

EFL classrooms in the new millennium: Selected papers from the 40th FAAPI Conference

Edited by
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Asociación Cordobesa de Profesores de Inglés

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Table of contents

From the editors	i
From FAAPI President.....	iii
40th FAAPI Conference.....	vi
1 Learners as agents of change: Challenges for the EFL class.....	1
Ana Laura Avalos and Adriana Castro	
2 Understanding and producing multimodal messages in secondary school through webquest.....	10
Ana Cecilia Cad, Paola Lorena Barboza, and Verónica Noemí Giaccaglia	
3 Value-driven EFL classroom practices: Promoting an integral education model.....	19
Marisel Bollati, Rosa Inés Cúneo, and Paula Soto	
4 Assessment of an intercultural education project at primary school level	32
Estela Braun	
5 Law students behind avatars: Virtual worlds in an ESP course	43
Carol Anne Ochoa Alpala	
6 Formulaic sequences involving ‘fact’ in EAP production: A corpus study	58
Magdalena Zinkgraf and María Angélica Verdú	
7 ESP – From Grammar Translation lessons to learner-centred blended learning lessons.....	70
Viviana Valenti and Marisa Galimberti	
8 Using ICTs to improve perception skills in EFL listening.....	81
Claudia Spataro	
9 B-learning in an EFL college class: Creativity, critical thinking and collaboration	98
Ileana Yamina Gava and Liliana Anglada	
11 Using self-monitoring strategies to enhance university students’ pronunciation skills	110
María Emilia Castellano, María Garay, and Luis Javier García	

12 Innovation from/for the new millennium: Where do Argentinian universities stand?.....	120
Darío Luis Banegas	
13 Teaching reading strategies in the primary school classroom through picture books	133
María Ana Barceló and Ana Cecilia Cad	
14 Sewing the injuries of exclusion by teaching English through literature	148
Eugenia Carrión Cantón	
15 Cooperation across borders: Designing an intercultural space for blended learning	158
Mariel R. Amez	
16 Fractured tales for future teachers: Genre-based writing pedagogy in teacher training.....	172
Gabriela A. Llaneza	
17 Self-monitoring based on agreed-on assessment criteria in EFL writing.....	185
Natalia Verónica Dalla Costa and Ileana Yamina Gava	
18 Academic writing: A key challenge for higher education students.....	194
Paula Camusso, Marisel Somale, and Ana Claudia Ziraldo	
19 What do genres do in the EFL coursebook?.....	203
Susana Liruso, Marisel Bollati, and Pablo Requena	
20 High school learners' beliefs and their influence on the development of lexical competence ...	215
María José Alcázar and Milena Solange Altamirano	
21 Do EFL coursebooks apply the latest L2 lexical research findings? A case study	228
Mario López-Barrios and Elba Villanueva de Debat	
22 Vocabulary learning at secondary schools: Strategies and learner's actual performance	235
María Gimena San Martín and Gabriela Helale	

From the editors

Year after year, the FAAPI Conference provides us with a selection of contributions from the paper presentation strand.

The following themes are well represented in this collection:

- Global citizenship, diversity, and interculturality
- Multimodality: information literacy and multiliteracies
- ICT in education
- Latest trends in teaching EFL, ESP, and EAP
- Distance education, blended learning, and autonomy

Such topics illustrate the prism that ELT has become in our country and the different levels and situated narratives of expertise and lived experiences found across our country and beyond.

ELT and EFL in the new millennium demand and generate not only new skills, new questions, new concerns, but also the opportunity for us to look at the past and reflect on the present in order to create a future collaboratively.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the FAAPI 2015 Academic Committee coordinated by Liliana Anglada: Laura Aza (APIBA), Darío Luis Banegas (APIZALS), María Celina Barbeito (ARPI), Silvia Beck (ARPI), Marisel Bollati (ASJPI), Erika Chrobak (APIZALS), Sandra Fadda (ACPI), Virginia Giraudo (ACPI), Susana Liruso (ACPI), Mario López Barrios (ACPI), Carolina Orgnero (ACPI), Ricardo Javier Palma (APIT), Graciela Placci (ARPI), Lucía Rivas (ALPPI), María Elisa Romano (ACPI), Fabiana Sacchi (ARPI), Nora Lía Sapag (ACPI), Alejandra Soto (APIER), and Florencia Viale (AprIR).

We truly hope that you enjoy this selection as much as we have enjoyed working on it.

Liliana, Nora, Darío & Alejandra

Disclaimer:

The editors have tried to take care of typing and punctuation problems and to ensure that the APA publication conventions have been followed. Only with the authors' consent have they made adjustments in the texts/papers/articles, at the levels of word choice, sentence structure or the organization of information.

Every effort has also been made to ensure that no misleading or inaccurate data, opinions, or statements appear in the Selected Papers from the 40th FAAPI Conference. The articles included in this publication are the sole responsibility of the contributing authors. The views expressed by authors do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editorial Team, the Conference Organizers, hosting institution(s), or the various sponsors of the conference series. No responsibility or liability whatsoever is accepted by these groups or institutions regarding the consequences of any information included in the authors' articles.

From FAAPI President

Dear all,

Teaching and learning are no longer what they used to be. This assertion does not intend to make nostalgic colleagues feel bad; on the contrary, it is good news for everybody. And this is not new; currents of change began some years ago. Already completely immersed in the XXI century, we are witnessing great changes of paradigm, demands of the present society and globalizing trends, in a world that is getting more and more unpredictable, unforeseeable and in constant transformation.

Under the alluring umbrella theme of "EFL Classrooms in the New Millennium: Local Developments and Global Concerns", ACPI (Asociación de Profesores de Inglés de Córdoba) has summoned us. These first years of the millennium disclose a myriad of novelties which would have taken aback previous generations of colleagues, let alone advocates of the grammar-translation method, if we go to extremes. Under a closer scrutiny, we find the following topics: 1. ICTs in teaching/learning English, 2. Language for diversity and inclusion, 3. Latest trends in teaching EFL, ESP and EAP, and 4. Managing the new classroom. They convoke [...ELT professionals from Argentina and other countries to discuss, reflect and develop their ideas on the proposed topics. It will also allow participants to engage in professional networking by exchanging experiences informally, presenting their research and/or debating their views...]. And many teachers have responded submitting their works.

The advancement and availability of technology have made classroom walls appear as demolished, the world without borders, cultures in contact are more the rule than the exception, all happening grounded in a radical uncertainty. This uncertainty leaves us teachers in a permanent process of self-reflection bringing researchers to continuously question our doubts, our ignorance and our confusion, making us revisit Morin's paradigm of complexity, with different tensions shaping the way research is carried out.

The globalized world claims for more sophisticated approaches to teaching and learning languages, the curriculum of initial teacher education is deemed not sufficient to prepare

student-teachers for its demands. Fortunately, the concept of lifelong learning has long been ingrained in the mind of conscientious teachers as long as we attempt to cater for students' emerging needs to use foreign languages in different contexts in an increasingly competitive world.

The rocketing number of works submitted for this Conference constitutes a reason for pride and contentment; a selection is published in this volume.

The topics tackled by colleagues are most interesting and varied, and cater for diverse audiences: primary, secondary, teacher education and English in higher education. We can find works on ICT (use of sitcoms as authentic material, avatars, blogs, ICT tools in Listening, B-learning), methodology, research on vocabulary at different levels: primary, secondary and higher education. Some pieces are related to values, there are others focusing on intercultural competence. There are some others devoted to writing and also, on reading, and two others on listening and phonology. A proposal is based on Systemic Functional Grammar and Genre Studies in Multimodality.

From a cursory reading of the abstracts of the selected papers, one cannot but feel satisfied with the diversity and depth of the topics addressed. This accounts for a group of teachers who reflect, carry on research in the classroom, who decided to respond to the never-ending challenge of being up to the demands of current state-of-the-art professional development and teaching education. This is very important for FAAPI, which encourages such further studies outside of mere practice. Since 1971, teacher development has been FAAPI's main concern, pursuing its founding ideals. We can continually witness this determination has yielded its fruits.

So, here you are! There is no need of space in your study; technology leaves the digital version of these pieces of work for you to indulge into reading when you wish, also as the cherished reminder of unforgettable moments in the process of our professional development.

Cristina Emilia Mayol, M.A.

FAAPI President



40th FAAPI Conference

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Learners as agents of change: Challenges for the EFL class

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1. Introduction

Multimedia tools are generally defined as the selection of instruments which transmit a sequence of messages in an audio-visual context. Thanks to the various and different rapid technological advances, learners are profiting from a proliferation of these tools which allow for the incorporation of new materials into formal instances of instruction. Audio visual devices become useful instruments which can be fully exploited to expose students to the natural production of native speakers, including the language patterns chosen in different communicative situations. This, in turn, raises awareness on the learners' own use of such constructions, and may be reflected in a quantum leap in their productive skills; consequently, in their overall performances.

Formerly, the most commonly adopted technological tools were those specifically designed for the classroom under the instructor's guidance. Conversely, nowadays students are exposed to a myriad of mediums through which to learn, i.e. web videos, documentaries, animated series, sitcoms, films, tutorials and so forth. By applying a large-scale survey about the use of videos in the foreign language (FL) class, Canning-Wilson (2000) finds that learners prefer action/entertainment films to those produced specifically for teaching purposes. The benefits reaped by students through authentic, collaborative, and contextualized learning tasks that result from audio visual products designed for an audience are well documented in research (Maor & Roberts, 2011 as cited in Dema & Moeller, 2012). The selection criteria to establish which materials represent the different voices within a learning community bring to the center of our enterprise the need to explore the connections between multimedia, culture and agency.

Therefore, the English Language III chair at Facultad de Lenguas, UNC, tries to integrate culture and language in tandem with audiovisual cultural products to create a rich and meaningful environment in which students interact with authentic data, get motivated, reflect upon certain social issues, and build their own understanding of a foreign culture's products, practices and perspectives. McDonnell (2014) argues that narrative art forms such as literature, film and television play an important role in the ways young people construct and perform their political subjectivity, and that this is an important part of their thorough learning.

