school	2
	School	Public	2
		Semi- private	2
	Experience (in years)	Less than 5	1
		Between 5 and 10	2
		Between 10 and 20	1

Table 2. Focal participants

2.3. Definition of important terms

Culture and culture teaching: Following the US *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century*, in this study, we understand *culture* as “the philosophical perspectives, the behavioral practices, and the products – both tangible and intangible – of a society” (p. 43). In addition, we understand that *culture teaching* in the foreign language classroom should enable learners to understand and accept people from different cultures as individuals with distinctive practices, products and perspectives.

3. Findings

Based on the literature review, the questionnaire was designed around three main constructs: teachers’ beliefs about their knowledge about cultures, teachers’ beliefs about the role of cultures in foreign language education, and teachers’ beliefs about their pedagogical knowledge to explore cultures in the foreign language classroom. The data from the questionnaire were analyzed following those three constructs. An important finding of this study is the similarity of beliefs among the 25 teachers who participated in the study. In relation to the first construct, 60 per cent of the respondents indicated that they believed to have the necessary cultural content knowledge about the English-speaking communities to explore cultural aspects in their language courses.

In the items that aimed at exploring teachers’ beliefs about the role of cultures in foreign language education, the majority of participants consistently reported that culture teaching is positive in language learning and teaching in that it enhances student motivation and fosters respect for different cultures. For example, 23 teachers agreed with the statement “Exploring the cultural dimension of the language in an English course contributes to student motivation,” while only 2 disagreed. In addition, the majority of the participants (n= 18) reported that teaching cultural aspects was as

important as teaching linguistic aspects of the language. Similarly, 20 participants were supportive of the idea of equally including cultural and linguistic aspects of the language in the course curriculum.

In the questionnaire items which explored the teachers' beliefs about their pedagogical knowledge to explore cultures in the foreign language classroom, 76 per cent of the teachers stated that they believed to have the necessary pedagogical knowledge to explore culture in their courses. In addition, the respondents believed that their classroom practices, and the course curriculum and materials allow for the exploration of cultures in their courses. For example, 21 respondents disagreed with the statement "The rigid course curriculum does not allow for the exploration of cultural aspects of the language," while 14 agreed with the statement "The textbooks and materials that I have access to allow for the exploration of cultural aspects of the language."

The data from the semi-structured interviews support some of these findings. In relation to their beliefs about their content knowledge about cultures of the English-speaking communities, all participants reinforced the idea of having such knowledge and shared the experiences which helped them develop such understanding, most of them in their teaching training program at the university. In the interview, the participants also reinforced their belief that teaching culture is part of their role as foreign language teachers. However, when asked to elaborate on such belief, all participants (pseudonyms: Carmen, Mariano, Mirta, and Rebeca) commented on factors that limited their possibilities to explore culture in their courses. Mariano, Mirta, and Rebeca acknowledged that the content of the course curriculum was a limiting factor because culture was not an integral part of it, only allowing for a sporadic exploration of cultures in the classroom. In Mariano's words:

Si los temas dan para incluir lo cultural, lo hago (...), pero lo que yo le añado es un extra/If the topics offer me the chance to do include culture, I do it (...), but adding it (cultural content) is an extra.

Similarly, Rebeca and Mirta, who had indicated in their responses to the questionnaire that they believed that their classroom practices allowed for the exploration of culture in their courses, when asked to elaborate on their responses, commented on the strong influence of contextual factors on their actual teaching practices. Rebeca indicated that

no te dan los tiempos para poder llevar a cabo una clase en la que se pueda explorar [la dimensión cultural] en profundidad/there's no time to be able to explore the cultural dimension in depth in a class.

In addition to time, other limiting factors that were mentioned by these participants were language level of students and student interests.

In relation to beliefs about pedagogical knowledge to teach culture, all participants indicated in the questionnaire that they believed to have the necessary knowledge to be able to teach cultural content. In the interview, however, all participants acknowledged weaknesses in their pedagogical training and indicated that their teacher training program mostly provided them with content knowledge about culture, but did not provide training on how to teach culture.

The interviews allowed the participants the chance to share classroom practices in which they explored cultural aspects. In addition to the aforementioned sporadic nature of culture teaching, data analysis also shows that when the participants teach culture, they mostly focus on cultural products (e.g., food, music, dances) of English-speaking communities. The participants mentioned lessons in which they had focused on festivals, food, buildings, and comics to illustrate how they explored the cultural dimension in their courses. For example, Carmen planned a lesson in which students had to make gingerbread cookies following the instructions of a recipe. She shared:

[los estudiantes] aprendieron sobre la cultura –de dónde vienen esas galletitas-, aprendieron lengua porque aprendieron sobre los ingredientes básicos y se divirtieron./ [the students] learned about culture –where the cookies come from-, they learned language because they learned about basic ingredients [to make the cookies], and they had fun.

In this lesson, Carmen incorporated gingerbread cookies as cultural products for her students to encounter a part of what she understands as culture. Carmen mentioned that the goal of the activity was twofold, with a cultural (the origin of the cookies) as well as a linguistic component (ingredients and instructions). At the same time, she reflected on the interest of the students in the activity. This excerpt is representative of some of the findings of this study because the activity focused on both cultural and linguistic aspects of the language, it was based on a cultural product, and according to the teacher it enhanced student motivation.

4. Discussion and conclusion

Despite their differences in terms of age, teaching experience, and teaching context, the results of the study show that the participants reported similar beliefs in relation to culture and the teaching of culture in their language courses. In addition, those beliefs seem to be in line with current approaches to foreign language teaching which consider culture an integral part of language learning and teaching. The majority of participants reported that they believed to have the necessary content and pedagogical knowledge to teach culture in their courses and that teaching culture was part of their role as teachers of English.

Even though these are positive results, in the qualitative data teachers also reported that their classroom practices were highly influenced by contextual factors that sometimes did not allow for an exploration of cultural aspects in their lessons. This

finding suggests that despite believing that teaching culture is important, when faced with contextual constraints, the focal participants continue to choose the teaching of linguistic aspects of the language over cultural aspects.

Another relevant finding is related to the differences in responses in relation to beliefs about pedagogical knowledge to teach culture. While in the questionnaire the focal participants reported that they believed to have the necessary pedagogical knowledge to teach culture, during the interview they all reported that they mostly had cultural content knowledge and that they lacked pedagogical knowledge to be able to include cultural aspects in their courses. This difference in their responses may be attributed to “social desirability” bias (Dörnyei, 2010, p. 8) because it might be difficult for teachers to acknowledge lack of pedagogical knowledge. Once the focal participants met the researcher in the interviews, they might have felt more comfortable to share experiences than in the questionnaire.

Another important finding has to do with the cultural aspects that the participants reported teaching in their courses. In the interview data, all the examples that the teachers provided were related to the teaching of cultural products such as food and buildings. Even though it is good that the teachers included cultural aspects in their lessons, culture teaching should not be limited to cultural products and should also help learners explore the practices and perspectives of different English-speaking communities.

In addition, even though cultural products were part of their EFL courses, the teachers indicated that they were only included sporadically. When culture is not systematically taught, learners might be just exposed to superficial cultural aspects, which might lead to the reinforcement of stereotypical understandings of English-speaking communities.

These study results should have direct implications for EFL teacher training programs in Argentina. EFL teacher training programs should prepare teachers to be equipped with the necessary skills to design courses and lessons which systematically integrate the teaching of linguistic and cultural aspects of the language. EFL teacher training programs should prepare teachers to move beyond the teaching of isolated cultural products and into a critical discussion of the products, practices, and perspectives of the cultures of the English-speaking world.

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Materials development

7 Materials design: An experience of writing materials for state-run schools in Córdoba

Ana Cecilia Cad

anaceciliacad@hotmail.com

Facultad de Lenguas – UNC

1. Introduction

Most state-run schools in the province of Córdoba offer English through *Jornada Extendida*. The Ministry of Education of the province has recently passed a law to improve the education students from deprived backgrounds receive. As a consequence, *Jornada Extendida* was created to provide these students with better opportunities (Jornada Extendida, 2011). In many cases English is taught by people who are not qualified English teachers but “primary school teachers with orientation to *Jornada Extendida*” (Boletín Oficial, 2010). In other words, primary school teachers who have received basic training as regards the teaching of a second language, and who face the problem that the market does not offer suitable material for this context. The aim of *Jornada Extendida* in Córdoba is “to foster students’ participation within interactive and meaningful communicative situations in English (...), generate learning opportunities that promote the comprehension and the production of written and oral texts (...) and create a learning environment to share music and literary production” (Jornada Extendida escuela primaria, 2011).

A group of teachers from the School of Languages at UNC¹ set out to design materials for this context. In an attempt to provide teachers with graded material, and

students with affordable contextualized resources, we started to generate our own classroom material. We took into consideration the context that surrounds the students; thus, all the activities and topics revolve around their socio-cultural context and linguistic needs. A need analysis carried out by means of observations and interviews to teachers of *Jornada Extendida* determined that students needed contextualized material to which they could easily relate to and which would offer relevant content in appropriate language to talk about their reality. In this way, students would perceive that their learning is meaningful and connected to their daily lives.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Materials design

There are some materials evaluators who have a negative opinion of teacher produced material (Allbright, 1981; Dudley Evans & St John, 1998; Sheldon, 1988; Seow, 2002). However, Block (2013) states three important reasons to encourage teacher-made resources. First, one of the main reasons is the benefit of having *contextualized* material, which is consequently relevant to the students since teachers can connect the teaching of the foreign language to other core subjects and their students' lives. As language is presented in a meaningful, well-structured context, students will find that they are using the language in a significant way and, consequently, they will experience the tasks as being intrinsically motivating. Along similar lines, Tomlinson (2011) states that teacher-made materials should bare a close connection with the students' socio- cultural context. In this way, students will perceive what they learn as meaningful and they will easily relate it to their background knowledge. Furthermore, familiar content provides potential for acquiring new knowledge (Krashen, 1985).

The second reason that Block (2013) postulates to foster teacher- made materials is the *timelessness* of these materials. Materials that are created for a specific context can be updated regularly, baring a close connection to what is currently going on in the students' local context. Updated material engages students and fosters their reactions towards that content.

The third and final reason Block (2013) mentions is the *personal touch* of the teacher in the sense that teachers create materials taking into account their students' interest and their immediate learning needs. For example, teachers can elaborate self-editing exercises based on their students' mistakes.

Following Tomlinson (2011), we can describe our material as being:

- *instructional*: because it provides information about the language;
- *experiential*: students are presented, by means of dialogues, with instances of language in use;
- *elicitative*: there are activities that promote students' use of the language; and
- *exploratory*: it fosters students' noticing of linguistic features and facilitates discovery about language use (Tomlinson, 2011, p. 2).

Materials should present activities that encourage an inductive approach to learning and learning by discovery, which are considered to be very valuable (Rutherford & Sharwood-Smith, 1998; Bolitho & Tomlinson, 1995) because students have to invest their interest and attention. At the same time, materials should provide communicative activities whereby they use their linguistic and strategic knowledge to carry out a task. Tomlinson (2011, p.16) also adds that

Such attempts can enable the learners to “check” the effectiveness of their internal hypotheses, especially if the activities stimulate them into “pushed output” (Swain, 1985) which is slightly above their current proficiency. They also help the learners to automatise their existing procedural

knowledge (i.e. their knowledge of how the language is used) and to develop strategic competence (Canale & Swain, 1980).

Ideally, materials should promote learning without forcing premature speaking or making students to remain quiet for long periods of time. Thus, it is convenient that at first materials present listening passages accompanied with exercises that will allow them to reflect on the language. Also, students should have the possibility of answering questions in their L1 and/or through drawings and gestures (Tomlinson, 2011). The aim of using these activities is that students will be exposed to tasks that require comprehension but not production.

2.2. Teaching principles

Young learners learn best when the linguistic input is taught within a specific context in which “the message is more important than form” (Shin & Crandall, 2014, p. 40). If the context does not promote the use of the language in meaningful ways, young learners may not feel motivated to participate. Children acquire language by focusing on *meaning* rather than by focusing on specific grammatical rules. Preferably, grammar should be taught implicitly through the repetition of the structure in different contexts. (Shin & Crandall, 2014, p. 41). Pinter (2006) and Cameron (2001) state that the implicit teaching of grammar fosters students’ noticing of the grammatical pattern; thus, teachers need to provide students with meaning-focused input to be able to notice grammar. This implicit approach goes in line with Cameron’s (2003) claim that children see the language *from the inside* since they try to find meaning “in how language is used in action, in interaction and with intention” (Cameron, 2001, p.99). In other words, they see meaning when they learn by doing, when they interact with others and when they

carry our purposeful activities. Therefore, it is important that teachers provide meaningful contextualized activities in which students can become familiar with new structures, revise and recycle them.