We seek to better understand the educational outcomes of the use of multimedia tools, more specifically the animated sitcom, and the development of skills and attitudes that allow for active participation. Also, we are interested in the interplay between incorporating authentic cultural products in the EFL classroom which foster language acquisition, learning strategies and autonomy, and inciting university students to become agents of change who critically analyze different realities. As such, we focused on two interlocking areas: the relevance of the selected audio visual instruments used for the class, and the educative role of global citizenship. Simply put, to what extent does the introduction of cultural products designed for youth consumerism lead to developing critical awareness, promoting active participation and producing meaningful learning, and to what extent does the experience of agents of change bring along a change of mind?

2. Theoretical framework

According to *Global citizenship education: topics and learning objectives*- a document published by UNESCO in 2015 -“global citizenship refers to a sense of belonging to a broader community and common humanity. It emphasizes political, economic, social and cultural interdependency and interconnectedness between the local, the national and the global”. Therefore, global citizenship education entails the importance of generating socially constructed spaces for transforming language students into social change agents. The term global citizenship contributes to empowering learners as well as conferring them the right to challenge authority and dissent (Byers, 2005). As agents of change, students learn to have a critical view of existing social circumstances and look towards more emancipatory ways of working and relating (Foster, 1986, as cited in Wyper, 2014). Change agents ask questions and consciously choose how to promote dialogue and build

community (Gerzon, 2006 as cited in Wyper, 2014). Along this perspective, language instructors should face the task of forming knowledgeable, reflective, and inquisitive learners with the ability to critically analyze global issues from an open and empathic view. Furthermore, they must inspire students by the axiom of environmental education "think globally and act locally" and urge them to know and care about the global dimensions and significance of environmental problems and issues as well as to consider the planet their home and take action (Gough, 2002).

Brinton, Snow and Wesche (1989) define content-based instruction (CBI) as a way of learning that integrates content with language-teaching objectives. Through the application of this approach, learners are encouraged to think and learn through the use of the target language by developing a variety of receptive and productive skills which prepare them for the range of academic demands they will have to face in the near future. As students are taught through the medium of subject matter, they can move forward and accomplish progressive mastery of the instrument, i.e. of the target language (Madrid & García Sánchez, 2001). These authors claim that "this progress with the TL is often incidental and subconscious and it is achieved through immersion" (ibid p.125).

When teachers integrate powerful technological tools into their instruction, students are allowed to personally interact with real data and solve open-ended problems. Integrating technology in this manner places the majority of responsibility for negotiating meaning in the hands of the learners. This learner-centered approach allows students to start with what they know and build their own understanding of culture. The integration of content, pedagogy, and instructional technology when constructing knowledge promotes a rich and engaging learning environment for foreign language learners.

3. Background studies

Literature on the benefits of incorporating technological instruments to the language class is vast. Arcario (1993) and Lonergan (1984) as cited in Kiani (2014) point out that the extended context; that is to say, the content, visual imagery, actions and gestures of a film or video provide students with a multi-sensory input that is close to what they would find in real-life communication. Such input resembles our immediate and *real* environments and, is therefore engaging and motivating to learners, because of its many contextual clues (Chapple & Curtis, 2000, as cited in Kiani, 2014). In addition, multi- sensory input fosters

students' holistic comprehension as well as assists memory retention more efficiently since it requires viewers to use the right hemisphere of the brain in addition to the left, which is already activated for the language learning (ibid, 2014).

Specifically, many researchers have claimed and established the effectiveness of introducing various audio visual aids in the language classrooms. Ismaili (2013), in a study at the South East European University with pre-intermediate and intermediate students, analyzes the effects of using movies in the EFL classroom. Results showed that technological tools stimulate deeper text-comprehension and boost the learners' mind allowing prediction and recollection practices that activate background knowledge. Furthermore, technological tools enable learners to exercise their powers of observation to inductively learn about cultural aspects such as customs and humor, or culturally specific use of language, such as idiomatic expressions and collocations (ibid, 2013). Finally, multimedia tools which are incorporated in the language classroom help not only to display content and deepen comprehension but also to improve students' lexical and grammatical productions. For instance Baltova (1994) studied the effects of viewing French video with subtitles on students' vocabulary learning and found that students learned significantly more vocabulary when they viewed the audio-visual materials with subtitles.

Consequently, it is logically assumed that by exposing students to multimedia tools, they will become better equipped to integrate linguistic and paralinguistic features. Also, they will have the chance to experience vicariously a number of situations which allow for the development of empathy –an awareness of the Other- as well as the opportunity to embark on deep reflections in connection to this. In a study carried out in Canada, Krasnikova (2014) explores ways of using Hollywood movies in the ESL classroom as a means of developing students' proficiency, specifically their writing skills, and she mentions that recreating authentic content through TV series helps students integrate language and culture and makes the learning experience more similar to what happens in real life. In a study about the use of videos for task-based learning of scientific subjects through English in secondary education, Oddone (2011) examines the potential of implementing multimedia instruments in language learning contexts with the aim of improving students' competence. The author states that these tools, fully exploited in in-class and out of-class lessons, provide instances of authentic language and authentic material which are both particularly motivating. By creating a direct link between the target

language users and the target language learners, technological instruments definitely contribute to making learners become aware of the cultural phenomenon they see on screen (Abdolmanafi Rokni & Jannati Atanee, 2014). As matter of fact, animated series are widely used as a source of authentic sociocultural teaching material for EFL students since they combine sounds, images and texts together with socio-cultural information about traditions, living styles and thinking patterns in order to grant genuine communicative language, increase learner motivation, and hopefully facilitate the learning of the target vocabulary.

4. The sitcom

Numerous media scholars (e.g., Bogle, Dow, Fiske, Giroux, Jones, Kellner, Taylor as cited in Rucynski, 2011) regard television primarily as a means to reproduce the dominant norms, values, and practices of contemporary society. In *Nervous Laughter: Television Situation Comedy and Liberal Democratic Ideology* Hamamoto (1991) points out that the sitcom reveals "the mores, ideals, prejudices, and ideologies shared-by fiat or default-by the majority of the American public" (p. 10). His claim is applicable to many contemporary television shows, but none more so than to the animated sitcom *The Simpsons* which is considered a complex cultural artifact because of its satirical engagement with highly politicized social issues. As an iconic mainstay of American popular culture for the past two decades, *The Simpsons* is an obvious choice for teachers looking for authentic materials for EFL students.

In *Using authentic video in the language classroom*, Sherman (2003) asserts that TV series and animated sitcoms introduce different aspects of real life into the language learning environment, should the instructor choose to incorporate them, and thereby contextualize the learning process. In this view, *The Simpsons* represents an instance of authentic material which not only motivates students to reflect upon the views and positions expressed by Americans on different current hotly debated issues, but also –and at the same time- exposes them to the language used by native speakers in real life situations. Since the chair understands that focusing on the cultural component means dealing with cultural differences in popular culture, its teachers concurred with the decision that *The Simpsons* represented a challenging choice as well as an enticing complement to content-based instruction.

5. Context of experience

The English Language III syllabus touches upon different thematic units organized upon the specific linguistic and metalinguistic objectives of the subject. As explained in it, the subject represents a link between the intermediate level achieved in 1st and 2nd year, and the advanced level that the subjects in 4th and 5th year require. Thus, learners should be able to master the macro linguistic abilities while at the same time develop learning strategies that help them become autonomous learners in order to face the complexity posed by the specific content based subjects corresponding to the higher levels of the careers (i.e. Linguistics I and II, English Literature, Culture). Following these general objectives, the specific aims of the English Language III chair are connected to the “systematic acquisition of new lexicon, [...] the introduction to a systematic study of cultural aspects of English speaking countries, the development of critical thinking...” (English Language III syllabus, 2015). As English Language teachers at Facultad de Lenguas- UNC, we are confronted with young adult students who are disengaged from current affairs, almost insensitive towards global concerns, and barely informed about social and political conflicts. Thus, one of the Language III chair main goals is ultimately to give students the resources and opportunities necessary to think critically and independently, so that they would be able to formulate a sense of who they are.

We decide to complement the teaching of some contentious topics -genetic manipulation (GM) and medication abuse- which stir debate and foster the taking of clear stances with the viewing of two different chapters of *The Simpsons*, which ironically and pungently expose the contradictions and cons that these issues present for most societies. The introduction of these episodes and activities which were carried out in class allowed for a motivational boost for students, and the learning and incorporation of aspects that went beyond the mere linguistic acquisition.

First, the students were asked to read a text in their course materials about multiple births. Then they came to class and watched chapter 7, season 11 of *The Simpsons* called *Eight Misbehavin'* which presents viewers with the complications of genetic engineering and fertility drugs. Apu, one of the secondary characters in the series (an Indian immigrant married to Manjula) becomes the father of octuplets after undergoing a fertility treatment. On a different class, students worked with a text about emotional literacy. Then they came to class and were exposed to chapter 2, season 11 of *The Simpsons* named *Brother's Little*

Helper which presents viewers with the nefarious effects of the use and abuse of psychotropic drugs, a very much debated issue in American society today. After watching the video, organized debate was stirred up and the whole class responded through actively participating in rich and stimulating discussions.

6. Implications

The activities carried out in connection allowed for a growing interest not only on the formal aspects of the language, but also on establishing clear connections between the material included in the booklet, the ideas debated when those texts were covered and the different aspects dealt with in the episodes.

The implementation of selected episodes proved to be highly effective in motivating students due to several after effects: during the watching sessions, we evidenced an increase in students' oral participation (we keep an oral performance record per class) and a boost of students' involvement in global issues. At the same time, exposure to different enactments based on these relevant current issues enhanced students' performances since they reacted to the different situations ironically portrayed in the episodes with an empathic awareness of what the actual outcomes connected to these issues can be. In successive sessions, students kept debate going by committing themselves to do further research. We finally witnessed that many groups of students decided to write their essay assignments on these topics. The chair implements a writing project by which students form groups that write an essay on ticklish issues discussed in class in a collaborative way. As a corollary experience, students were challenged to reflect with careful consideration on their actions and to assess critically their own behavior. They were invited to attend extracurricular talks, support community projects and join different action groups that work in social programs.

Using episodes as part of a thematic unit has made the show more than mindless entertainment, and it actually helped learners gain a different understanding of deep issues of American culture and reflect upon these as well as their own culture.

Audiovisual resources work as tools for fostering language acquisition and consolidation and the incorporation of specific learning strategies and autonomy. The use of cultural products that introduce controversial topics encourage learners to move away from their comfort zone and to reflect on global conflicts and debates on ethical dilemmas. We understand that our students become agents of change when they develop the capacity

to adopt a critical role in the interpretation of mass media texts and an active participation in in-class and out-of-class activities. Therefore, as teachers who face the challenges of the new millennium including topics which address global citizenship and cultural diversity is not enough. We must adopt a pedagogical approach to English teaching which considers learners as social agents with their own beliefs and experiences as well as inquisitive interests, and prepare them in taking a critical and informed stance upon social and cultural issues.

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Understanding and producing multimodal messages in secondary school through webquest

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1. Introduction

Technological developments offer new ways to structure messages by making use of different semiotic systems. Therefore, the concept of reading has been stretched to make room not only for the written mode but also for the combination of modes such as the auditory and visual ones (Kress, 2004). This alteration in the traditional concept of reading has had an impact on the concept of literacy. Being literate implies that readers make use of different skills to perceive each composing element of a text and understand how the text elements are intertwined to create a unified coherent text.

In this paper, we will describe an activity that we have crafted to enhance students' ability to read and create multimodal texts and to understand that the composition of a text responds to the author's world view. To train students to craft and decode multilingual messages is a must for a literate citizen in the XXI century. This paper presents the results of a research project in which secondary school students in their 4th and 5th year of their studies were taught to deal with multimodal messages. We carried out a task with two groups of intermediate level students between 15 and 16 years old who attend a semi

private institution in Cordoba City. This institution has a special English programme in which students are streamed according to their linguistic competence and their English load is divided into meetings of a hundred minutes each. The project consisted in a webquest divided into four tasks. In the first task, the concept multimodality was introduced to the students. On a second task, students had to analyze the meaning making signs that make up the multimodal messages. This process of analysis was deepened on the third task in which students had to provide a written feedback of their analysis. The final task focused on the production and design of multimodal texts. In a closing plenary session, students were encouraged to provide feedback on the success of the task and reflect on the social significance of critical thinking and responsible citizenship.

The webquest was laid out following the webquest model of Dodge and March (Sox, 2009) because it favors autonomous learning, inquiry- based learning, collaborative learning and a constructivist approach. Following Dörnyei & Ushioda's (2009, p.1) conceptualization of motivation, this webquest project fostered students' participation by relating new content with their own life experiences. Thus, students made use of different language skills to understand a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will enhance their cultural capital, their identity and their desires for the future. Thus, an investment in the target language is also an investment in the learner's own identity (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009, p.4).

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Multimodality and new literacies

Technological developments have changed the nature of the messages that are found on the Internet; thus, these developments have also influenced the new conceptualization of

reading. “Reading has to be rethought given that the commonsense of what reading is was developed in the era of unquestioned dominance of writing.” (Kress, 2010, p. 17) Kress understands “[r]eading as taking and making meaning from many sources of information, from many different sign systems (...).” (Kress, 2010, p.17) In other words, readers will be exposed to a wide range of *multimodal* messages built from different composing elements that come from different semiotic systems (auditory, visual and verbal modes among others) (Kress, 2010). These texts can be difficult to read since text- interpreters have to focus on multiple meaning making signs to deconstruct the main ideas of the texts. Students will also have to understand the dynamic essence of reading since nowadays authors become readers and readers become authors as technology allows quick answers to almost any message, giving birth to long chains of discourse (Kress, 2010, p.18-19).

2.2. Teaching approach

This activity was laid out in the form of a webquest, following the webquest model of Dodge and March (Sox, 2009), because it favours autonomous learning, inquiry- based learning, collaborative learning and a constructivist approach. The webquest presented a series of tasks that students had to solve to complete the quest; thus, students had to work together to provide a collaborative answer for each task. In addition, each activity was meant to foster critical thinking and debate among students. Students had to visit different web pages; therefore, they were highly exposed to the English language, having the opportunity to consolidate their language and learn new linguistic items that helped students expand their linguistic knowledge. The tasks were crafted to suit the language level of the students. However, there are many external links which are not pedagogically tailored to suit students’ linguistic competence, so a language resource page was included

within the webquest for students to consult when necessary. Providing students with resources helped to improve their autonomy since they had to select which resource they were going to use to solve each situation.

Webquests follow a constructivist approach (Sox, 2009) since students have to learn by making connections with their already existing knowledge and the new information. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001, p.109) who adhere to J. Piaget, J. Bruner and L. Vygotsky's ideas, "knowledge is socially constructed rather than received or discovered." Webquests provide a series of resources to promote students' autonomy, create a learning environment that fosters critical thinking and learning by doing, and promote the role of the teacher as facilitator (Tharp, 1993). Besides, since some webquests can be carried out in groups, they foster collaborative learning (social constructivism) in which students can learn together from their peers. Following constructivism, learners are encouraged to analyze, do research, make contributions, share, build, and generate meaning based on what he or she already knows, encouraging, in this way, the development of an active methodology, mainly learn by doing. (Baynat Monreal & Sanz Gil, 2007, p.85)

2.3. Motivation

It is not unknown that motivation supports the behaviors necessary for language learning. In this sense, significant developments in language teaching have occurred as new technologies are used to provide novel ways of configuring and accessing language learning opportunities; thus, language teachers are called upon to adjust or restructure their pedagogical and professional practices in response to changes in curricula, materials, classes and learners, and in response to shifts in broader understandings of language learning and teaching. (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009). Hand in hand with XXI century ways of

accessing language learning, this webquest represents the restructuring of our pedagogical practices in which students were guided in their process of understanding their role as readers and producers of multimodal messages. This proved to be highly motivating in the sense that students related this learning experience to their own background knowledge.

3. Project

3.1. Setting

The webquest was planned out to be used with students from 4th and 5th year, between 15 and 16 years old, of a private secondary school in the city of Córdoba whose specialisation curriculum paves the way towards the fields of social studies and humanities. The English level of these students is B1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). As stated by the Council of Europe at a threshold or intermediate level (B1), students are able to deal with “the main ideas of complex texts on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialization.” (Council of Europe, 2014).

This learning experience took place in months previous to Argentinian presidential elections 2015. As regards technological tools present in the classroom, the school is equipped with computers and Internet access. The activity presented here was meant to consolidate the key important areas of what had been discussed in the classroom as regards multimodal messages and to guide the analysis of these messages with the help of the teacher.

3.2. Methodology

We crafted a webquest by using free software to create webpages, Wix.com (to have access to our site click on [this link](#)). The layout is user friendly and extra buttons have been added in strategic places so that students can navigate through the site with easiness and clear out any questions they may have as regards language use by consulting the language resource section. Some class time was devoted to explaining students how this tool works and students were asked to experiment with it.

This educational tool is made up of an introduction, task objectives, a process section divided into four sub- tasks, an evaluation, and a conclusion. First, in the introduction section, students were introduced to the concept of new literacies, which was a new concept for them, and analyzed some components of multimodal messages as well as their impact on meaning construction. Once the main concepts were introduced, students were presented with the task objective and the first sub- tasks, first and second. In the first task, students worked collaboratively to define the concept of multimodal texts. Secondly, students had to analyze different multimodal texts, audiovisual and visual political propaganda, to see how each of the different mode elements contributes to the creation of the ultimate meaning of a text. Part of this task was carried out as classwork, followed by a plenary session and the rest was assigned as homework to foster students' independent analysis. The homework done served as scaffolding for task three which presented some guiding questions for a written piece of work in which students had to summarise ideas discussed so far. In this same session, the final sub- task was introduced and students started drafting their own multimodal message, political propaganda for the Students' Union Election. This group work was meant to be done in two classes so as to share their final production with their classmates in upcoming classes.

The work described above was carried out in six classes, including the evaluation stage. The first class was devoted to the introduction of the webquest. On a second session, the task objectives were presented and the first task was solved so as to present students with a model of analysis of different mode elements. In a third session, by a written piece of work, students summarised the main concepts dealt with so far. At the same time, they were introduced with the rubrics of the final work. On the fourth class, students worked collaboratively on the production of their multimodal messages, which were shared with the rest of the class in sessions five and six.

3.3. Results

The fact that teenagers are allowed to participate in presidential elections in Argentina as from the age of 16 and that the school where the experience took place is paving the way towards the creation of their first Student Union this year made the project meaningful and highly motivating for students. Both groups got involved in most of the activities suggested on the webquest, showing a special interest in the ones dealing with visual and audiovisual input, and found the final crafting of their own propaganda appealing. Most of the collaborative work was carried out in class, which made it easier for them to hand in a final product on time.

Dealing with political messages as well as analyzing images, bearing in mind a multimodal frame of thought, posed a challenge for both groups. The pedagogical scaffolding provided by teachers served as a facilitator and supported their work in class. Peer collaboration was paramount and learning together (with others and from others) was an appropriate pedagogical frame for the project, which meant that every student could do useful work, depending on their own abilities and competences.

All in all, students managed to craft simple and successful multimodal messages for the upcoming Student Union Elections and were able to grasp the key concepts introduced by the webquest to enhance their socio-cultural capital within a frame of responsible citizenship awareness. We may conclude that this project has resulted in a valuable step towards the encouragement of critical thinking and upper level thought in the context of secondary school work. Also, students could play an active role as readers since they had to analyze and produce their own multimodal texts. To generate these texts, students made use of technological tools in a genuine productive way, responsibly handling available resources such as images and audio openly licensed.

As to technical devices, in the last five years the school chosen to carry out the project has gradually equipped its classrooms with an interactive whiteboard with audio tools and a projector in every class. Besides, each student has a netbook, which allows to work on a one-netbook-per-pupil scheme. This institutional context meant an initial asset for the project work described above; however, technical problems such as issues related to broadband facilities and the number of netbooks available every class had to be sorted out.

4. Conclusion

Changes in literacy brought about by the use of technology and different modes to convey meaning, added to changes in Argentina's voting system make the teaching of reading and writing of multimodal texts an imperative in our context. Current learning classroom materials that rely heavily on print are highly divorced from a reality in which students are immersed in multimodal texts that need to be interpreted, analyzed and responded to. Today's socio- cultural reality challenges our traditional practices, which should be altered to teach how to read and write these novel messages.

A proper use of technology in the classroom has allowed us to provide students with a learning experience in which they explore a new kind of literacy within the context of a pedagogical practice that respected the construction of their identities and language development. In working with this webquest, students were empowered with the knowledge of text compositionality and critical thinking skills that would lead them to be responsible citizens.