Young learners learn best through meaningful interaction with their peers. The constructivist model put forward by Piaget, Bruner and Vygotsky (Richards & Rodgers, 2001) stresses that knowledge is socially shared. Learners should be encouraged to analyze, do research, discover, make contributions, share, build, and generate meaning based on what they already know. This is what Baynat Monreal & Sanz Gil (2007, p.85) call an “active methodology.”

The role of the teacher should be one of a provider of resources and a guide to task achievement. Teachers need to help their students to learn by doing, and from their mistakes and experiences. In this way, independent learning and students’ autonomy is fostered.

3. Description of the material

3.1. Formal organization

Our material is a set of units covering different topics. Each unit is subdivided into three lessons, an expansion section to consolidate what was taught previously in the lesson, and finally a project section in which we relate the topic of the unit to a value like friendship or family love. The units were designed and piloted in 2013 in different schools in Córdoba city by teachers who volunteered to do so after attending workshops that we delivered to talk about teaching young children and to share our material. Teachers received the first unit and after sending us feedback on that unit we sent the second one. The same procedure was followed until teachers got all the units and projects. Based on the feedback we got, we changed some activities and planned

subsequent units. The final version of each unit is uploaded in PDF format to a blog page *Ventana al Inglés* (<http://ventana.fl.unc.edu.ar/>) located in the School of Languages (UNC) platform. This blog is the result of the collaborative work of the materials designers and it was set up aiming at making the process of getting feedback from teachers quick. The materials can be freely downloaded and they are protected by Creative Commons. We have decided to make our materials available in this way so that teachers can retrieve the unit they need when they need it. They can download specific black and white units in order to reduce costs and favour access. Besides, once teachers have made use of the materials, they can send us feedback, suggestions or share their classroom experience through the blog contact page.

Apart from the content units, we provide teachers with *Teachers' Notes* for each unit where they can find guidance to work with the activities, stories, alternatives to some activities and information that we consider useful for teaching. For example, when students have to work with parts of the body with a Picasso painting, we include information (a short biography) about Pablo Picasso. All the activities of the units have been carefully graded and structured in a way that promotes students' autonomy. All the instructions are stated using just a verb that is accompanied by an icon so it becomes easier for students to remember the instructions by linking the verb with its corresponding image. Activities in general tend to have a similar structure and may look like repetitive material; however, these activities have been planned out in this way so that students can carry out the tasks at home on their own. There are grammar boxes that help students notice certain grammatical features. All the units open up with a dialogue situation to foster students' language comprehension skills. Apart from linguistic- focused activities, there are activities to foster high-order thinking abilities such as classification, analysis, application and synthesis.

Recently, we have opened up a section called *Projects* in which we try to connect the teaching of English with other core areas like Art and Physical Education. We are working to link English with other subjects in the curricula.

3.2. Topics and activities

Our material is highly contextualized because, as we have explained before, the topics and the activities have been designed taking these students' socio-cultural contexts as a point of departure. Thus, we hope teachers can easily make their students perceive their learning as meaningful and connected to their daily lives. Our material is flexible in the sense that both teachers and students can make choices as regards how to perform each of the activities. In the Teachers' Notes we offer different suggestions to carry out the activities with different types of materials or with varied patterns of interaction. The activities that are present in our material foster the development of skills and strategies (learning to learn). Therefore, there are activities to train cognitive skills as well as language skills, namely, classification, analysis, application and synthesis activities. Besides, the activities have been planned to foster learning by doing since students can perceive the content as meaningful and they are willing to invest some effort in performing oral activities and projects. Also, in the project section, students have to use the topic and linguistic knowledge learned through the unit to carry out the different activities but, at the same time, they should search for additional information, process it and share it.

3.3. Characters

The characters were thought out to share the same age and interests that an eleven or twelve- year- old student may have in this kind of schools in Córdoba. The notion of

inclusive education is a recognition that learners have diverse abilities and interests, and that they come from diverse ethnic and social backgrounds and might have special needs. In the material proposed we present Argentinean and Latin American children as well as children with special needs sharing the class at school. Also, the kinds of activities that the characters perform or the hobbies they have are related to the students' realities. Besides, in accordance to the educational policy of integration, we have created a character that uses a wheelchair, so all kinds of students can feel part of the material. Effort has been made not to present stereotypes since the characterization of the students does not present any kind of exaggeration. At the same time, all the characters display a special trait so as to promote the conception that all students are unique and have something special to share within their communities. By emphasizing the idea that we all have something meaningful to share, we have empowered children with disabilities or of different cultural backgrounds; thus, we break with the stereotype of placing students who are perceived as "different" in a vulnerable position. The feedback we have obtained from teachers tells us that the incorporation of this type of characters has been positive since students can talk about similar situations in their daily lives.

3.4. Values

From our standpoint, values also play a key role in students' development. Thus, the characters of the book make students dwell on important values and that is why we present characters that represent different ethnic groups and have different abilities. We decided to include people from different socio-cultural backgrounds to account for the social demographic change that exists not only in Argentina but all over the world: mass immigration. Today, we are likely to have students coming from Africa or Latin

American countries; sometimes, this situation is a breeding ground for contempt and cases of bullying. Presenting these characters to the class may work as a starting point for debate about the recognition of others. Also, characters share bits of their culture as a means to promoting mutual understanding. Besides, all the characters are known for an outstanding feature; for instance, there is a character that is good at playing football while there is another one good at performing arts. This idea was planned out to stress out that all of us have something meaningful to share.

Likewise, the projects at the end of each unit also make students reflect about important social values. Each project is thematically connected to a specific unit. For instance, there is a unit that deals with the topic of the family (“My Family and Friends”) but we divert from the prototypical idea of the family (father, mother and children) to make room for different family patterns.

4. Materials evaluation

Since March 2014, our material can be downloaded from our blog *Ventana al Inglés* (<http://ventana.fl.unc.edu.ar/>) and put into practice by teachers in different schools in the province of Córdoba. Taking into account the feedback some teachers have sent us, we have been able to identify contextual, pedagogical and linguistic needs (Tomlison, 2013). Since most schools lack appropriate resources to carry out listening activities, our material does not provide many of them. However, we are starting to script and record audio files that are soon to be uploaded to the blog.

Although the materials have been developed to cater for the needs of teachers and students of schools from deprived backgrounds, other teachers from Córdoba have also downloaded it because, as they have commented on our blog, they find its contextualization appealing. Also, some teachers have provided us with feedback to

improve the quality of our materials. Besides, some teachers have adapted our materials to meet the needs of their students. For instance, an English teacher had to share with a Natural Science teacher a day at the planetarium so she used our characters to introduce the topic of the solar system. Also, in one of our projects we suggest carrying out a donation of school objects, and a teacher carried this out and we also contributed to getting more people involved in the project.

5. Conclusion

The process of materials creation has proved to be challenging but also very rewarding. Through these materials we have been able to share our perspective of how we believe primary school children learn best. We have shared our work and we have obtained feedback that is helping us to improve. Also, we have seen the positive impact of our materials in classrooms and some of their rippling effects when teachers and students went outside their classrooms making connections with their communities through donations and visits to the planetarium, among others. Designing these materials is a rich and complex undertaking for us. It pushes us to think and re-think on different aspects of teaching and learning. We believe that the materials -paying special attention to contextual factors- are a relevant alternative for teachers. Moreover, they capture the spirit of the post-method era.

Creating materials is time consuming, and this is the main reason why many times teachers prefer to follow a course book rather than prepare their own materials. Besides, in order to create teaching and learning materials that are perceived as successful for students, teachers have to have a clear idea of how they consider their students learn best and how students relate themselves to their nearby context. The design of these materials aims at trying to provide undertrained teachers with material

that is heavily contextualized and engaging. In this way, we seek to promote quality teaching and learning.

We believe that our material is a clear reflection of the post- method condition. As teachers, we developed teaching/ learning materials taking into account affective and contextual variables. Then, we drew on different approaches to design activities that could be best adapted to suit our needs; thus, we never fell on the constraints of any approach. Through the process of materials design, we have reflected on our own teaching practice and, by sharing this work with others, we hope these materials become a valuable resource leading to professional growth.

Note

1. The members of the team are coordinated by MA Susana M. Liruso. The teachers that take part in this project are Paola L. Barboza, María A. Barceló, M. Florencia Boggnano, Ana Cecilia Cad and Angélica Carnero.

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8 Learner training in vocabulary learning strategies in elementary EFL coursebooks: Yet another Cinderella

Gabriela Helale

Mario López Barrios

María Gimena San Martín

Facultad de Lenguas, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba

1. Introduction

Promoting learner autonomy and maximizing learner opportunities are some of the tenets of postmethod pedagogy (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Accordingly, the last decades have witnessed a steady growth in research on learning strategies, which has now become rather mature (Cohen & Macaro, 2007). Along with grammar and phonology, lexis is crucial to both receptive and productive skill development, and consequently, effective communication (Nykos & Fan, 2007). Therefore, equipping learners with specific strategies to help them increase and consolidate their lexical competence should be a feature of EFL coursebooks even at elementary level. Nevertheless, the presence of learner training in vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) is quite scarce in coursebooks of this level. Thus, the aim of this paper is to analyze how EFL coursebooks contribute to the development of VLS.

2. Literature review

ELT coursebooks have been analyzed from many points of view such as culture content, approaches to grammar teaching or skills development. Yet, the way VLS are treated in ELT teaching materials has been neglected in materials development research. A pioneering study by Lake (1997) surveyed the inclusion of learner training, including VLS, in seven EFL coursebooks ranging from beginner to advanced level. Results indicate that the coursebooks analyzed offer training in VLS such as inferencing, memorizing and induction. Ranalli (2003) analyzed the characteristics of three key VLS in three upper-level EFL coursebooks: planning repetition, dictionary use, and vocabulary recording. The author found significant variability in the treatment of these strategies in the sample analyzed and concluded that the results reveal an unsatisfactory degree of VLS development. In a study of the treatment of lexical aspects in a selection of coursebooks for Spanish as a foreign language and EFL, López-Jiménez (2009) found a negligible degree of training in VLS, with the EFL coursebooks including more such training than the Spanish ones. An interesting finding is that the presence of VLS training differs across coursebook levels and target language: the elementary level EFL coursebooks do not include this component whereas the Spanish coursebooks of the same level do, and the proportion is quite the opposite in the intermediate and advanced levels of the series. Lastly, Bastanfar and Hashemi explore the inclusion of VLS training in the seven levels of an EFL coursebook for secondary schools in Iran (Bastanfar & Hashemi, 2010a), and compare this component in the same coursebook series and a four-level international coursebook commonly used in private language schools in the same country (Bastanfar & Hashemi, 2010b). Results indicate that the 7th level of the local coursebook shows a more satisfactory degree of VLS training in

comparison to the modest presence of this component in the lower levels of the coursebook. The major differences in both coursebook series lie in the richness of the strategy repertoire included, with the international coursebook providing training in both cognitive and metacognitive strategies.

The present study differs from the reviewed studies in that ours concentrates on elementary EFL coursebooks published between 2002 and 2010. When the coursebook is not produced for learners with a particular L1, the target language becomes the vehicle of strategy instruction. Because the low proficiency level of the intended learners does not allow them access to linguistically complex input and activities, it is relevant to analyze how elaborate the VLS component is and to describe the techniques used.

3. Theoretical background

Language learning strategies (LLS) consist of “specific actions taken by the learners to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferable to new situations” (Oxford, 2003 p.8). Different taxonomies have been developed in the literature; however, the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) developed by Oxford (1990) has had the strongest impact on second language learning. Oxford proposes two categories of LLS: direct or indirect strategies. Direct strategies encompass memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies, and indirect strategies comprise metacognitive, affective and social strategies. Chamot & O'Malley (1994) place emphasis on the importance of instructing learners on strategies since these represent the dynamic processes underlying learning. Thus, using different

learning strategies can help learners become active and autonomous learners, and learners can transfer strategies to new learning situations.