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Value-driven EFL classroom practices: Promoting an integral education model

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1. Introduction

This paper presents some classroom practices which have been implemented in English Language courses taught at the teacher training and research programmes within the English Department of the School of Philosophy, Humanities and the Arts of the National University of San Juan. The practices have been developed as a component of an action research project which explores human values as they are construed in EFL reading, listening and viewing materials, with special attention given to the linguistic realizations of such values, and which encourages value-based reflection of such materials as a regular classroom activity.

In our approach to exploring the construal of values in texts, we recognize the existence of a strong link between the concept of values and the notions of ideology, evaluation and positioning, as each of these entails upholding values of one kind or another. The link between ideology and values is clear from Bonnycastle's definition:

An ideology determines what you think is important in life, what categories you put people into, how you see male and female roles in life, and a host of other things. You can visualize your ideology as a grid, or a set of glasses, through which you can see the world (as cited in Beach et al., 2011, p. 153).

We also recognize that the world of the classroom is immersed in ideology/ies and as such, it provides a good setting for students and teachers to

critically reflect upon their taken-for-granted assumptions [as] one of the first steps towards the development of effective and functional critical thinking skills. This level of reflection can only be reached if first they understand that the world they experience every day is just one more among many other interpretations of reality (Farrailelli, 2009, p. 26).

Guided by this critical approach, we have defined a twofold focus for our research. On the one hand, as EFL teachers we are committed to promoting our students' progress in the development of their language skills. We encourage student exploration of linguistic choices as meaning making resources, working at both, the receptive and productive ends of the meaning making process. On the other hand, as EFL teachers working in a teacher training setting, we believe that we have a role in helping our students understand their own responsibility as future educators. In this sense, we contend that the language class is fertile ground for reflection on individual and social values and provides an ideal opportunity for awareness raising around culture-specific as well as global issues which are always--explicitly or implicitly--evaluated, either positively or negatively.

2. Guiding principles

Our research is based on the view of language of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), as proposed by Halliday (1994), Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), Martin (2000), Martin and Rose (2003, 2008), which conceives of language as a meaning making resource, inseparable from the situational and cultural contexts in which language occurs. From a socio-semiotic perspective, SFL understands language as a resource for speakers and writers to “simultaneously represent experience (the ideational function), manage their

relationship with their co-participants (the interpersonal function) and produce dialogue or monologue, whether spoken or written, which is cohesive and coherent (the textual function)” (Trappes Lomax, 2004, p. 138).

Halliday explains that meanings made at the metafunctional level are always shaped by contextual parameters, which, in the SFL model of language, correspond to the variables of Field, Tenor and Mode (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

Another guiding principle for our research is Appraisal Theory (AT), as developed by Martin and White (2005) and Martin and Rose (2003), among others. AT constitutes a development of SFL which enables a fuller account of the interpersonal metafunction and provides tools for exploring choices that reveal attitudes, feelings and emotion in texts. Given our interest in language elements that construe evaluation and positioning, AT becomes a particularly relevant approach to our study.

With respect to the axiological component of our work, we have drawn on a number of studies which endorse critical reflection on ethical and moral values in the EFL or ESL class. There appears to be widespread concern across geographical borders for strengthening such values. Kassim Shaaban (University of Beirut, Lebanon) suggests that the EFL class should promote “fundamental values, principles and attitudes” and that a value-based approach can help students develop “their linguistic and cognitive skills, social awareness, emotional well-being, critical thinking, and a tolerant world view” (2005, p. 201).

Enrique Gervilla Castillo (University of Granada, Spain) argues for the importance of making values central to any educational context. He claims that there is no way of delivering education "other than through values" (2000, p.39). Gervilla Castillo proposes a taxonomy of human values / antivalues developed from a definition of the human being as

an evaluative, singular and relational animal, endowed with reason, capable of feeling passion and making decisions (2000, p. 43).

Following Cohen, Professor Cheng-Fang Tsui (National University of Chengchi, Taiwan) claims that it is imperative to redefine the goals of EFL teaching so as to “prioritize not only academic learning of the language, but also social, emotional, and ethical competencies of the students” (2006, p. 98). She highlights the importance of guiding students to consider “all sides of an issue” (p. 91) without prejudice towards views that are different from theirs.

In turn, Brown (University of San Francisco, USA) raises the issue of whether the EFL class is a suitable environment for the discussion of values, posing the following question: “In the process of second language learning, must learners inevitably grapple with ethical, moral, and religious issues in the classroom?” (1997, p. 21). He goes on to propose arguments and counterarguments for dealing with such issues and presents a case for giving students the chance to critically discuss matters of global significance, while “respecting learners' own beliefs and attitudes” (p. 21).

Among many others around the world, these scholars assert that the discussion of values does have a place in the foreign language classroom and that it is worth pursuing it as an educational endeavor.

3. Values in the EFL classroom: a sensitive issue

There is no question that the decision to bring a value-based focus to the EFL class will invite some controversy, as is acknowledged by all those scholars who favor this approach.

Discussing values in the class should not be misinterpreted to mean that the EFL class is expected to become a morality forum or that the teacher must be viewed as a model

of desirable behavior. Professor Cheng-Fang Tsui (2006) addresses this controversial question and, making reference to values education in EFL, she explains that its purpose is

not to declare any teacher's moral supremacy. Instead, the emphasis is for teachers to create an accommodating, nurturing environment for students to explore moral ambiguities of life while at the same time respecting the autonomy of the students (p. 14).

Addressing another controversial aspect of the discussion of values in the class, Shaaban (2005) claims that embracing a value-based approach should not be understood as an attempt on the part of teachers to convert students "to a new doctrine, religion or otherwise, but rather to prepare them to think carefully and critically about moral issues" (p. 203). This in a way provides a response to the allegation that teachers might have a hidden agenda to promote a particular set of values.

Brown, in turn, raises the controversial question of teachers' power in the classroom, pointing out that such power may allegedly be used to impose the teachers' own values. Citing Auerbach, who claims that power and domination "permeate the fabric of classroom life", Brown (1997) asks: "must we teachers, in full recognition of the power we wield in the classrooms, refrain from any treatment of critical issues lest we become agents of an 'unequal division of power and resources'?" (p.21). In response to this question, he goes on to endorse the active role of teachers in the defense of basic human rights, such as tolerance, fairness, equality, the "humane treatment of every human being" (p. 8) among others, and claims that EFL/ESL teachers are perhaps "covert ambassadors of peace" (p. 9) working for a more humane, less violent society.

Also aware of the conflictive nature of including an axiological component in the EFL class and of the 'sensitivities it may engender', Shaaban explains that it is "almost

impossible to avoid moral education in schools” and that institutions should focus on “how they should do it” rather than on whether it should be done at all (2005, p. 203).

Undoubtedly, the inclusion of value-based content and activities in the language class is inextricably linked to controversy. We believe, however, this should not deter language educators from embracing a holistic approach to their own practices seeking to strengthen learners’ integral education.

4. Some value-driven practices

We believe that all types of input material lend themselves to the analysis and discussion of values in the EFL class, as all texts -including visual, reading and listening material- can be subjected to an exploration of values and ideologies. As Stephens and Watson point out, “no text is innocent” (as cited in Bainbridge et al., 2005, p. 1498); “all texts embody an ideology; all texts foreground some ideas and suppress or omit others” (Bainbridge et al., 2005, p. 1498).

In order to make the discussion of values central to the class, we propose a number of activities which can be used in a variety of contexts. In our action research project, these activities have been used with students at higher intermediate and advanced levels. It should be pointed out that the list is by no means exhaustive.

4.1. Capturing values/antivalues from texts through photographs, drawings and/or videos

This activity can be implemented after students have worked with a given text such as a short story, a poem or an article. Students are asked to act out some scene/s of the text in question, in which they identify a specific value/antivalue or set of values/antivalues. They video tape or take photographs of their performance and then show their production to the rest of the class, explaining the value/antivalue they have attempted to capture. Alternatively, they may be asked to design a graphic representation of a value/antivalue to be shown to and discussed with the rest of the class. One of the advantages of this practice is that it provides a good opportunity to combine various modes of making meaning, and allows the more technologically savvy students to display their skills.

This activity was successfully carried out by first year students of our teacher training program, working with two classic short stories: *Twenty Pieces of Silver* and *Enoch's Two Letters*.

4.2. Identifying linguistic realizations of values/antivalues

This activity engages students in the completion of a two-column table. Students are asked to list in one column the various values/antivalues they identify in a given text and then indicate in the other column what language construes or evokes such value/antivalue. Below is a brief illustration of the implementation of this activity based on the text *Learning from the past* (Dummet et al., 2014, p.10), which is part of the course material for English Language II.

Value/antivalue	Linguistic Realization
Value: reconciliation / collaboration	<i>If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy.</i>
Antivalue: Stubbornness /inaction	<i>either we forget these lessons or we deliberately choose to misinterpret them, or knowing them, we simply fail to act on them.</i>

Table 1. Identifying linguistic realizations of values/antivalues - An example.

This can be an enriching activity since it raises awareness of the many ways in which evaluation can be realized in language, from a simple adjectival or adverbial phrase to a complex structure. One interesting aspect of this practice is that, depending on their own perspective and standpoint, different students may assign different values to the same linguistic realization.

In advanced classes, the activity also allows for discussions of the various degrees of explicitness through which values/antivalues can be expressed. In our teacher-training programme, the use of this activity with a number of texts triggered discussions of different aspects of language, such as subtleties of meaning created through linguistic choices, helping students to discover meanings which had gone unnoticed in their initial reading.

4.3. Relating various texts around a value/antivalue

For this practice, students are asked to select a specific value/antivalue and to group different texts they have worked on over a given period around such value/antivalue. Then students are expected to explain in what way the texts they have selected illustrate the value/antivalue chosen, providing specific references from each text. For example, for the Final Assessment Session of the English Language III course, one of the Junior students

(2014 Class) associated a number of the articles and videos studied throughout the year with the value of “*Active Citizenship*” and with a number of sub-values directly related to it, such as *Respect*, *Tolerance*, *Justice*, *Self-Discipline* and *Determination*. Next, using the slogan “Change starts from within”, he showed how the value and sub-values were instantiated in the various texts chosen. The following slides are part of his Power Point Presentation:



Figure 1. Student’s presentation *Relating various texts around the Active Citizenship value and sub-values*

Other students also produced creative and original associations between the various texts covered during the year, which confirmed that the more freedom students are given to express their viewpoints, the more resourcefulness they display.

4.4. Discriminating fact from opinion

Another activity which promotes reflection on evaluative elements in a text is what we call FACT/OPINION analysis. This activity is carried out as a table completion task. Having read a text, students are asked to identify chunks of language which construe representations of the world as either facts or opinions. Then they are asked to single out what linguistic items provide the clue for their classification. If they identify a part of a text

as an Opinion, they are asked to indicate whose viewpoint is being reported. Finally, students must decide if the chunk of language analyzed actually construes an opinion or a fact, regardless of the way it might be represented.

This activity makes it possible to illustrate how an opinion can be presented as a fact, discouraging contestation, and how a text can--directly or indirectly--give voice to several participants. The activity also serves to illustrate that subjective elements in a text can be realized through a range of resources as varied as modality, lexis, nominalization, etc.

The following examples, based on the *Beyond a Joke* text (Dellar and Walkley, 2012, p. 28) illustrate the use of this tool in the context of the English Language III course:

Idea presented as		Language item/s realizing FACT/OPINION	Source of opinion	Is it F/O?
FACT	OPINION			
	X	Professor Russell Peterson argues that comedians are having a harmful effect on politics	Professor Russell Peterson	O
X		Because the main target of most jokes is the character and personal qualities of politicians, audiences are left with the impression that all politicians are equally awful, a feeling which increases already widespread cynicism and frustration with the democratic process.	Writer of the article	O

Table 2. Discriminating fact from opinion - An example

In the first example, an opinion is presented as such through the acknowledgement of its source and the use of the verb ‘argue’, which construes a position. In the second example, however, the idea that there is “widespread cynicism and frustration with the democratic process” is presented as a fact through nominalizations (*cynicism and frustration*), eliminating arguability. Through this resource, an opinion is “dressed” as fact.

The importance of this activity is that it can make students aware of the ways language can be used in manipulative ways. Warned about this power of linguistic resources, students can be better equipped to respond to texts in a critical manner.

4.5. Exploring values/antivalues in songs

Songs are unquestionably a favorite resource in EFL classes of all levels as they are often seen as enjoyable and motivating. Apart from their recognized value in developing students' vocabulary and improving their listening and speaking skills, songs can be used to explore the values and identities of various social groups that are part of the culture of the target language.

The practice we propose involves students selecting a song on the basis of values/antivalues that emerge from the lyrics. Students listen to the song chosen, read its lyrics, and discuss the values/antivalues identified. This can be done as a whole class activity, or in small groups working with different songs.

In the framework of our project, one selected song was *F**in Perfect* (Pink et al., 2010, track 18). Students chose the song as it invites young people to be accepting of their own imperfections rather than obsessed by socially imposed pressures. They further described the song as a reaction against stereotypes of beauty. The song thus provided a good opportunity for the discussion of aesthetic values and antivalues.

5. Conclusion

We believe that the practices illustrated here show that the EFL class can become a site for reflection about the ways in which language construes values and thereby, ideologies. The

implementation of these practices requires strong teacher commitment towards a social view of language and a holistic approach to language teaching.

In this endeavor, it becomes clear that the teaching of the formal aspects of language, which is so often emphasized in language classes -especially at teaching training levels- should not be prioritized at the expense of reflection on moral and ethical considerations which permeate every aspect of our social lives.

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Assessment of an intercultural education project at primary school level

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1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to present the results of an action research project carried out through international cooperation by the National Ministry of Education and the English Language Assistant Programme by the British Council in the context of the Humanities College, UNLPam and the area of Curriculum Design, Primary Education Direction, Ministry of Education of La Pampa.

The “Intercultural English Project for Primary Schools”, as the project was called, took place during six months at different schools: Normal School 256, School 4 and rural schools at Utracán (Boarding School 73) and Chacharramendi (Boarding School 176).

Firstly, we will present the changes in curriculum design for the teaching of English as a Foreign language and Culture in Argentina since the implementation of the NAP (*Núcleos de Aprendizaje Prioritarios para Lenguas Extranjeras* or Core Language Learning Priorities for Foreign Languages), which were issued by the Federal Education Bureau as Act 181/12. Curriculum guidelines for primary schools in La Pampa province follow these guidelines which develop a whole set of topics related to intercultural reflection.

Secondly, a theoretical framework for this intercultural perspective will be presented, followed by examples of didactic sequences and materials which reflect the intercultural approach at work with young learners in the above-mentioned schools. The

pupils were guided by their teachers and the English Language Assistant and participated in different activities that showed their own culture.

From an action research perspective, data were collected in order to analyze the impact of the Intercultural Project. Surveys were carried out with primary school students and interviews with English Teachers and Headmistresses participating in the project were recorded on video. The positive as well as unexpected results of the project will be assessed in the light of the theoretical framework of Education for Intercultural Citizenship developed by Byram (2008, 2012), Barboni (2011), Barboni and Simón (2013), Corbett (2003, 2010) and Porto (2014), Porto & Barboni (2012).

2. Changes in curriculum design for English as a foreign language in Argentina

The rationale behind the NAP is to foster an intercultural plurilingual perspective which “promotes multi-disciplinary approaches and combines language learning with the capacity for reflection and critical thinking necessary to adapt to societies of great cultural diversity; in other words, it fosters students’ active participation in democratic processes and contributes to education for citizenship and for peace” (NAP 2012, section Introduction p. 1).²

These curriculum guidelines differ from those followed in Argentina during the 1990s (Framework Agreement 15 for the Teaching of Foreign Languages), which established the teaching of English as the main foreign language in state schools and prompted its gradual implementation throughout all levels of the Argentine education system (primary school education, basic school Education and general education). However, very few districts, namely Buenos Aires province and the city of Buenos Aires, were able to develop the teaching of English at primary school level. The teaching methods promoted at that time recommended the adoption of standard dialects of greater cultural dissemination and general acceptance, because of their better linguistic and pragmatic characterization. The reference to standard dialects in the national guidelines indicated the need to teach only RP (Received Pronunciation) as a valid norm, ignoring the richness of

linguistic and cultural diversity of different countries where English is spoken as an international language in an ever-expanding circle, as reflected by Kachru's circles (1992).

This view has certainly changed since the NAP for Foreign Languages were issued in 2012 as a new curricular framework of reference. The diversity of contexts in which English is taught throughout Argentina is now being considered and thus four different possible paths are offered to include English language teaching in the school curriculum. Another difference between this framework (NAP) and the previous one is that whereas in the 1990s only the teaching of English as EFL was fostered, nowadays the focus on intercultural and plurilingual perspective offers the possibility of choosing between five languages: French, Portuguese, Italian, German and/or English.

The NAP for foreign languages organize learning into six main areas: listening and reading comprehension, oral and written production, reflection processes necessary to notice features of the target language in comparison with the mother tongue and the intercultural reflection which is stimulated with the aim of making teachers and students aware that the teaching of foreign languages from a plurilingual and intercultural perspective is a rich and valuable experience that goes beyond learning in the school environment.

3. Theoretical framework

The current pedagogy derives from the era of post-methods (Kumaravadivelu, 2003a, 2003b, 2006) and requires changes in our perception of what elements constitute a valid means of teaching English as a foreign language. Despite the communicative language teaching methods from the '70s and post-communicative trends such as task-based learning (TBL) (Willis & Willis, 2007) or the Intercultural approach (Byram, 2008), the teaching of language as a system with a strong focus on form is still prevalent in classroom practice in many schools in our context, with results indicating low levels of communicative and intercultural competence in English and often leading to frustration in students. These situations are also perpetuated by the use of textbooks produced by foreign publishers which tend to reinforce stereotypes that could sometimes lead to the idealization of the

dominant groups, with the devaluation of the dominated group and the suppression of their cultural patterns and lifestyles. This view is in agreement with what Phillipson (1992) referred to as linguistic imperialism, the set of beliefs based on a political, economic and cultural agenda which he attributed to the teaching of English as a lingua franca with hegemonic characteristics, in the context of colonization. Teaching English as a lingua franca has led to marginalization practices (Canagarajah, 1999), and authors such as Pennycook (1998) and Holliday (1994) indicate that the methods present in English language textbooks were often generated from centers of power and were transformed into political agendas and vehicles for linguistic imperialism. According to Barboni (2011, p. 9):

the complex status of English needs to be analyzed from the social and political effects of colonialism in Latin America, dating back to 1810 in South America and in Argentina it has historically legitimized teaching practices of English as a foreign Language (EFL) from the perspective of "otherness". ²

In the past, the aim of ELT was to imitate a native speaker by developing a) linguistic competence, b) knowledge of what is appropriate language, c) knowledge about the target language country and its culture. It was a dangerous simplification which assumed that learning a language involved becoming like a person from another country. In the era of post-methods, however, the superiority of native speaker teachers and/or culture is no longer deemed relevant and standard varieties of English such as RP (Received Pronunciation) are no longer considered as the only viable model to teach. There is a growing awareness that effective communication among users of World Englishes is possible if we take into account variation in the social, cultural and ideational functions of English (Kachru & Smith, 2008).

4. From communicative competence to intercultural competence

The intercultural dimension in language teaching aims to help learners become intercultural mediators who are able to avoid the stereotypes that associate a nationality with a single monolithic identity. Teaching about language and culture is different from teaching just the four macro-skills. Culture is always in the background given the differences in gender, sex,

social class, education, life experiences, religious and/or political beliefs of foreign language speakers (Kramsch, 1993, 1998). Communicative competence can be challenged if the intercultural perspective is not taken into account. As English language teachers we should be able to understand the need to widen the view of English as a skill or tool in order to incorporate contents which are meaningful to students and which may produce the change that Kramsch describes as the shift from “learning by doing to learning by thinking” (1993, p. 3).

The development of intercultural competence as a learning process is a spiral that brings together intercultural knowledge and skills such as communication skills, comprehensive cultural knowledge and abilities to manage conflicts. Attitudes of empathy for otherness, the value of cultural diversity, tolerance of ambiguity, avoidance of violation of cultural rules are made possible through the development of intercultural reflection.

According to Byram, Gribkova and Starkey (2002) the “best teacher” is neither the native nor the non-native speaker but rather the person who can help learners see the relationship between their own and other cultures. There is no perfect model to imitate nor the notion of a perfect “native speaker”. Promoting and developing the intercultural dimension will give learners the intercultural competence as well as the linguistic competence that may prepare them for interaction with people from other cultures.