Research on LLS has tended to concentrate on different aspects of language learning. Asgari and Mustapha (2011) argue that VLS are part of LLS since the majority of the LLS listed in Oxford's taxonomy in the memory category refer to VLS or most strategies can be applied in vocabulary learning tasks. Different researchers have proposed inventories of VLS (Gu, 2003; Nation, 2013; Schmitt, 1997). One of the most widely used taxonomies is Schmitt's (1997), which draws on Oxford's classification of LLS and provides a full range of VLS. Schmitt classifies them into two main categories: discovery strategies, i.e. strategies deployed by learners to learn new words; and consolidation strategies, i.e. strategies used for recalling words. Furthermore, the taxonomy classifies VLS into five subsets. *Determination strategies* refer to individual learning strategies; *social strategies* involve strategies learners use to learn new words by interacting with others; *memory strategies* refer to strategies learners apply to remember the meaning of a word; *cognitive strategies* are those by which learners engage in more mental processing such as repetition or labelling objects; and *metacognitive strategies* relate to processes involved in monitoring, decision-making, and evaluation of one's progress.

For our study we have employed Schmitt's classification, to which we have added one more cognitive strategy, "dictionary using strategies" and a metacognitive strategy, "planning a course of action to improve one's vocabulary learning." These additions were necessary in view of their presence in the corpus analyzed, and were adopted from Gu (2003), in the first case, and from Nation's taxonomy (2013), in the last case.

4. Description of the corpus

The study involved the analysis of seven elementary level textbooks: *Real Life Elementary* (Cunningham & Moor, 2010), *Friends United 1* (Beare, 2004), *Opportunities Beginner* (Harris & Mower, 2002), *Flashlight 1* (Davies & Falla, 2007), *Extreme 1* (Downie, Gray & Jiménez, 2004), *We can do it 1* (Downie, Gray & James, 2004) and *Attitude 1* (Fusco, Garside & Prodromou, 2006). Some of these books are intended for adolescent or adult learners, and are either internationally or locally produced. The exploration comprised looking into the Student Book (SB), the Workbook (WB) and the Teacher's book (TB).

5. Findings

The table below shows the main features of the VLS components in the corpus analyzed and the kinds of strategies found. TB refers to the teacher's book:

Coursebooks	Characteristics of VLS in the learner training sections	Types of strategies
1) Real Life Elementary	<i>Active study</i> tips encourage learners to notice aspects of vocabulary, for example word formation and two-word verbs. There are also simple tips in the <i>Active Study</i> revision sections, for example reminding learners 'to learn words in groups' or 'notice word stress' (TB p. iv) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> includes a formal but limited VLS component consisting of tips 	memory
2) Friends United 1	The sections reading/listening tips and Learning to Learn have "been designed to initiate students into developing good studying habits and improving their potential as students". (TB p. 8) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> includes a formal VLS component containing more elaborate tips and related tasks. 	determination, memory, cognitive
3) Opportunities Beginner	" <i>Learning Power</i> appears every two modules. It offers tips and reminders to help students in their development as learners" (TB p. 7) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> includes a formal VLS component with several tips and related tasks. 	determination, memory, cognitive, metacognitive
4) Flashlight 1	In the workbook, "[T]he unit finishes with a <i>Learning diary</i> where students assess their own progress by responding <i>yes</i> or <i>no</i> to simple 'can do' statements (<i>I can name six family words [...]</i>) which reflect the basic aims of each unit. This encourages learner autonomy and is also a useful tool for the teacher to see how well	metacognitive

	students think they have learned the new material.” (TB p. vi) • VLS limited to self-evaluation	
5) Extreme 1	The table of contents includes a “learning skills” section, but the actual objectives are not always present as suggestions or as a demonstration of learning strategies, instead, some activities don’t make learners reflect on the outcome. For example, in unit 2 the objectives are “labeling objects to memorize vocabulary “ (TB p. 7). • includes a formal, though limited, VLS component and some of the instruction is implicit.	determination, memory, cognitive, metacognitive
6) We can do it 1	[the student’s book] includes Learning skill boxes: short sections that suggest learning skills to help the student gradually achieve awareness and autonomy in learning. (TB, p. 6) Self check sections divided into vocabulary, grammar and skills allow students to test themselves (TB, p. 6) The My vocabulary section helps students to classify and memorize new words and expressions. In the Word families section students can keep a record of the new words in semantic groups (TB, p. 7) • includes a formal, tough limited, VLS component with tips and related tasks.	memory, cognitive metacognitive
7) Attitude	The <i>Develop your learning</i> section introduces further learner training techniques to help students become better learners. (TB, p. iv) A focus on the development of study and writing skills, empowering students to become effective learners through awareness-raising activities, learning tips and follow-up tasks. (TB, back cover) • includes a formal VLS component with several tips and related tasks.	memory, cognitive, metacognitive

Table 1. VLS in the seven coursebooks analysed.

We will now analyze VLS according to their type. Two of the seven coursebooks include four different types of VLS: determination, memory, cognitive and metacognitive, whereas two coursebooks include only one type. Metacognitive VLS were the most frequently found in the sample with 23 instances contained in five of the seven coursebooks. The second most frequent type is memory VLS, which are represented by 22 examples and is included in 6 books. Instances of cognitive strategies were recorded 19 times and are included in five of the seven coursebooks. Determination VLS are the least represented: 4 appearances included in three coursebooks.

Schmitt's taxonomy encompasses 27 different types of memory strategies, whereas for both determination and cognitive VLS, 9 and 10 different types are included. Only 5 types of metacognitive VLS are represented in the taxonomy, which constitutes a weakness since it has not captured the wider array of possibilities that can be found in other taxonomies such as Nation's (2013). In the corpus analyzed, five different types of memory VLS (out of 27 in the taxonomy), five types of metacognitive strategies (out of 5 in Schmitt's original taxonomy and 1 addition of our own), five types of cognitive strategies (out of 9 in the original taxonomy plus one addition by us) and 2 types of determination VLS (out of 9) could be found. The table below shows the variety of VLS found. Figures in brackets indicate the number of instances:

determination	memory	cognitive	metacognitive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> analyze part of speech (2) check for L1 cognate (2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> group words together (11) learn the words of an idiom together (5) study word with pictorial representation (3) use new word in sentences (2) study the spelling of word (1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> keep a vocabulary notebook (13) use vocabulary section of coursebook (2) dictionary using strategies (2) put labels on objects as a study aid (1) record word information (1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> testing oneself (15) planning a course of action to improve one's vocabulary learning (3) use spaced word practice (2) skip or pass new word (2) use English language media (1)

Table 2. variety of VLS found in the corpus.

Most of the instruction in VLS offered by the coursebooks is explicit and is materialized as tips, activities and reflection. Two of the coursebooks, *Extreme* and *We can do it* tend to include some implicit instruction. This is perceived since both coursebooks include an indication of the learning skills to be developed in the unit, but in some cases the objectives stated there are not matched with a corresponding activity in the book. This is the case of "revising and integrating" in Unit 1 of *We can do it*.

We will now deal with the salient characteristics of the explicit VLS component of the sample analyzed. We considered two main features: the structure and complexity of the instruction given, and the depth of cognitive processing encouraged by the activity. As regards the first aspect, five types of structures were found:

- 1) Tips formulated as instructions: Learn words in groups (*Real Life*), Use pictures to learn vocabulary (*Friends United*), as statements giving advice and shown as a note: x-note: A good way to remember new vocabulary is to label things in your house (*Extreme*), Learning tip: It's a good idea to look back at vocabulary [...] you have studied after the lesson, after 24 hours, and again after one week [...] (*Attitude*) or as an explanation: x-note: Words that are similar in English and in Spanish are called cognates: delicious – delicioso, science –ciencia (*Extreme*).
- 2) Simple instructions, for example, Make a vocabulary book, Write this information (*Opportunities*), Group the words under these headings (*Extreme*).
- 3) Questions for reflection: Read these words from a dictionary. Are they adjectives, nouns or verbs? (*Friends United*), Look at the Mini-dictionary. What vocabulary areas do you need to study? (*Opportunities*).
- 4) As can-do statements: I can name six countries and their nationalities (*Flashlight*)
- 5) As multiple choice options: Mark your progress in these areas (*Opportunities*)

Since the coursebooks are strictly monolingual, it can be observed that the complexity of the instructions given is quite manageable as they use simple vocabulary and syntax. The depth of cognitive processing demanded by the activity correlates with the formal structure of the strategy. For example, questions such as “What order do these words appear in the dictionary?” (*Friends United*) or instructions such as “Write example sentences” (*Opportunities*) are cognitively more demanding than tips formulated as instructions, as in “Notice word stress” (*Real Life*), since learners are not required to translate these into a specific action in the activity and no post-reflection activity is suggested to foster metacognition.

In sum, a variety of strategy types and formats can be found in the sample, with the coursebooks *Attitude* and *Opportunities* including the most elaborate VLS component in terms of quantity and quality. *Friends United*, *Extreme* and *We can do it* occupy a middle position, and *Real Life* and *Flashlight* offer learners very limited opportunities of familiarizing themselves with and using VLS.

6. Conclusion

Research in the last decades has drawn considerable attention to language learning strategies in general, and strategies learners deploy when learning different skills, vocabulary and grammar. Coursebooks are very important educational tools that enable learners to increase their learning opportunities both in and out of class. This small scale study has revealed that the coursebooks analyzed uphold VLS instruction to varying degrees, with some coursebooks including a wide repertoire of VLS instructional practices, whereas others only focus on few strategy types and activities. Therefore, we

deem it necessary that EFL teachers engage in careful textbook analysis and make informed decisions as to whether materials should be supplemented and to what extent.

We hope that the present analysis may contribute to raising EFL teachers' awareness as to VLS instruction and thus, offer them some tools to help increase their learners' lexical competence.

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9 Intercomprehension in Germanic languages in Argentina

Patricia Lauría de Gentile

Facultad de Lenguas, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba

patricia.lauria@fl.unc.edu.ar

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to describe the fourth stage of a research project which aims at designing materials for the simultaneous development of the ability to read texts in Dutch, German and English. The target students of such a course are Spanish-speaking adults with basic knowledge of English (Common European Framework Levels A1 or A2). Employing English and Spanish as bridge languages (Grzega, 2005) the course will enable the acquisition of partial competences in Dutch and German.

It is significant to draw attention to the fundamental role that knowledge of English plays in this context. The fact that most young adults who have completed compulsory schooling in Argentina possess some knowledge of English, ranging from A1 to B 2 levels in general (Pozzo, 2009) means that this foreign language can serve as the medium – the “bridge” – through which reading competence in additional languages of the same linguistic family can be developed.

Intercomprehension in Germanic Languages for Spanish speaking students is a research study which has been implemented in four stages since 2008 at, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba (UNC). This paper will summarise this research work and focus on the fourth stage, which involves refining the materials on the basis of pilot course

information, observation and systematic revision. This process will pave the way for the publication of the first textbook on Intercomprehension in Germanic languages for Spanish speakers with basic knowledge of English.

2. Theoretical framework

The research is grounded in studies on intercomprehension (Lauria de Gentile et al, 2013), receptive multilingualism (Thije & Zeevaert, 2007), reading comprehension, linguistic transfer and the results of European projects such as *IGLO* (Intercomprehension in Germanic Languages Online) and *EuroComGerm* (Hufeisen & Marx, 2007). The focus of *IGLO* is on one language at a time, using students' prior knowledge as a reference point. Such pre-existing knowledge can be classed into five categories defined by Doyé (2005) as general knowledge, cultural knowledge, situational knowledge, behavioural knowledge and linguistic knowledge. The last category, in turn, involves pragmatic, graphic, phonological, grammatical and lexical knowledge.

EuroComGerm, as part of the *EuroCom* project, focuses on the development of reading comprehension in one or more typologically-related languages, by making learners aware of their existing linguistic capital, which accounts for what they need not learn when embarking on the process. While *IGLO* has a consecutive approach to intercomprehension, by developing intercomprehension in one language at a time, *EuroComGerm* has a simultaneous approach, that is to say all the languages of the same linguistic family are presented together from the angle of systematic contrastivity. In other words, the texts are presented in all the target languages at the same time and the reader is encouraged to apply his/her inborn capacity to transfer knowledge and thus

develop intercomprehensive abilities through a process called “optimized deduction” (Jessner, 2008), which accounts for the innate ability to perceive similarities in typologically related languages. Similarly, the project “*Intercomprehension in Germanic Languages for Spanish speaking students*” at UNC, has a simultaneous approach to the development of partial competences in Dutch and German through the use of English and Spanish as bridge languages.