5. Elements of intercultural education practices in the primary school classroom

According to Corbett (2003), an intercultural approach favors the appreciation of similarities and differences between the students’ own culture and the culture of the English-speaking country so that they may use this knowledge to develop a more objective view of their own language and culture. Corbett (2010) also states that the best intercultural practices should adopt context-sensitive and culture-specific approaches to introduce culture in the language classroom in such a way that cultural content is determined according to local needs, adopting and adapting global topics to each teaching context. Promoting a flexible model of English that is open to student appropriation and emergent

linguistic forms should allow students to come in contact with diverse voices so that they are encouraged to develop their own second-language voice.

From an intercultural perspective, Corbett defines acculturation as people's "ability to function in another culture while maintaining their own identity" (2003, p. 15). In this sense, the development of intercultural awareness should be a goal to be reached in the teaching and learning of foreign language and culture in primary schools because classrooms where multicultural diversity is celebrated consider learners as language users and inheritors of a rich culture. In primary schools in La Pampa province, we teach about languages and cultures, catering for diversity in the classroom and respecting our students' identity, trying to avoid stereotypes and not to assimilate foreign culture into our own culture.

Allowing our classes to be enriched by cultural diversity means presenting not just materials about English speaking countries from the inner circle (Kachru, 1992) but also from the expanding circles. In our context, an intercultural experience at school number 4 connecting students from that institution with a school in India through has proved to be a rich and empowering intercultural experience that has motivated young learners to learn about other cultures and to share their culture with others.

The teaching of English as a foreign language can be integrated into citizenship education through multidisciplinary approaches. Transversal topics such as children's rights, education for peace, environmental education and integral sexual education form part of global citizenship issues that are worth developing in primary school classrooms. Moreover, the Internet can be beneficial for intercultural reflection as it offers a wealth of authentic materials and possibilities of interaction through learning communities and online programmes. Multi-disciplinary projects along the lines mentioned above may help arouse in learners the empathy and respect necessary to allow for cross-cultural communication and to develop values necessary for global citizenship.

6. Intercultural project for primary schools (2014)

This project was made possible by the participation of the English language Assistant Robert Trevor Markham Harrison, who came to work in La Pampa through the British Council and National Ministry of Education International Cooperation Program. The project was designed by the Foreign Languages Department, Area of Curricular Design, La Pampa Ministry of Education. The aims of the project were to help students become aware about the existence of other languages and cultures, to encourage them to value their own culture and share it with others, to develop intercultural relationships that may help to overcome prejudices and stereotypes associated with other languages and cultures and to develop values related to citizenship education through an intercultural dialogue.

The schools that participated in the project included Normal School 256 from Santa Rosa, Schools 4 and 218 from Santa Rosa, Primary Boarding School 73, Utracán, and Primary Boarding School 176 from Chacharramendi. The British Council Language Assistant helped teachers and students at each school with the implementation of the project for a period of around two to three weeks at each school. The projects were planned taking into account students' level of English. The language assistant participated in planning meetings and lessons, helped children edit materials and shared his own presentations with the students. The materials produced in class were shared face-to-face with the local education community or virtually (i.e. with blogs) in the schools.

The projects were centered on topics based on the intercultural aspects present in the NAP, ideas from the British Council "Connecting Classrooms" Project and Corbett's Intercultural Language Activities (2010).

- At school number 4 students developed a project around the topic of peace called *Can we make the world a better place?* It was part of an intercultural multi-disciplinary project at school and students reflected upon the value of peace and produced posters with messages according to their level of English.
- At school number 256 students exchanged Power Point presentations about Festivals in Argentina and in the UK (sixth year) and about wild animals in both countries (fifth year).

- At school 176 from Chacharramendi students produced descriptions of objects found at an iconic place in La Pampa: “Pulpería de Chacharramendi” and took the assistant on a guided tour of the place. The assistant made a presentation about the city of York. Students also described typical animals from their area, exchanging pictures and descriptions with the ELA (English Language Assistant).
- At boarding school 73 in Utracán students discussed aspects about life on a farm in Argentina. They showed the ELA the vegetables grown in an orchard, how to prepare our typical drink, mate, and performed typical folk dances from our area.

7. Assessment of the project

The project was assessed in two of the participating schools: number 4 and number 256. The information was drawn from the recorded interviews with the directors and the English teachers and also from surveys based on the following criteria:

Criteria	Excellent	Very Good	Good	In need of Improvement
Students' Motivation				
Contribution to Learning				
Development of a didactic sequence associated with school syllabus				

Students were also asked to complete written surveys with the following questions and format:

	Yes, explain why.	No, explain why.
Did you like the Project with Robert?		
Why?		
What did you learn about Robert's country?		
Did you find similarities/ differences with our country? Which ones?		

8. Results

The results of the interviews and surveys completed by the teachers and the directors of studies were highly positive in terms of contributions to students' motivation; in their opinion, the different didactic sequences developed were meaningful in the implementation of the school syllabus and the students' learning was enhanced in terms of output since they produced written texts and oral presentations of good quality.

Students' survey results were richer as regards the analysis of the intercultural experience but they were restricted to only two of the four schools. Of the 46 protocols analyzed from Normal School 256 and School 4, all the students reacted positively to the project. In terms of learning, some of them were surprised about the existence of trains in England, as this means of transportation is not common in their own towns; they mentioned that they could compare different wild animals, clothes, festivals, flags in both countries.

In the assessment of similarities and differences between both countries, however, at Normal school 256 there were unexpected results in some of the surveys, such as a more positive evaluation for the foreign culture with answers such as the following: "they have many more things" or "their country is better because they have a queen". These data contradict the aim of the intercultural project in terms of the students' regarding the foreign culture as superior and deserve further analysis, in particular of English teachers' roles as mediators within the intercultural teaching perspective.

9. Conclusion

This article has described an Intercultural English Project carried out in 2014 in different primary schools in La Pampa province. The aim of the project was to foster intercultural exchanges among the students and the ELA from the UK. The focus on primary schools is innovative and the empirical data gathered show that there was a positive impact on students' motivation and learning. However, the role of teachers as cultural mediators needs to be further assessed as some of the data indicate unwanted views on the part of the students, mainly related to the consideration of the foreign culture as superior to their own.

Further research and more interdisciplinary projects are needed to help put the intercultural approach into practice in primary school classrooms.

Notes

1 The translation is the responsibility of the author of this article.

2 The translation is the responsibility of the author of this article.

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Law students behind avatars: Virtual worlds in an ESP course

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1. Introduction

Learning ESP (English for Specific Purposes) is becoming increasingly spread in university contexts, using physical and technological resources that may enhance, regulate and give dynamism to the learning process. Among such technological resources, we can mention a game called *Icivics*, which is a virtual platform organized in a variety of games. This research is based on two virtual worlds or metaverses called *Do I have a right?* and *machinima movie storm*. I will show how 22 Law students from Santo Tomás University in Tunja, Colombia interacted with these two metaverses and whether they influenced their reading strategies used to solve simulated cases of constitutional law.

2. Problem statement

My guiding question was: To what extent Law students from Santo Tomás University used reading strategies, through metaverses to improve their skills in the application of constitutional law? Through this study, I intended to involve students in the metaverses or virtual worlds in order to promote the development of reading skills and the application of knowledge about Law. Besides, by means of this investigation, it could be evidenced how the game titled *Do I have a right?* of *Icivics* and *movie storm machinima* were assumed as well as the student's impressions regarding the use of metaverses within an ESP course.

3. Methodology

This is a case study carried out through interviews, a three-month observation period and a questionnaire; all of them supported with students' work. In this way, the instructional design was organized in three guides: In the first one, the students went through the *Icivics* website and described the steps in order to get familiarized with this virtual environment. In the second one, they were asked to analyze the cases presented at the end of this guide, the Law students took a reading comprehension test and finally, in the third guide, the students worked on a project with the tool *machinima movie storm*, creating their cases through avatars, in order for them to apply what they learned from *Icivics*.

4. Theoretical framework

This theoretical framework describes the relevant concepts that supported this research. It included reading strategies, metaverses and English for Specific purposes.

4.1. Reading strategies in virtual worlds

Reading strategies of virtual worlds do not differ in a large proportion from those used in real contexts for example when students are exposed to read a book in English as a foreign language.

Moreover, the analysis of virtual worlds leads us to explore fields that represent real life to such an extent that we are able to apply this knowledge in a profession or discipline in simulated learning environments.

Some reading strategies used in virtual worlds are:

- **Skimming:** This reading strategy implies going fast through the text.
- **Scanning:** This strategy implies searching for specific information.

- **Inference and context:** (...) the context is always existing, but turns its permanently set in the update of information by the reader at the time of reading. (...) Moreover, the inference can be defined as information that is activated during reading, explicitly not included in the text. (Aznárez, 2012, p.3)
- **Selection, analysis and evaluation of information:** On the Internet, the access to information required skills to use search engines, surf on a website and choose itineraries by using hyperlinks. (Zayas, 2013 p. 1)
- **Hypertext navigation:** The texts we read on the net are usually hypertexts; they consist of multiple texts, connected by hyperlinks leading to other parts of the same site or external documents. The texts connected by hyperlinks may have different formats: writing, images, audios, videos, etc. The hypertext has no fixed limits as the printed text: it is the reader who develops a personalized way". (Zayas, 2013 p. 1)
- **Interpretation of multimodal messages:** Digital media allow you to combine in a single message different ways of representing the information and knowledge: writing, audio, image, video (Zayas, 2013 p. 1).

The previous reading strategies were carried out by using two metaverses or virtual worlds which are described in the section below.

4.2.Metaverses/ Virtual worlds

According to Center for Financial Studies (2012) metaverses are virtual 3D environments, where avatars interact socially and economically through software in a space that becomes a metaphor for the real world, but without any physical limitation. "(p.3)

- **Icivics:** It is a non-profit organization which promotes interactive teaching and learning of civil law based on the constitution of the United States. This idea was created in order to give students the tools to participate in a democratic world. In this project, I worked on constitutional law related to the virtual game: *Do I have a right?*, in which Law students at the University applied their knowledge to understand how the legal system worked and the best solutions for the cases. (Icivics, 2013, p.7)
- **Movie-storm (machinima):** According to Moviestorm Ltda "it is a real-time 3D software for creating animated films, using technology *machinima*." (p.1).Currently, this virtual software has been used in the educational field by students of different educational levels to recreate everyday situations, using avatars that allow them to have another identity.

4.3. English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

Fiorito(2005) defines ESP as follows:

ESP students are usually adults who already have some acquaintance with English and are learning the language in order to communicate a set of professional skills and to perform particular job-related functions. An ESP program is therefore built on an assessment of purposes and needs and the functions for which English is required. (para. 1)

5. Results and discussion

5.1. Using metaverses and its applicability in an ESP course in the subject of legal

English: Experiences of students.

In this first experience, the students did not seem very interested in following the guide # 1, most of them began to explore the game without guide # 1 (Figure 1), but some problems arose regarding the use, as the tool is in English.

Therefore, they did not want to read every step, they just used the tool but then, they decided to complete the guide # 1 in order to understand the game. In this way, some students asked and others returned to this guide, in order to first explore it and which asked them to describe each step of the serious game called *Do I have a right?*

By developing the guide # 1, they could understand the use of the metaverse in a meaningful and effective way. What follows is one of the guides described by a law student; I used initials for anonymity. In guide # 1, the student P. R. described each of the steps of the game.

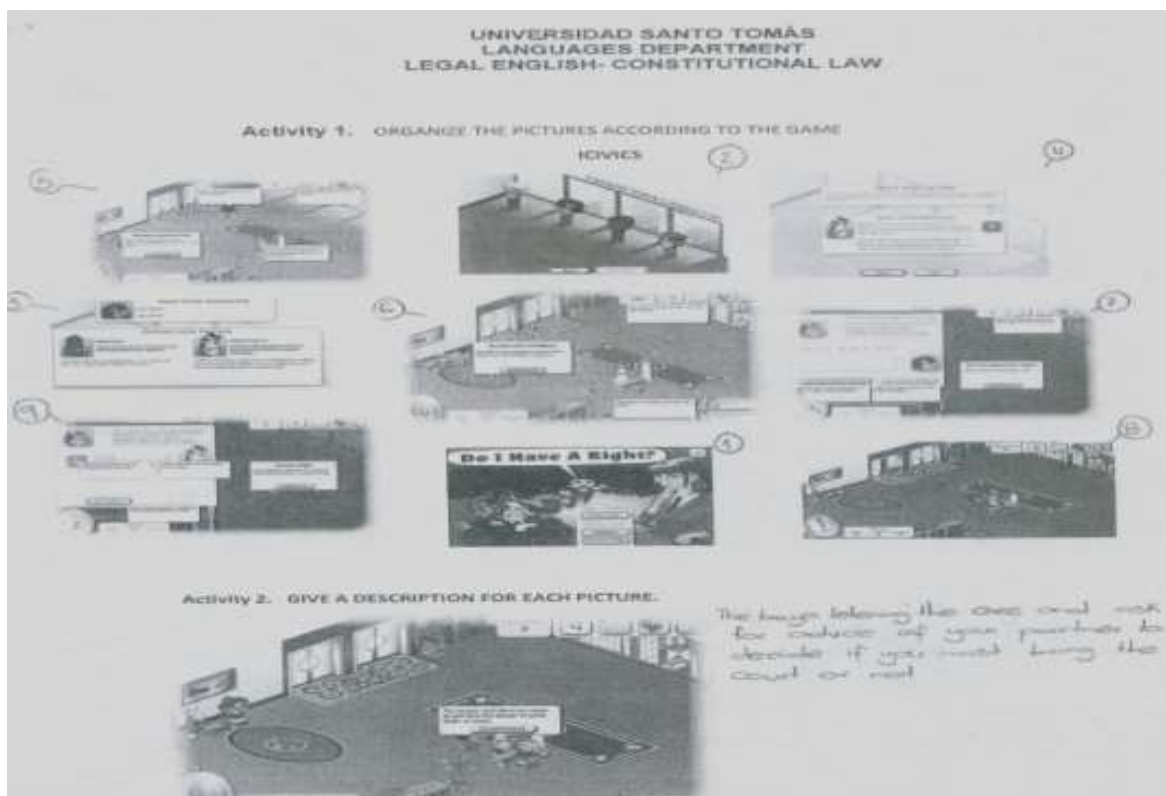


Figure 1. Guide # 1. Game: Do I have a right? (Icivics).

The student P. R. through the work of the guide # 2 had to organize the steps of the game and then describe them in the activity 2. The exercise was carried out correctly and allowed students to understand the use of the game *-Do I have a right? of Icivics* by choosing a character or avatar.

Overall, students described the steps of the game in the guide and, although seven of them had some trouble using the game, in the end, the guide led them to more effectively understand the game *Do I have a right? of Icivics*. I interviewed 10 Law students who reflected about their views of the game:

L.S.: "o sea muchas veces en la vida real nos encontramos con eso, no? Los usuarios se ponen bravos ehh porque uno no los atiende rápido[...] se parece a la vida real, muchas veces la gente cree que tiene la razón.

Extract 1. Interview.

In the questionnaire, students also expressed their opinions; Thus, I wanted to corroborate the information from the interview:

P.Q.: si, yo aprendí a usar herramientas virtuales y recrear situaciones cotidianas, aportan para aquellos quienes nunca habían tenido esta oportunidad.”

Extract 2. Interview.

As evidenced in the responses, students considered that the game *Do I have a right?* of *Icivics* was a tool that allowed them to explore cases of American constitutional law, also they compared this game to the Colombian context and measured their knowledge in their discipline through the use of English for specific purposes, However, the problem was that the game made them read fast.

In the guide # 2 of the game called *Do I have a right?*, they must read analytically cases described in the guide and then, complete a comparative table with the cases of the Colombian context and, how the law applies regarding comparative constitutional law in the United States and the Colombian context, in this way, Law students were more confident to handle the serious game called *Do I have a right?*

In the second session, students had less difficulty using the program since they appealed to speed reading strategies to solve customer's cases in order to gain prestige within the buffet, thus, if they won this prestige, they could hire other lawyers who served more customers, but as long as the student made the most appropriate decisions according to the program and its structure based on the American context.

The student G.M gave a description about the cases this student explored in the game called *Do I have a right?* of the Icivics website, chose a solution and also made a comparison with the Colombian context from the laws of both countries and expressed an opinion about the two contexts:

Original work. guide # 2	Extract from the original work
<div> <p>Comparison with Colombian Constitutional Law</p> <p>Colombian constitution also protects those rights. It says, on the 20th fl, that every person is guaranteed the freedom to express and talk about their thoughts, beliefs and opinions; And to transmit and receive truthful and impartial information. People can also establish mass media.</p> </div>	<p>Colombian constitution also protects those rights. It says on the 20th article that every person is guaranteed the freedom to express and talk about their thoughts..."</p>

Extract 3. Production-guide # 2.

As evidenced in the work of a student, s/he first described the case of the game *Icivics*, then explained the solution s/he chose and finally, made a comparison with the Colombian context, taking into account some articles of the national constitution and how it works in these specific cases.

Thus, it is noticeable how the cases explored in the American law firm *Do I have a right ?* had solutions that students should select, besides choosing the right lawyer to help in the cases and finally, in the guide # 2, the students should compare it with the Colombian context, showing the similarities and differences.

In the interview the students reflected their views and experiences regarding the two contexts:

N.A.: Es interesante ver ehh cómo en algunos casos es parecido a los casos de cualquier parte del mundo. Lo único diferente es las sanciones y el trato a los delitos.

Extract 4. Interview.

In all three data collection instruments such as the interview, the questionnaire and the observation supported by the work of the students, they did a comparative analysis of the cases and recognized the similarities and differences of the two types of legislation and also their applications in other practical subjects and in general, in real life from the implementation of constitutional law.

After several sessions using the platform *Icivics*, the students made use of the game more quickly and effectively. This practice made them enjoy the game and gain more prestige as lawyers in the game. In the end, Law students, mostly had a mastery of the game and wanted to have a similar scenario in other subjects to be applied, as they expressed it. At the end of the course, the Law students worked on a project related to another metaverse called *movie-storm machinima*.

This project involved the use of *movie storm machinima* as a metaverse for a project in 3D, where students contextualize the Colombian context through similar cases learned in their profession. They were asked to do a project with the metaverse called *movie storm machinima*, where they chose an avatar, created a scenario and wrote a script, presenting a case and its solution, keeping in mind the Colombian law. In this way, they could apply what they learned in the virtual Course of the subject called Legal English 1. What follows

is one of the projects created by the students exploring a murder case and how the rules work according to the Colombian law.



Figure 2. Project in machinima.

As I observed, at first, even though the teacher explained the use of the program and a tutorial on the use of the metaverse *machinima*, it was not easy for them to use the software because they had to read in English all time, which made it a bit more complex to understand. In addition, they had to repeat several times the scenes, as the pronunciation should be improved and they needed to edit several times. The students expressed their opinions in the interview:

O.S.: ...machinima, mediante los avatars (risas) fue divertida aunque un poco difícil de manejar, pues, ya que no lo habíamos usado antes.[...] pero aplicamos lo que sabemos de nuestra carrera del derecho...

Extract 5. Interview.

5.2. Reading strategies and technical English used by Law students in the use of virtual tools

The reading strategies used by Law students to participate in the virtual environment *Icivics* on constitutional law were as follows: navigating through hypertext, where the students in Activity # 1 first registered for the game. It was not easy for them, because in the first instance, the use of the website, entirely in English, took them longer to explore and did not know where to begin. For this reason, they required the help of the teacher because the reading of hypertext in the virtual platform called *Icivics* has several elements that are not presented entirely sequential; however, players choose their own route to follow.



Figure 3. Screen Do I have a game right?

One of the tools students used to read hypertext was *Google translator* to check the meaning of some words and the dictionary called *Linguee* for them to contextualize the constitutional law cases shown in the game. But first, they had to read the instructions and try to understand them by implementing reading strategies, seen in face to face classes such as skimming and scanning in order to extract the most relevant and specific instructions. To help Law students to understand the organization of the *Icivics* website, they worked on

guide #1. In this guide they organized the images according to the game and understood how to work more significantly. Furthermore, in activity # 2 students had to describe each stage of the game. They developed it consistently and without major complications in terms of understanding and use of English.