Intercomprehension implies the ability to communicate in languages of the same linguistic family without the need for full mastery of all of them. Capucho & Oliveira see it as a “heuristic and interpretative competence in any communicative code” (2005, p. 12). In their words, intercomprehension is the development of “the ability to co-construct meaning in the context of the encounter of different languages and to make pragmatic use of this in a concrete communicative situation” (Ibid. p.14).

Another definition of intercomprehension is provided by Degache (2006) defines intercomprehension as a special case of plurilingual-exolingual communication which is characterised by the asymmetry of the interlocutors’ linguistic competences and the use of diverse codes in the interaction. Although this definition refers to both interlocutors and interaction, it also applies to reading comprehension, understood as a process of interaction between a reader, his linguistic and extralinguistic schemata and a text.

What is clear from the definitions above is that intercomprehension is an approach to the development of partial competences which makes use of the linguistic resources learners already possess. Research on intercomprehension has demonstrated how receptive knowledge of one language can be developed on the basis of knowledge of another language, belonging to the same linguistic family (Stoye, 2000). The process is based on the human ability to transfer previous experiences and known structures and

lexis into new contexts, and leads to great efficiency in the use of cognitive resources, reduced learning time, as well as to satisfying results in terms of the increased awareness as to the wealth of knowledge students have.

The process mentioned above, called “optimised deduction” (Jessner, 2008), can be systematically implemented by means of the multilingual didactic techniques known as *the Seven Sieves*. This is a construct first developed by Klein & Stegmann (2000) for intercomprehension in the Romance languages and systematized later on for the Germanic languages (Hufeisen & Marx, 2007, Jaimez, Villanueva & Wilke, 2009). The concept is based on the metaphor of the learner seeking and extracting gold by means of successive sieving. In other words, this involves the perception of similarities between typologically related languages, English in our case, and transfer of that knowledge in order to develop receptive abilities in other new language(s), in our context German and Dutch.

3. The study: materials development process

3.1. Text selection

This stage, which has been implemented twice already in the recursive materials development process that we have implemented (Lauria de Gentile, 2013), involves the collection of authentic and updated texts of varied lengths and genres, from reliable sources, on topics which are thought to appeal to our student population. The target students are adults with basic knowledge of English, who want to develop their reading comprehension ability in English, German and Dutch. Since subject specificity is not a relevant criterion in our context, as the groups are heterogeneous in terms of field of work or study, a set of texts on general topic areas has been compiled. Those issues are

all related to the culture of some or other of the countries where one of the target languages is spoken. We have texts that involve the arts (literature, films, painting, sculpture, etc.) and cultural, geographical and historical facts related to the varied countries where the three target languages are spoken. By way of example, the first batch of texts in English, German and Dutch which led to the development of the first eight task sheets, include texts with tourist information about accommodation options in three different European cities, headlines from varied online papers , texts about Suriname, a Dutch speaking country in South America; texts about three well known Argentine women who work in three different cities of Europe; texts about three European cities; texts about records in nature and about the famous Dutch painter Van Gogh.

The criteria employed for the text selection process is grounded on McGrath's (2002) and Reissner's (2007). Authentic texts, as defined by Alderson & Urquhart (1984) were chosen on the basis of varied criteria , namely, their relevance to students' needs, the perceived intrinsic interest of the topics, cultural appropriateness, the level of cognitive and linguistic challenge, as well as practical considerations, such as length, legibility, quality (as a representative of a genre) and exploitability.

Such criteria were employed for collecting and pre-selecting texts that would go into the initial text bank. When the time came for actually using the texts in a task sheet, - each worksheet needed at least three texts (one in each language)- , we found the need to either grade the text by making some adjustments to it, or else grade the task, in order to gauge the task demands to the assumed comprehension level of the students. This is in line with McGrath's (2002) suggestion of two possible alternatives for dealing with the difficulties that genuine texts can pose to beginning readers in L2, namely, grading the text or grading the task. The first strategy implies selecting texts that match the

students' linguistic, cultural, situational and behavioural schemata or elaborating the original texts to make them more comprehensible. The second approach, grading the tasks, involves scaffolding students' processing of genuine texts by means of tasks that both match readers' linguistic, general and cultural knowledge and support their understanding.

Text elaboration (Long, 2007) is an approach to improving the comprehensibility of genuine texts and overcoming the shortcomings of both genuine and simplified texts for second / third Language Acquisition (SLA/ TLA). The approach involves adding redundancy, explicitness and/ or regularity to sections of the text. In line with this, the adjustments made to some of the texts in the text bank we built were the following:

- a) **Shortening**: this is the most common processes employed, since in general, it is impossible to include full texts due to practical considerations. In addition, since each worksheet must have at least three texts, length is a variable that calls for inevitable adjustments.
- b) **Redundancy**: this involves adding transparent terms or terms which are graphemically similar to the English equivalent, in order to promote the recognition of the Dutch and or German counterparts due to the similarities.
- c) **Explicitness and regularity**: sentence structure was made more regular by devices such as parallelism, frequent use of canonical word order, use of full noun phrases instead of anaphors and matching order of mention to order of occurrence. These processes, were compounded by greater explicitness, achieved by the use of overt marking of grammatical and semantic relations and the addition of inter- and intra-sentential linkers.

Texts such as table of contents and lists of varied sorts, which have been labeled *colony texts* (Hoey, 1986), have been selected for the first two task sheets due to their textual nature, which enables us to gauge the degree of intercomprehension at level one (Reissner, 2007). Such texts are characterized by the fact that their “component parts do not derive their meaning from the sequence in which they are placed” (Hoey, 1986, p. 4). Therefore, they allow for greater manipulation of the elements without altering their nature. This text type allows the presentation of basic syntactic elements of the three Germanic languages in an authentic and clear context. As an instance of this, in the second tasksheet called “Headlines (EN)Schlagzeilen (DE)krantenkoppen(NL)”, a selection of headlines from online papers in the three Germanic languages has been employed in order to focus on similarities between the target languages in terms of the noun, the noun phrase and the formation of plurals.

3.2. Task design

Once each set of texts has been selected, the question of task design has to be tackled. On the basis of a pre- while- and post-reading framework (Grabe & Stoller, 2002), tasks have been developed as a support for intercomprehension development in Dutch and German, using English as the bridge language. Tasks have been designed for varied purposes, such as developing new reading strategies and promoting the awareness and later application of known strategies. Another purpose for the development of some of the tasks has been fostering transfer of knowledge of the bridge languages – English and Spanish– to the target languages by discovering similarities and inferring meaning. In other words, the purpose of some of the tasks has been the application of one or more of the multilingual didactic techniques known as *the Seven Sieves*. This purpose is realized

through the task that we call “DESCUBRIR: Discover (EN) Entdecken (DE)Ontdekken (NL)”.

These discovery tasks focus on what the reader with a basic knowledge of English, the bridge language, already knows about the other Germanic languages involved. The first multilingual didactic technique involves using readers’ knowledge of International Vocabulary(eg. those derived from Latin, such as *democracy/Demokratie/ democratie* or *information/ Information /informatien*) and a focus on the words which are related in the Germanic languages family or *PanGermanic vocabulary* , for example *water* (E), *Wasser* (G) and *water* (D), or *here* (E),, *hier* (G), *hier*(D). The second *Sieve* involves a focus on function words such as personal and possessive pronouns, negative adverbs, articles and demonstrative pronouns, interrogative pronouns, conjunctions and prepositions , and modal and auxiliary verbs. The third *Sieve* uses the similarities that exist between the languages on the basis of *sound –grapheme correspondences* among the three languages. One instance of this can be found in the use of *f/ff* after vowel and consonant in German (*offen, Schiff*) which corresponds to *p* in English and Dutch (*open, ship* (E) , *open, schip* (D). The fourth of these language awareness tools focuses on *spelling and pronunciation correspondences* in each language, which can facilitate the recognition of the relationship between words and meanings. The fifth multilingual didactic tool concentrates on the *common syntactic structures* in the Germanic languages, such as word order in the noun phrase or types of sentence structure depending on the position of the verb (initial position, second position and final position). The sixth of these tools for intercomprehension development in Germanic languages is the focus on the *morphosyntactic elements* which enable the recognition of varied grammatical elements, such as comparative and superlative adjectives, the recognition of plurals, etc. The

seventh and last *Sieve* includes the *prefixes and suffixes* which allow readers to deduce the meaning of certain words, for example, the prefix *mis-* , which is common to the three languages: *misunderstand* (E.), *misverstehen* (G.), *misverstaan* (D).

It seems clear that those multilingual didactic techniques involve a focus on language awareness. They are based mostly on what the languages have in common so that readers can cash in on what they already know, facilitating the process of learning . In addition to those language awareness tasks developed on the basis of *the Seven Sieves*, we have designed some other tasks to make readers conscious of some of the most important *differences* between and among the three Germanic languages (Wilke, 2013). These tasks focus on noticing syntactic, lexical and phonological differences among Dutch, German and English.

3.3. Physical realisation of the materials

The issue of careful and attractive presentation of each worksheet is an important consideration which has been accounted for by the design of a template in Word. Using this template every member of the research team working in small groups can actually design tasks sheets that display regularities in terms of layout, font type, task types, rubrics, spacing, task numbering, among other issues. The different drafts of every worksheet have been reviewed, corrected and proofread by members of the team working alone and by the whole team in the meetings we hold every three weeks. The revision process has been done using the digital version of a worksheet, usually sent by email. Revision and proofreading have been extremely time consuming but necessary processes.

3.4. Trialing: implementation of pilot courses.

This research project so far has consisted in four stages which have involved the recursive application of some of the sub-stages , namely text search , analysis of text types and possibilities of exploitation, task design , proofreading , revision , piloting and further revision. By way of example of this recursivity, several pilot courses have been held so far, as free courses organized from the *Secretaría de Extensión* of the School of Languages in Cordoba and oriented to young Spanish speaking adults with basic knowledge of English. During the first term of 2014, for instance, a course was taught from April to June to a group of 50 students. Their ages ranged from 18 to 48. A total of nine 110 minute classes were given to pilot for the third time the eight initial task sheets. A level 2 course is to be implemented between August and October 2014 to trial materials which have just been developed for a second level of intercomprehension, and which will be piloted for the first time.

Each pilot course has provided opportunities for revising the tasksheets. The mistakes found by the observers using a materials observation form especially designed for the purpose have been varied: typos, lack of clarity of some of the instructions, the need for more writing space, inefficiency of some of the tasks designed, among others. This constitutes but one more illustration of Hutchinson & Waters' maxim: "Don't set out to write the perfect materials on the first draft. Materials can always be improved..." (1987, p.126).

4. Conclusion

From the standpoint of psycholinguistics, intercomprehension is a very satisfying and efficient process, in terms of reduced learning time and cognitive effort. This efficiency

is due to the linguistic capital the learner can cash into the moment s/he takes up the study of other languages.

The results of this study so far suggest that careful materials development, which apply the Seven Sieves, and help activate reading comprehension strategies, seem to facilitate the simultaneous development of reading competences in English, German and Dutch. One significant outcome of the project will be the publication of a Level 1 textbook for Intercomprehension in Germanic languages for Spanish speaking students. This textbook will come out at the end of 2015 and will be the first of its type in Argentina.

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CALL

10 Digital natives and learning strategies in the pronunciation class

Andrea Leceta

Facultad de Filosofía, Humanidades y Artes, UNSJ

andreleceta@hotmail.com

Patricia Castro

Facultad de Filosofía, Humanidades y Artes, UNSJ

pacas2003@yahoo.com.ar

1. Introduction

As teachers at university level we have felt the need to update our curriculum in light of the changes at play in our society, with regard to information and communications technology (ICT), such as m-learning, cloud computing, one-to-one computing, blended-learning, personal learning environment (PLE), virtual learning environment (VLE), ubiquitous learning, social networking, to name but a few. New and innovative perspectives should be adopted in our classrooms to face this challenge. It is widely known that most of our students are digital literate in a repertoire of skills; hence we consider that their competence could be empowered by a conscious development in learning strategies. Taking into account the characteristics of our educational context (Castro & Leceta, 2012; Ciccolini, 2013; Cosentino, 2013; Femenía, 2013; Leáñez, Leceta & Sánchez, 2013; Leáñez, Waasaf & Leceta, 2013; López Ale, Coronel & Mercado, 2013; Spataro, 2013; Waasaf, Castro & Torres, 2013) and in order to enhance

the teaching and learning process of English pronunciation, we set out to work on a research project entitled “Strategies and digital literacies in the acquisition of English pronunciation” (evaluated and financed by CICITCA-UNSJ, Res. 18/14-CS). Its main goal is to determine whether a group of undergraduate students, currently attending first and second year at the Teacher Training College at Facultad de Filosofía, Humanidades y Artes, Universidad Nacional de San Juan, can improve their English pronunciation by means of a systematic and explicit training in learning strategies in connection with digital literacies.

Our didactic-technological proposal is framed within the parameters of a blended-learning model, which proposes the inclusion and implementation of ICT in curriculum design, as a complement to face-to-face interaction (Sharma & Barret, 2007). To a certain degree, the incorporation of web 2.0 technological resources in the curricular units implies a disruption in traditional learning contexts in the sense that it generates new learning environments which display an array of choices laying the groundwork for different ways in which knowledge is accessed, built and processed. Consequently, we have felt the need to renew and adapt our teaching practices to meet these demands in order to include these innovations.

In this paper we will make a brief reference to the theoretical and methodological considerations that frame our research project. With respect to the results, as the project is under progress, the data are being processed and thus no specification can be provided at this stage.

2. Theoretical framework

The development of ICT during the last decade has generated new possibilities to access information as well as new learning environments. The integration of these tools in our educational context has encouraged us to reflect upon our academic practices at higher education level and introduce innovative changes to meet our students' demands as digital natives. With the aim of helping students to self-regulate their learning processes in a cooperative and collaborative way, teachers have felt the need to develop new learning settings that could integrate students' learning strategies with digital literacies. In our particular case, this combination is intended to improve the teaching and learning processes, related specifically to the acquisition of English pronunciation.

As previously stated, this proposal is based on a blended learning model, “a mixture of online and face-to-face course delivery” (Dudeney & Hockly, 2007, p. 137).

In tandem with these authors, Bartolomé (2004) holds that it is important to determine which learning objectives must be set up, which theories can explain this process and which technological devices seem most adequate. Furthermore, he expresses that “The key to the methodological change does not imply learning *more* but *differently*” (p. 17, our translation). This process of change entails a redefinition of both students' and teachers' roles. On the one hand, students may hold a position of greater responsibility for their own learning process by developing digital competencies. These competencies which allow learners to make an effective use of digital devices comprise:

- searching and finding out relevant information on the Net,
- developing different criteria to assess information,
- apply the information found to elaborate new information,
- working in teams sharing and generating information,

- contrasting information and making decisions based on the contrasted information and
- making group decisions

(Bartolomé, 2004, p. 17)

On the other hand, in a technology-enhanced learning environment and in order to cater for students' different learning styles and paces, the teacher's role is changing from that of the only source of knowledge to that of a mediator that provides a scaffold for their students' learning (Stepp-Greany, 2002; Horn and Staker, 2012). In this sense, Salinas (1998) considers that teachers should be able to:

- guide students in the effective use of the different technological tools,
- foster students' self-directed learning when exploiting different Web 2.0 learning resources,
- monitor and manage the learning settings where these resources are being used in order to help students develop and profit from collaborative learning experiences,
- monitor the students' progress by providing feedback on the outcome of their learning activities,
- provide different opportunities for sharing the students' production and
- encourage students' work in tandem with the learning strategies at play and the students' new role as users of technology.

As regards what was previously stated with respect to the learning theories and from the perspective of Applied Linguistics, we adhere to an information processing approach, particularly the *Adaptive Control of Thought –ACT-* model, developed by

Anderson (1983). This is a general cognitive model of skill acquisition that can be applied to those aspects of second language learning, such as pronunciation, which require proceduralization and automatization processes. ACT defines learning as “the gradual transformation of performance from controlled to automatic” (Ortega, 2009, p. 84). A key concept in this theory is the distinction between declarative knowledge – know what- and procedural knowledge –know how-, the latter constitutes “the basic mechanism through which control over cognition is exercised” (O’Malley & Chamot, 1990, p. 47). From this perspective, the conversion from declarative knowledge to procedural knowledge is crucial when it comes to learning complex abilities. This process entails a qualitative change described as proceduralization. In this regard, Ortega (2009) states that the ultimate result of this gradual process of proceduralization is automaticity.

Taking into consideration aspects specifically related to second language learning, this approach may account for not only the acquisition of a complex cognitive ability, as is the case of a second language, but also that of a complex procedure, in the case of learning strategies. The strategies that actively involve a person’s mental processes should be the most effective to sustain learning. The taxonomy of strategies used in this study is based on the classification proposed by O’Malley & Chamot (1990), who define them as “special ways of processing information that enhance comprehension, learning, or retention of information” (p. 1). Bearing in mind the level and type of processing required, these authors classify learning strategies in three broad categories:

- metacognitive strategies considered as higher order executive skills that may entail planning for, monitoring and evaluating the success of a learning activity,

- cognitive strategies which operate directly on incoming information, manipulating it in a way that enhance learning and
- socio-affective strategies that involve either interacting with another person or ideational control over affect.

It is relevant to mention that these strategies will be adjusted to the use of the technological resources available and students' digital literacies, without losing sight of the fact that our ultimate goal is the enhancement of English pronunciation. In this sense, a more efficient and effective learning process of the phonological component may be achieved by the application of appropriate learning strategies in conjunction with the development of digital competencies. At the same time, it may help students to become more independent, critical and reflective learners when searching, selecting and processing information.

3. Methodology

Bearing in mind the objective of this research project, the subjects were selected by means of “an intentional or predetermined sampling method” (Silva-Corvalán, 1989, in Leáñez et al., 2006, p.176). The sample was taken from learners attending the courses Introduction to the Pronunciation, English Phonetics and Phonology I and English Phonetics and Phonology II at the Teacher Training College at FFHA-UNSJ. Our students, in terms of Prensky (2001) are “native speakers of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet” (p. 1). According to this author, digital natives are used to receiving and sending information in a fluid and immediate way, carrying out several activities simultaneously and processing information in parallel.

The whole sample made up by 50 students was homogenously characterized by their knowledge of the English language. Considering the characteristics of a web 2.0 student, teachers are faced with the challenge of learning to communicate and interact with 21st century learners, which does not imply disregarding what is truly significant in the teaching-learning process. In this regard, teachers need to reflect on their teaching strategies in order to explore new systems of communication and distribution of learning material, so as to foster the interactivity required to guarantee a more dynamic learning environment in this new setting.

In order to achieve our goal, that of optimizing the phonological interlanguage in our students by means of a systematic training in learning strategies related to digital literacies, it was necessary to outline teaching-learning situations, specifically related to ICT, materials and virtual learning environments. Within the set of techniques and tools to be included in this experience, we can mention low-tech tools, such as desktop applications Word, Excel, Power Point, and high- tech tools, for example, Prezi, C-maps, podcasts, e-mail, forums, FAQs, social web Facebook and a learning management system –Haiku LMS. As regards Haiku LMS, it should be stated that this learning platform provides a whole set of digital devices that allows us to administer and publish contents by means of its own structure. The implementation of this resource offers a two-fold benefit. On the one hand, it provides a periodical update on their academic profiles by displaying detailed information of attendance, assignments and assessment, and on the other hand, its regular use may contribute to optimizing the development of their linguistic skills.

In order to collect the necessary data, various methodological instruments have been used:

- a) *A personal questionnaire* referring to the students experience as regards the use of technology with educational purposes.
- b) *A structured questionnaire* consisting of an inventory of strategies aimed at the learning of English pronunciation, in relation to digital literacies. This questionnaire has been answered by all participants at the beginning of the training period and the same questionnaire will be administered at the end of the courses.
- c) *A structured personal interview* to be digitally recorded in the language laboratory of the FFHA. The interview consists of two sessions, reading aloud and semi-spontaneous speaking. The interviews were recorded using *Audacity* - a free open source program for recording and editing sound. Both tasks were carried out by all participants when the training period began (pre-test) and the same interview will be conducted when the courses end (post-test). It should be mentioned that in the assessment of the linguistic performance of the students' interlanguage both segmental and suprasegmental features of pronunciation will be considered.
- d) *A structured questionnaire (checklist)* that contains an inventory of strategies related to digital literacies for both reading aloud and speaking activities.
- e) *An opinion qualitative survey* of the experience will be conducted once the period of instruction is completed. In this regard, Celce-Murcia et al. (as cited in Leáñez et al., 2006, p.51) consider that "the learners themselves are the ultimate judges of what they find most useful."

It is worth pointing out that at this stage only the pre-test (structured personal interview "c") has been implemented. At the present time, a percentage qualification of the

recordings (obtained through instrument c) and a comprehensive analysis of the data gathered in the questionnaires (instruments a, b, d) are currently being carried out.

4. Conclusion

As mentioned, the research team is in the process of analyzing the results of the information collected and thus no specifications can be provided so far. Nonetheless, it is our belief that the convergence of both learning strategies and digital literacies may result not only in an improvement of students' phonological production in English, but also in developing greater responsibility as active agents of their own learning process, and thus rendering a more autonomous learner.

In this paper we intended to share our insights into the teaching practices at the dawn of the 21st century. Taking into consideration the features and dynamics of our educational context, we, as university teachers, should be flexible enough to juggle the needs, demands and expectations that arise in our classes as we move on in the realm of digital culture.

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11 The use of IT to foster collaborative EFL teacher practices in evaluation

Eugenia Carrión Cantón

IPES “Paulo Freire” Río Grande Tierra del Fuego

eugeniaccarrioncanton@gmail.com

Ana Paula Pino

IPES “Paulo Freire” Río Grande Tierra del Fuego

anapaulapino@outlook.com

Viviana Pereyra Carreras

IPES “Paulo Freire” Río Grande Tierra del Fuego

prof.vivianapereyra@hotmail.com

1. Introduction

Understanding the role of technology in the classrooms is undoubtedly crucial. In her article 'La tecnología educativa en el debate didáctico contemporáneo' Litwin (2004, p. 3) explains that since the 1950s technology has been incorporated in the classrooms as a 'tool' to solve most teaching problems. In her view, the new technologies are not only tools but 'media' to unveil the variety of possibilities of uses depending on the teachers' use of them. The power of Information Technology (IT) in the classroom goes beyond the boundaries of the teaching - learning setting since having access to ITs gives students social equity. Such need to provide fair possibilities to all students is also considered in the Núcleos de Aprendizajes Prioritarios (NAPs) for English as a Foreign Language (2012): “along the primary and secondary levels, the school should offer

learning situations to promote in students the critical value of technological resources available to them so as to learn foreign languages” (p.4).

In such vein, our focus of attention will be centered in connecting evaluation and ITs. That moment of the learning process should reflect that the resource has been present throughout the teaching and learning experience.

According to Brown (1995), when we develop a test we should take into consideration four main principles that should also apply when using ITs:

- Practicality: whether it is plausible in your setting with your students to deliver the test.
- Reliability: whether the test reflects the methodology, objectives and evaluation criterion of the class.
- Validity: the degree by which the test measures what it is intended to measure.
- Authenticity: how far the test tasks are likely to be enacted in the real world.

These principles should guide the design of evaluation that promotes the inclusion of instances of co-evaluation and self-evaluation, for example, in comments on a blog, discussions in social networks or in wikis, among others. These are enriching experiences which stimulate collaborative work that fosters self-monitoring and peer evaluation. This practice implies that, in a group, all members evaluate and are being evaluated, highlighting these moments of evaluation as part of the learning process.

2. Technology: media not only tools

The incorporation of ITs in the language classroom is an invaluable resource teachers could use on a regular basis. However, as teachers, we need to be fully aware of its pedagogical implications.

Litwin (2004, p. 4) states that a debate about 'technological methodology' and knowledge about teaching practice in relation to the goals and aims that provide sense to the action of teaching.

In her view, IT is not only a tool but 'media' to unveil the variety of possibilities of uses depending on the teachers' and students' needs. Thus, a double purpose of tool and frame helps motivate, show, illustrate, reorganize information and enrich knowledge.

In Litwin's view (2004) the different theories of learning describe four aspects that characterize the function or task of the learner: the learner who learns by imitation, the learner who learns because he or she participates from an explanation, the one who is able to generate and develop critical attitude towards new knowledge and finally, the learner who learns by doing, questions presuppositions and confronts them with reality, deconstruct and reconstruct knowledge.

Each learning theory that teachers adhere to will determine the use of technology that they will make. If the teacher believes that students learn by imitation it is highly probable that technology will be used as a tool. On the contrary if the teacher believes that students learn by explanations, they will probably use technology to contextualize and or to help in the understanding of some content or in the thinking exercise. The way

in which technologies are included in the teaching and learning process will determine the role of tool of frame they have in relation to the learner.

The power of ITs in the classroom goes beyond the boundaries of the teaching-learning setting since having access to IT provides students with social equity. The underlying belief that we all have the right to access knowledge and information goes in tandem with becoming active participants of the network community.

For Litwin (2004, p. 6), there are three main ways in which teachers use the new technologies, but not all these ways of using them are fully exploited. All these manners are included in the concept of 'user' or in the use of them. The three ways of using new technologies are:

1. Typical system of information. The teacher is the provider; the student the consumer and the new technologies supply updated information.
2. Tools with content as part of the class. In this case, the new technologies widen the scope of the class. The teacher prepares a class sequence with these tools for instance when teachers plan webquests with questions related to someone or something and provides students with options for the search like a variety of search engines, web encyclopedias and offers them to the students and he/she incorporates new technologies to the classroom.
3. Students are thought of as 'Subject of Knowledge'. The new technologies offer varieties of options and encourage collaborative group work. Students become the subjects of knowledge as the use of new technologies is functional to their needs and places them as the generators of their own learning.

Essentially, the degree of importance and the sense with which the ITs are incorporated in the classrooms will depend on the use that the teacher decides to make of them.

3. Enhancing assessment with ICT

Following Brown (1995), we understand evaluation as "the systematic collection of all relevant information necessary to promote improvement" (p.24). That means that the decisions taken about the instruments used should derive directly from the course and class plan. As we discuss evaluation, the definition of test should be acknowledged. Brown (2004, p. 4) claims that "Tests are prepared administrative procedures that occur at identifiable times in a curriculum when learners muster all their faculties to offer peak performance, knowing that their responses are being measured and evaluated". We need to go back to Litwin's idea that ITs are media and not tools. Technology will provide us with the media to create relevant evaluation instruments. We agree with the author's idea that teaching (and evaluating) using ITs is more than just incorporating computers to the classroom. It is a work scheme, a new way of building knowledge. This implies that the class is extended beyond the limits of the actual classroom: the concept of ubiquity becomes relevant and necessary to understand the redefinition of communication circuits and the interaction between teacher and students.

Estaire and Zanon support the idea that "evaluation should take place all through the unit. Evaluation should be a continuous process" (1994, p. 35). This entails that evaluation becomes a metacognitive aid to allow students to become aware of their own learning process at different stages. If evaluation is seen only as end product, it only

captures a moment in the students' learning process and does not leave room for improvement and enhancement.

It is clear that testing is a difficult task, and designing and marking tests is a challenge. In preparing items of evaluation not only are validity, reliability, practicality and authenticity necessary for the planning of a testing instrument but should also be the result of markers that derive from evaluation criteria. In a typical test paper, including the use of IT poses new challenges. The difficulty lies in matching goals, objectives, evaluation criteria and markers that correlate with each other, and in not falling into the risk of evaluating the IT tool rather than its content. Besides, we also need to face the limitations regarding availability of resources still present in many of our schools without being deterred by this reality. We need to optimize resources so as to guarantee that all students are given equal opportunities.

It is clear that there are many aspects to take into account at the moment of designing tests. Not only are there challenges at the moment of applying ICT to tests; but also important benefits; such as the fact that it allows students to become evaluators. As the paradigm of evaluation changes, students turn to the centre of the evaluation process and can pursue self-evaluation and peer evaluation. In this process, according to Estaire and Zanon (1994), students themselves can test (abilities and skills, knowledge, meeting course requirements, use of English in class) their peers and self-evaluate (p. 37). Becoming their own evaluators is also a way for students to become motivated to participate in all the learning process and not to just be entertained by the technological tool. At the same time, it helps teachers who are not highly acquainted with technology to focus on monitoring and scaffolding linguistics aspects. For example, if after studying and practicing the use of passive voice for processes in the simple present,

students are asked to shoot a video with their cell phones, recording a process such as baking a cake, making the bed, etc., they will be in charge of handling the technology. Meanwhile, the teacher will monitor and scaffold the writing process for the script, the important vocabulary to be included among other aspects. Students can in a while-watching peer assessment chart, not only evaluate proper use of the English language, but other aspects related to the making of the video itself.

All in all evaluation and IT are not necessarily a perfect match, However, with a professional eye and some creativity the process of designing evaluation using ITs is attainable and enabling.

Taking into consideration that public and private efforts have been made in order to include both computers and Internet connections in schools and teacher training colleges around the country, it can be argued that technology is accessible, even if there are some challenges along the way. Educators are in charge of working towards giving equal emphasis to all their students regardless of their context.

The NAPs for EFL highlight throughout their six sections the need to incorporate digital tools either to provide information or as part of the lesson plan. This need is related to one of the most important principles stated in this document, which is the development of critical thinking with regards to culture, diversity and tolerance. The use of digital online media opens the world to students, their cultural setting and beliefs.

As stated by Wanger and others in the text *Modelo Político* in the context of the *Especialización docente de nivel superior in TIC*, "ITs open up the school's time and space limits. The school no longer starts and ends at the door, schedules go beyond the entrance and leaving times" (2012, p. 6). This idea is linked to that presented by the

NAPs and reinforces the necessity to include IT in all aspects of the learning and teaching process. It is only natural, then, that evaluation becomes key. Still, Wagner (2007) notes that the inclusion of technology does not disregard the role of the teacher; on the contrary, the teacher is at the center of the equation, acting as guide and monitor, distributing tasks in order to really share this collective and social intelligence that is IT (p.7). It is the teacher then, who will ensure equal opportunities and who will take advantage of what different students have to offer. For instance, the teacher makes sure that in the different groups working on a blog the talents of the different members can be taken advantage of; it will be the teacher, and not the chosen technological media that will take decisions in order to improve the students' work. On the other hand, understanding the use of ITs for the evaluation process means adapting technology to the curriculum rather than the opposite. Courses and their design need to be filled with instances of equal opportunities in general as well as for IT, and an appreciation of other cultures as well as our own. ITs will not provide anything the teacher and the students are not looking for. Technological tools are part of our everyday life context and they provide new ways to interact. .

4. From theory to practice

When referring to evaluation using ICT there is a variety of instruments to consider that can go in tandem with teacher's plans. These instruments may be progress or achievement tests, i.e. "... designed to measure learner's language and skill process in relation to the syllabus ..." (Harmer, 2007, p. 380), proficiency: "... (they) give a general picture of a student's knowledge and ability (rather than measure progress)" (Harmer, 2007, p. 380) and finally portfolio, as stated by Harmer has several benefits, "It provides evidence of student effort...helps students become more autonomous and help them self

-monitor their own learning.” (p. 380). We believe the use of IT is viable for each kind of test described above and that IT provides a great media for teachers to explore evaluation in the classroom.

First and foremost, we have decided to exemplify evaluation with ITs by means of three useful internet applications: blogs, social networks and wikis. On the one hand, the idea of using these applications is supported by the fact that teachers and students do not necessarily have to learn any particular IT skill but rather use what they are, most likely, already skilled at. They should choose user friendly tools to focus more on communicative competence than on technology. It is important to note that even though students are highly exposed to different online media, they are not necessarily aware of the skills necessary to carry out specific activities; hence, they may need the guidance and monitoring of teachers to perform different tasks.

In this paper, we are also aware that Internet connectivity is still a challenge in many schools, both public and private, around the country. We seek to look for activities that will allow both teachers and students to connect either at school or at home. The media used, as defined by Litwin (2008), is readily available on any home computer and a regular internet connection is needed.

Blogs have been used widely in education since they are easily accessible online and generally free. Their purpose is to post information and to give users the opportunity to be creative and to spread around cyberspace information for others to access. Blogs can be created in a great variety of ways from most popular Blogspot by Google or even www.edublogs.org. The latter even lists ways in which blogs can be used for the benefit of learning and evaluation (Edublogs, 2014). Below we list three of those suggestions:

- Create class publication that students can easily publish to and you can easily edit.

This could be very useful to motivate students writing with a purpose since there will be a real audience for whom to write. At the same time drafting will be stimulated as students can edit their own productions.

- Get feedback or gather information.

In this case, this is highly recommendable for collaborative work, like in the case of a group production. They share information and can edit their own productions.

- Create a fully functional website.

In the case of the websites not only writing but also designing, drawing and any artistic expression will be stimulated since by making their own website they can include purpose, information to share, suggestions, and areas of interest among others.

As we can see, blogging offers a variety of means to facilitate alternative ways of evaluation. With blogs, it is easy to see the particular contributions of each student, how often he/she participates, and whether there are instances of editing and collaborative work. Also, a blog is a great way to create a portfolio, either individually or in groups, since all productions done during a project, thematic unit and/or semester can be collected, including oral interviews that can be recorded, writings, group presentations, posters, Prezi and/or PPT presentations, among others. Students and their teacher can then go back together to the blog and choose the best work to be assessed according to the pre-established criteria. This combination of portfolio and blogs is an interesting way to add motivation to students' performance, provide a place for storage

and even be able to use for Open School days and projects. As stated before, the idea is that ICT is the media through which you attain your goals and objectives and not the opposite.

Another helpful resource for evaluation that includes the use of ITs is wikis. We are all very well familiar with Wikipedia; an online free encyclopedia "written collaboratively by the people who use it". It is a special type of website designed to make collaboration easy, called a wiki" (Wikipedia, 2014), where a wide range of information can be found. According to www.oxforddictionaries.com (2014) a wiki is, "A website or database developed collaboratively by a community of users, allowing any user to add and edit content." Due to this capacity, wikis are an extraordinary media to allow for a collaborative writing process, i.e. a class or group in a class that collaborate in the outlining and drafting processes of writing. Students can be guided into participating in the wiki with different objectives according the evaluation criteria designed. Evaluation can therefore take place at different stages of the writing process, allowing for a monitoring of the instances of participation of each student.

A text can be provided either by a student or teacher, with or without modifications according to teacher's criteria. The special quality of the wiki is that those allowed to edit it can come in and make changes as necessary. Also, it is possible to evaluate and monitor how the writing has improved as it is drafted and edited by the student/s and/or teacher. The idea of a hands-on writing task that fosters collaboration is an excellent motivator. There could even be special guests to the wiki, who can provide their input as well. Senior students or guest teachers can help in creating a nice hard working atmosphere.

A wiki is relatively easy to create. Having a Gmail account and following the steps provided at www.google.com/sites is a trouble-free way to create a wiki with a template and accompanying resources.

Finally, the third media we have chosen to exemplify is social networks. In Argentina the most commonly used social networks at the moment are Facebook and Twitter. These social networks can be used more freely if students are adults and/or at the tertiary level since there are privacy and security issues to be taken into consideration. If students are minors, we highly recommend parental agreement and a strong security policy to avoid privacy issues.

One very common activity in the EFL classroom is the introduction of readers, due to the enormous amount of benefits they bring into the lesson. Fostering the use of graded readers in the classroom allows for better understanding of how language is used, it increases vocabulary, creates opportunities for purposeful writing and, not least important, it generates a positive attitude towards studying the language. An interesting activity to complete with students is by means of Facebook. The teacher asks different students to take on a character from the story being read and create the profile. Once all the characters have their own profiles students and teachers alike can come in and participate in conversations and information exchange among the characters. Photos, videos and links can be added for atmosphere, setting and themes. What is being evaluated is whether students have a good grasp of the character by checking how deep the description is, the relationship among characters, as well as the use of specific language to refer to plot, symbols, among others. Teachers can initiate, lead and/or monitor student interaction, but most definitely the advantage of this idea is to foster autonomy and allow for students to make their choices and decisions. In the evaluation

criteria items such as creativity and number of posts can be negotiated with the students. This activity is especially useful if students are planning to perform the story as a play since it lets students under the skin of the characters.

5. Conclusion

ICTs have increasingly become an inherent part of school life that should no longer be disregarded. As teachers become more comfortable at including different technological tools into their planning, it is important to consider evaluation in this scenario not only because it motivates students and engages them in activities they feel familiar with, but also because the new learning paradigm demands evaluation instruments that can focus on process as well as achievement.

Including ICTs in evaluation is a creative endeavor that requires collaboration, imagination and patience on part of the students. At the same time, and for that reason, it is a rewarding experience that leaves students with a sense of achievement, of having been able to apply ITs to evaluation and interact in the foreign language, and finally understand a bit better their own learning process.

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Course development and evaluation

12 Learners' voices: Their contributions to language teaching

Cristina Emilia Mayol

Facultad de Ciencias Exactas, Químicas y Naturales

Universidad Nacional de Misiones

cmayol@fceqyn.unam.edu.ar

1. Introduction

This piece of work is inscribed within the framework of a wider exploratory study which is being carried out thanks to a grant by a research team I lead (Convocatoria Especial 2011 UNaM – Educación). We had the perception that English teachers were working as islands, so we felt the need of trying to analyse the present situation of teaching and learning English at Universidad Nacional de Misiones (UNaM). English is taught for most of the courses at the University, as part of the curriculum or optional. English for Specific Purposes, be it English for Academic Purposes or English for Occupational Purposes are today a fundamental tool for University students and graduates, enhancing their intellectual autonomy, since it is the *lingua franca* in sciences, technology and most fields of knowledge.

The universe under analysis is the subject English itself and the actors involved. To carry out this study, it was necessary to divide the universe into different segments: teachers from the different English chairs of the whole University, students in their last year of studies and graduates and directors/coordinators of the different courses. Another source of information is the curricula of the different courses, the syllabuses of

the different English subjects, and all official documents related to English filed in all Schools we have been able to track.

The data obtained will be used for a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) when we finish this Project. Subsequently, it is hoped the team will be able to suggest strategies for the improvement of teaching and learning of English in all the Schools of the University, thus having all colleagues within an English teaching community, absent previously and which appears to be beginning to build up.

2. Learners' voices: Some issues taken from the surveys

I will refer to one of the instruments considered in our research piece: surveys to obtain the opinion of students in their last year of studies (6 cohorts - 302 respondents) and graduates- former students (6 cohorts – 435 respondents) from five of the six schools as they embody the character of qualified informants. Surveys are relatively easier and faster to administer to a considerably large population. The former answered in class and in paper and the latter, online. In this article, I concentrate on two Schools only. Those selected are: School of Exact, Chemical and Natural Sciences (appearing as FCEQyN) and School of Engineering (appearing as FI) in the slides. Once we decided on the objectives of the surveys and their content, a theoretical framework was elaborated. The content of the statements was piloted and some recommendations were made. Respondents' attitude was measured by a five-point Likert scale. The scores were obtained adding up the values from each statement.

In the surveys, qualitative variables in nominal scale were used. Data treatment had a descriptive stage, and another stage to know the association of measures between variables. In the descriptive stage, contingency tables were constructed and frequency

distributions were obtained. The analysis of measures for variables association was carried out by means of the Chi-square test.

For the purpose of this article, the statements corresponding to the section Methodology from the content of the two surveys were selected for students and graduates as well. The statements analysed inform about the following issues: efficiency of the teaching methodology, participation in class, teacher feedback, individual and group work, time allotted for practice, teaching resources and relation of evaluation scheme to teaching points (face validity); although there is not room for all the data here. Firstly, I will try to analyse Students' opinions on a couple of issues only; followed by one of graduates.

2.1. Learners' voices: Hard data about teaching methodology

I find it necessary to clarify that this research work is being carried out in Spanish as it was submitted to the Education area, on one hand. The content of the surveys is also in Spanish to make them user-friendly. Thus, the Schools appear in the slides in Spanish, and their acronyms likewise.

What follows is an analysis of students responses taken from the methodology section.

Figure 1 shows the frequency of the categories of the category *Teaching Methodology*. It can be seen that for FCEQyN and FI the median value is *much*.

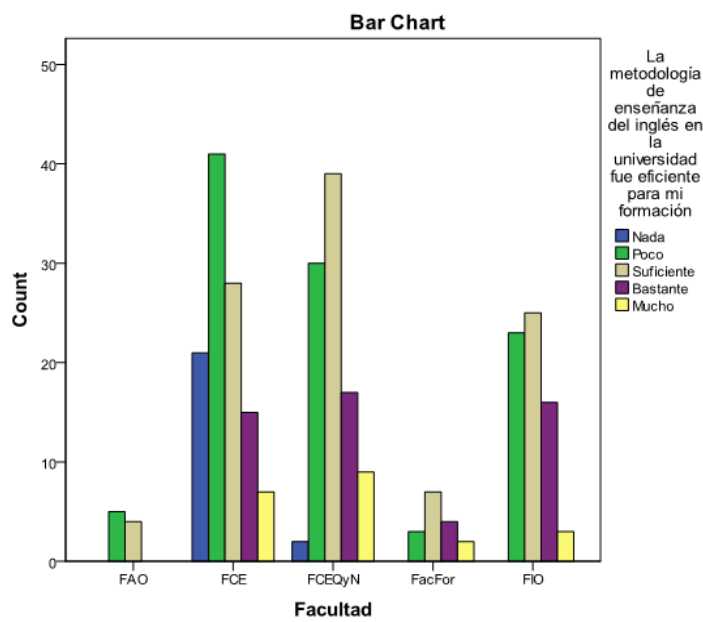


Figure 1. Students' response to teaching methodology.

Figure 2 shows the opinion of Students in their last year of studies about the category *Teaching Material – Adequacy*. It appears that for FCEQyN the *median* is positioned in **usually**. For FI the *median* is positioned in *always*.

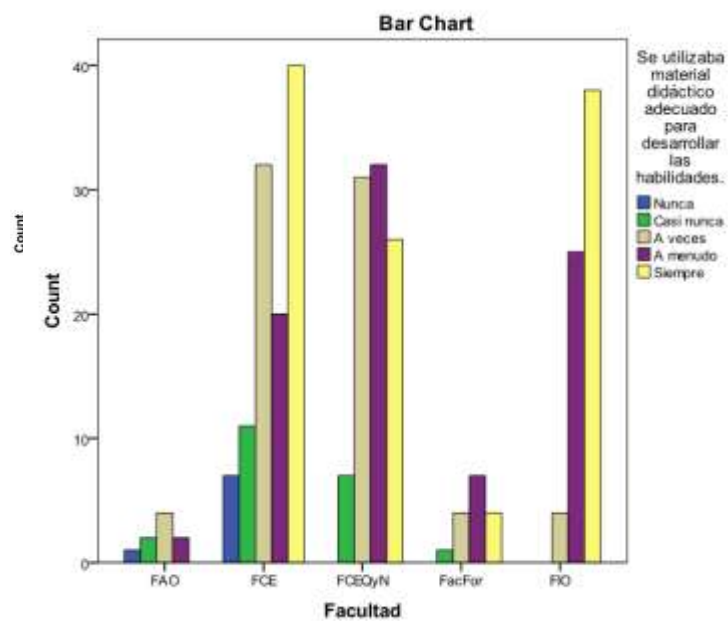


Figure 2. Students' opinion about teaching material: adequacy.

Figure 3 presents their selection about the category *Teaching Material – Content*. It can be observed that for FCEQyN the *median* is positioned in *usually*. For FI the *median* is positioned in *sometimes*.

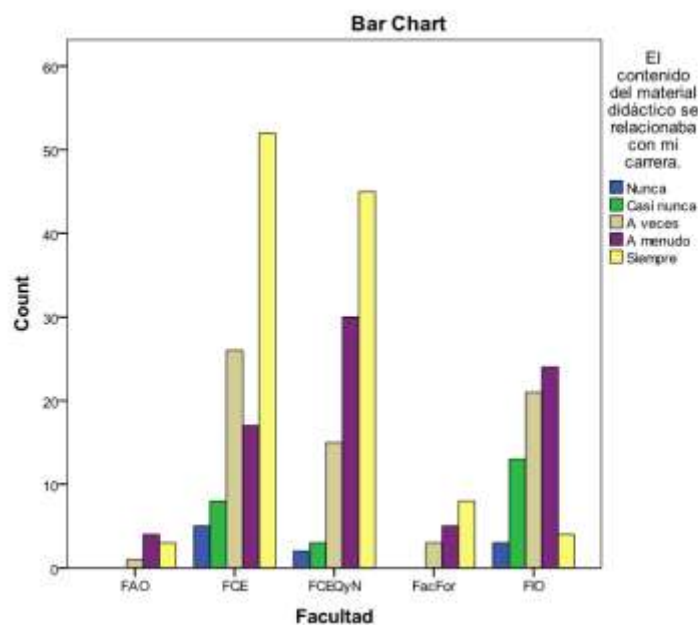


Figure 3. Students' Response to teaching material: content.

Let us now observe students' choices when the statement was presented asking for the relationship of the content of assessment instruments and their own course (*Assessment - Face Validity*). It can be observed that FCEQyN and FI data is concentrated on the *always* position.

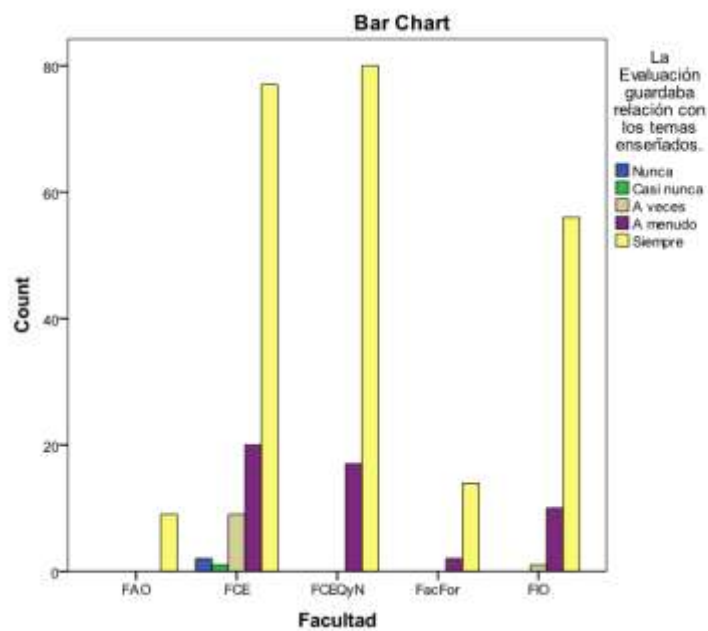


Figure 4. Students' opinion about assessment: face validity.

Only one variable was chosen for graduates (ex-students) in the interest of brevity. Figure 5 shows the frequency of the categories of the category *Teaching methodology*. It can be observed that for both FCEQyN and FI the median is positioned in *somewhat*. There are no significant differences between Schools for this variable. The position of the median seems to be correlated with the expectations students bring when they attend our subject: they would like the University to offer them a sound preparation for the challenges of their graduate stage: postgraduate studies, work needs, etc. Unfortunately, the curricula do not allow for much time devoted to our Subject (Mayol, 1998). Another reason for this result may be that graduates attended the subject around 5-10 years ago, and our teaching methodology has been in continual change over the years (Mayol et al., 2011).

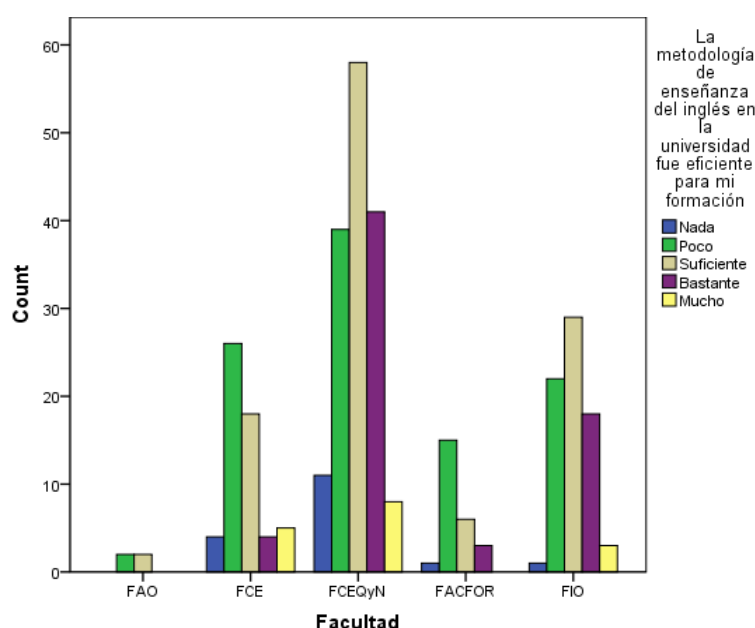


Figure 5. Graduates response to teaching methodology.

What can be gathered from all this data is that according to the opinion of the students and graduates of the two Schools they are satisfied more often than not. Data tends to demonstrate that our ‘no-method’ appears to be efficient.

A syllabus can be considered as a framework for the potential content of teaching, stating what is to be achieved in the course, identifying what will be worked on in reaching the overall course aims and providing a basis for evaluating students’ progress (Hyland, 2007, p. 317). Then, along the years, paraphrasing Hyland (2007:2) we seem to have catered for the communicative demands of the modern university, which much like the modern workplace, involve far more than simply controlling linguistic error or polishing style. Demands are of a wider caliber: with an expanding range of publications and research journals, there is a growing awareness that students have to take on new roles and engage with knowledge in new ways when they enter university.

3. Our method, or rather “no-method”?

We partially agree with Richards in Bell (2003, p. 325) when he contends that TESOL methodology is said to have moved *beyond methods* to the *postmethod pedagogy* posed by Kumaravadivelu (2001). In fact, Bell expounds that some consider the term method remains as “apt description of what teachers do in the classroom” (p. 325). All in all, we believe in a kind of *no-method* (our coinage) in the sense that we do not adhere blindly to any of the known ones. We rather agree with Block in that “it is not the method that is the crucial variable in successful pedagogy but the teacher’s passion for whatever method is embraced and the way that passion is passed on to the learners” (Block in Bell, 2003, p. 333). In fact, according to Richards and Rodgers (2001) postmethod strategies and principles can be understood as articulating the design features –teaching and learning activities, teacher/learner roles, and the role of the instructional materials- of the CLT paradigm, coupled with the tools of learner autonomy, context sensitivity, teacher/student reflection to construct and deconstruct the emerging method .

Through the analysis of the data obtained at these two Schools, I hope to demonstrate that we have carried out a way of teaching which appears as “an alternative outside of the framework of brand-name approaches and methods” (Richards & Rodgers, 2005, p. 250). This has been constructed based on years of experience and reflecting on our beliefs, values, and principles.

In brief, we follow Kumaravadivelu (1994, p. 43) when identifying what he called the “postmethod condition” as a result of “the widespread dissatisfaction with the conventional concept of method.” In the end, all teachers try to adapt their approach in accordance with local, contextual factors.

As long as we develop and carry out classroom techniques, we can ground everything we do in well-established principles of language learning and teaching, and

will be “less likely to bring a prepackaged and possibly ineffective method to bear, and more likely to be directly responsive to our students’ purposes and goals” (Douglas Brown, 2002, p. 17).

We are convinced that we have reached “a state of heightened awareness about the futility of searching for the best method which has resulted in a postmethod condition,” as expressed by Kumaravadivelu (2004, p. 29).

4. Our teaching practice in the post-methods era

4.1. My experience as a teacher for 32 years at Facultad de Ciencias Exactas, Químicas y Naturales - UNaM

I stemmed from the structuralist view which informed the practice as from the seventies. With the advent of the communicative approach for EAP, expounded by Henry Widdowson, I studied and plunged into working under this new paradigm.

We (the English chair) departed from texts and their comprehension through information transfer, short answers, completion, matching, jigsaw exercises, etc. We arrived at a turning point: we thought we were ready to get rid of the series of textbooks which was developed under the supervision of Henry Widdowson (1980).

We followed on the vein of authentic material and using the global approach. We continued studying and learning, in sum, updating ways of doing, and we read about pre-reading activities, while-reading activities and after-reading activities. We tried to make our students use their higher order thinking skills, teaching them to think, using thinking strategies, seeing the importance more of the process than that of the result. We carried out mini-needs analysis, first, and went on to more detailed ones. We received interesting advice and teaching materials from the subject teachers. We studied CBT

(content-based teaching), TBT (task-based teaching), all of which represent “how something is done”, and were gradually more interested in the texture of the material trying to develop language learning through negotiation for meaning during tasks to negotiating aspects of the teaching-learning process itself (Breen & Littlejohn, 2000 in Hyland, 2007, p. 83).

We found ourselves creating theory from our practice. We were conscious that the total is more than the sum of the parts. We tried to retreat and lessen our intervention in evaluations. We were working out of experience, for years, from trial and error, and move away from prescribed methods. What were we doing? We were –inadvertently– working beyond the known methods; we have been creating our own method, with the needs of our students in mind. And each of our students was unique, deserving a tailor-made teaching approach, considering the type of discourse community they constituted.

See the Appendix for an example illustrating our approach to teaching EAP at FCEQyN and FI, UNaM

4.2. Description of the Subjects *Taller de Inglés 1* and *Taller de Inglés 2* at FI in 2012

Students at FI develop the four language macro-skills, namely, reading, listening, writing and speaking in both subjects at different levels of performance.

Both subjects tackle environmental issues in English for Academic Purposes. In *Taller de Inglés 2* students learn English for Occupational Purposes in the last unit of the syllabus.

In *Taller de Inglés 1*, a 90-hour course, students are able to:

1. Interpret technical texts from newspapers or magazines. Students do multiple-choice exercises to practice and assess comprehension in a blended-learning environment.
2. Write different types of expository paragraphs, such as process-description, cause-effect, problem-solution, among others. Process writing is the teaching methodology adopted.

In *Taller de Inglés 2*, another 90-hour course, students are able to:

1. Write an essay about a topic related to environmental issues. They choose and develop the writing assignment (about 500-600 words). After writing and passing the task, students have to make an oral presentation of their essay.
2. Translate a text from English into Spanish. The text is chosen by them (about 300 words)
3. Watch short videos (four/six minutes) spoken and subtitled in English. They also practise note-taking with the audio-visual material. To assess video-watching, students have to present a new video with the subtitle in English and make an oral presentation.
4. Be familiar with situations found in the professional field, such as:
 - a. Job hunting
 - b. Resume writing
 - c. Job interviewing
 - d. Business Presentation

5. Reflection on learners' voices: their contribution to language teaching

According to Williams and Burden (1997, p. 5), the process of education is one of the most important and complex of all human endeavours, involving an intricate interplay

between the learning process itself, the teacher's intentions and actions, the individual personalities of the learners, their culture and background, the learning environment and a host of other variables. These authors, together with many others, Larsen-Freeman in Breen (2001, pp. 12-24), Lantolf (2001, pp. 141-158), to name just two, consider students as active participants in the learning process, a position we also adhere to. That said, here I would like to emphasise that giving them that standing, we have resorted to their opinions, as valuable contributions for reflection and revision of teaching quality. This way we involved them in the process of self-evaluation, following Thiollent (1985, p. 45) who posed "all parts or groups interested in the situation or issues under research should be summoned. Research cannot be carried out if one of the parts is in default" (my translation).

As a consequence, we were able to evaluate that with our approach to teaching, which does not adhere blindly to any of the known methods, termed as 'no-method' a coined name for our work as practitioners, much can be gained. We reckon we are not nearer to a universally appropriate and effective language teaching method: this may well be one 'Holy Grail'.

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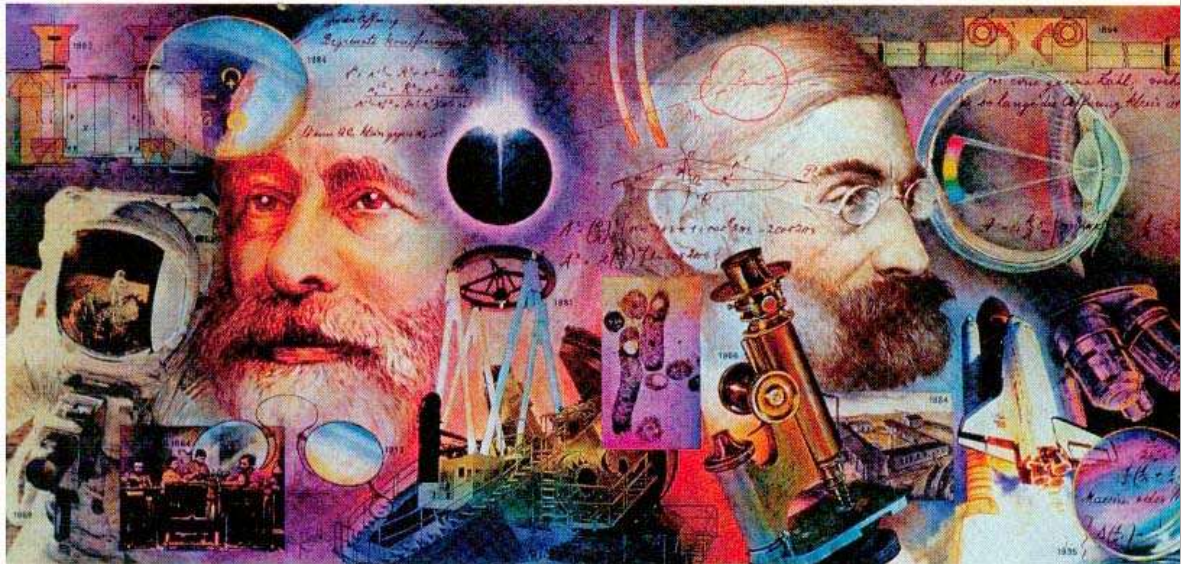
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APPENDIX

SAMPLE LESSON - *Ingles Instrumental* FCEQyN

CUADERNO DE CÁTEDRA 2012 – 154 YEARS OF PRECISION

154 Years Of Precision.



Since 1846, when Carl Zeiss founded his microscope workshop in Jena, Germany, our products have set the standards for quality and advanced performance.

Today, the Zeiss commitment to scientific progress is stronger than ever. Our partnerships with leading industrial companies, teaching institutions and scientists throughout the world are reflections of the special emphasis we place on offering leading-edge products to our customers.

We thank our customers for their support.

Whether you are wearing Zeiss eyeglasses, performing a delicate neurosurgical procedure with a Zeiss operation microscope, or working with an ultra high-precision Zeiss measuring machine, you can be certain you are using the best that modern technology can produce. It's a standard we intend to keep for the next 154 years.

I. COMPRENSIÓN

A. Lectura rápida

1. Determine la fuente textual.
2. Elabore una predicción acerca del contenido del texto.
3. Confirme la predicción elaborada previamente y explique cómo realizó dicha confirmación.
4. Indique cuál es la organización textual.
5. Observe las imágenes del texto y determine a qué hacen referencia.

B. Lectura específica

1. ¿Qué relaciones se mencionan en el texto que dan cuenta del progreso de Zeiss?

2. ¿A qué se refieren las siguientes cifras? 154, 1846, 10594.
3. Interprete el texto en negritas.

II. ANÁLISIS

1. Analice las formas *-ing* en el texto. Tradúzcalas.

SAMPLE LESSON TALLER DE INGLÉS 2 - FI

ENGLISH FOR OCCUPATIONAL PURPOSES PRESENTING A PRODUCT OR A SERVICE - 2012

Lesson 1

Step 1

Structuring an Oral Presentation

- *Do you know what an oral presentation is? Have you been to one? Have you ever delivered one?*
- *What are the characteristics of an interesting presentation? Let's write the words on the board, under the heading: Oral Presentation: Features*
- *Let's agree on the important features of an appealing presentation. Choose five qualities that you consider most relevant.*

Now, let's listen to an oral presentation to see how it is carried out.



What is a "CM125"?

- *What are the advantages of a CM125?*
- *What extra customer services are offered when you buy a CM125?*
- *Could you notice any of the characteristics that you mentioned before in this presentation? If so, which ones?*

Now let's see how a presentation is structured.

Structuring your Presentation

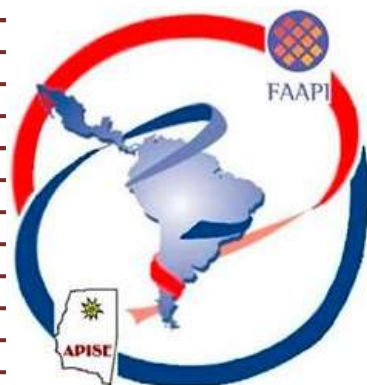
Plan your presentation

- bearing in mind:
 - the objectives of the presentation
 - what you know about the topic
 - what your audience knows about it
 - context of presentation
 - purpose of presentation
 - time available

Organise the information

- Ways of organising information:
 - chronological sequence
 - most important to least important
 - general to particular
 - comparing points of view

(and the lesson continues).



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