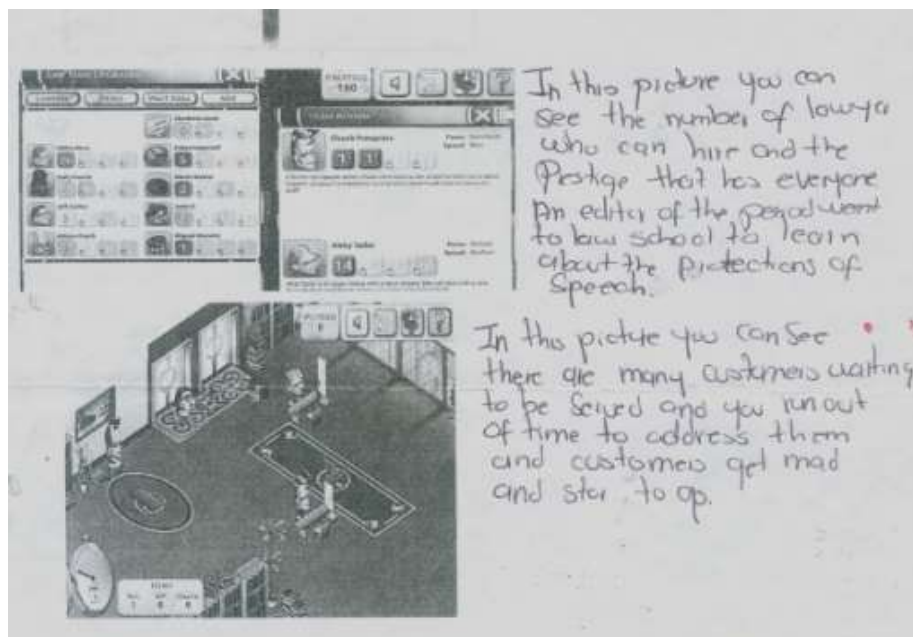


Figure 4. Production-guide # 1.

Student N.C. expressed that the game *Do I have a right? of Icivics*:

N.C: Es un juego muy didáctico, muy creativo, de fácil acceso y sencillo de manejar“(...) que se podría manejar en otras asignaturas”.

Extract 6. Interview.

According to N.C, the game was not complex and also highlighted the importance of these virtual spaces or metaverses simulating the application of his/her career in real life. Similarly, other students said:

R.M.: Sí porque me permitió indagar, experimentar y lograr comprender mejor las utilidades que le genera saber sobre las herramientas virtuales.”

Z.A.: Aquellos brindaban explicaciones claras las cuales puedo aplicar posteriormente”.

W.J.: Se dio una explicación por parte de la docente, y en la página web también, sobre cómo usarla.

Extract 7. Questionnaire.

As experienced by students, reading hypertext is not as simple as it seems, because as Zayas (2013) states "they should interpret multimodal messages ..." The same content flows through very different channels and takes many forms at the reception point" (...) and readers tend to establish connections among dispersed media content (p.10). Therefore, the 22 Law students using the game *Do I have a right?* of *Icivics* and *machinima* had to use reading strategies which interpreted multimodal audio messages, writing, images and video, how to connect to these tools in a web page and follow non-linear hypertext, but it is important to know how to explore this type of reading more effectively allowing users to access information and select it to achieve the objectives proposed in each e-learning activity.

Regarding the use of ESP, in general, students of legal English read and understood the cases, although they had to check some technical terms or asked the teacher or classmates. Grammatically, the students did not consider the use of the third person in their written production, their primary objective was the understanding and interpretation of texts

to communicate what they experienced in the game and being able to give their own application of constitutional law in the Colombian context.

6. Conclusions

Icivics and *machinima* are two metaverses that support and complement the English with specific purposes classes; in this case, they helped Law students apply their knowledge of constitutional law, using technical English. These virtual tools allowed both teachers and students to promote opportunities for simulating real situations and how they are challenged to solve cases that resemble those of everyday life in a particular area of knowledge.

Reading in a virtual environment (hypertext) has features that vary in relation to reading books because as Zayas stated (2013), "[i]t is the reader who chooses an itinerary" (p.8). For this reason, reading hypertext leads students to create their own itinerary to explore texts, images and videos according to their interpretation and possible learning styles. Law students relied on various reading strategies such as skimming, scanning, access, selection, analysis and evaluation of information, and hypertext navigation.

The implementation of metaverses in English for specific purposes courses made legal English students use the foreign language and find solutions to the cases presented in the game *Do I have a right?* of *Icivics* and, finally, the creation of a project for the implementation of constitutional law by means of the metaverse *movie storm machinima*, in which students applied what they learned in the course and what they already knew about their profession, along with the search for information, in order to achieve a more meaningful and contextualized learning in the area of legal English.

The use of technological tools must be seen not only as a way to supplement or make ESP classes more didactic and interactive. This also suggests the learning of how to select, analyze and evaluate information, in addition to the use of different sources the reader should value and know how to recognize if the information comes from a reliable source.

Law students used reading strategies when working with virtual tools or metaverses such as: *Icivics* and *Movie storm machinima*. In this research, an interview, a questionnaire and observation supported with student work were the instruments utilized for data collection, which allowed the investigator to collect accurate information about reading strategies used by students in the implementation of metaverses.

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Formulaic sequences involving ‘fact’ in EAP production: A corpus study¹

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1. Formulaic sequences in EAP written production

A ‘formulaic sequence’ (Wray, 2002) was originally defined as “a sequence, continuous or discontinuous, words or other elements, which is, or appears to be, prefabricated: that is, stored and retrieved whole from memory at the time of use, rather than being subject to generation or analysis by the language grammar” (p. 9). Irrespective of the number of different definitions that have since been put forward to redefine the term, Ellis (2008) and Wood (2010) coincide that they are central to the expression of concepts and textual relationships in efficient and effective communication. Evidence of the pivotal role formulaic sequences play is the vast repertoire of memorized, prefabricated strings present in native speaker language (Erman & Warren, 2000).

Recently they have gained more importance in EFL since their acquisition by non-native language learners has been shown to present difficulties which may be a hindrance to the development of fluency in natural language use (Coxhead, 2008; Schmitt, 2010; Schmitt, Dörnyei, Adolphs & Durow, 2004).

Previous research into the importance of these strings of words in EAP has shed light on different sequences used by learners or ‘apprentice writers’ (Römer & Arbor, 2009) as

compared to both native and non-native expert writers' use. Studies like those by Biber (2006), Henderson and Barr (2010), Neff van Aerselslaer (2008), and Oshima and Hogue (2004) claim that EAP learners' writings display certain characteristics that are not altogether present in expert academic journals.

Many researchers have used corpus-based linguistics to compare native speakers' versus non-native learners' use of strings to identify differences between these two populations (Nesselhauf, 2003, 2005; Siyanova & Schmitt, 2008). The present paper is one such case.

2. The study

The purpose of this study is to characterize how the noun "fact", typical of academic writing contexts (Barry, 2011; McCarthy & O'Dell, 2008), is employed in formulaic sequences (FSs) involving clusters like *the fact that*, *a well-known fact* and *the fact is that*, and compare these expressions to instances found in the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* or *COCA* hereafter (Davies, 2008). This study will analyse the uses of these FSs in *COCA*'s academic subcorpus, which will constitute the 'expert' corpus of reference (EC).

To this end, a database of 237 written texts (114,514 words in 5,176 sentences) was studied by means of *Wordsmith Tools 6.0* (Scott, 2015) in search of the most frequent FSs involving *fact*. Learners from cohorts between the years 2008 – 2014 were asked to write 300-to-500-word essays (mean 358.54, Std: 202.28) about any topic of a list of thesis statements provided. The first practical assignment was used to compile the learner corpus (LC).

Participants in the study were 237 EFL students who took the annual subject English IV, for the Teacher-Training and Translation Courses at Facultad de Lenguas (Universidad Nacional del Comahue) and who gave a written consent for their written production to be used for research purposes. Their age varied between 21 and 34. The LC represents a cross-sectional sample of the initial written performance of learners taking this course in this particular EFL university setting.

Following Gillett (2011)'s definition of EAP in terms of Robinson's (1991) criteria for ESP, their production is considered as belonging within the realms of EAP because of a) the university setting in which they acquire the target language, b) the type of courses they are taking (teaching and translation), and c) the text-types and task-types they are required to submit during the course.

2.1. Analysis of formulaic sequences with 'fact'

Wordsmith Tools 6.0's (Scott, 2015) was predetermined to identify recurrent clusters made up of between three to eight words in the learner corpus. Due to the size of the corpus, the frequency required was established as three or more times (Scott, 2001). Those involving *fact* were manually selected. Concordance lines were sought using the software's tool *concordance* and frequent FSs around *fact* were identified, and their number of instances, summarized in Table 1 below.

Clusters in the learner corpus	
<i>the fact that</i>	115
<i>it is a well-known fact</i>	10
<i>the fact of</i>	10
<i>the fact is that</i>	5
Total	140

Table 1. Number of instances per cluster involving fact in the learner corpus.

In section 3, we analyse the 140 concordance lines obtained and present longer formulaic sequences recurrently used by these learners.

3. Results and discussion

The detailed study of the concordance lines in LC obtained for each of the clusters has led to a characterization of their use. In Table 2 the occurrences of each of those clusters (N) are presented for both the LC and the EC. In the latter, we have included those appearing in the academic subcorpus and in the general *COCA* (Davies, 2008), given that a more accurate comparison may highlight certain patterns of use and reveal similarities and differences between learner and expert use².

3.1. *the fact that*

This 3-word string, which is by far the most frequent in LC, participates in much larger sequences which appear quite recurrently. As illustrated in Table 2, the first eight FSs are the most recurrent in this corpus –shaded in white in the table- and, for all of them, learner use seems to imitate expert use as evinced in the high number of their occurrences in *COCA* Academic. Examples from the learner corpus are offered below for the causative function (1) and (2), *due to the fact that* and *owing to the fact that*. The use of the latter, though much less frequent in the general *COCA* and in the academic subcorpus, might indicate a slight degree of overuse on the part of these learners.

- (1) at in many cases they keep up the pretence **due to the fact that** they have fear of speaking publicly

(2) use them without disturbing other people **owing to the fact that** we can use headphones which are usef

<u>Formulaic sequence</u>	<u>Learner</u> <u>corpus</u> (114,514 words)	<u>COCA (450 million words)</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>General</u>	<u>N</u> <u>Academic</u> (within general)
the fact that	115	49860	12822
due to the fact that	31	633	372
owing to the fact that	3	28	8
despite the fact that	6	2627	98
in spite of the fact that	5	362	127
(be) aware of the fact that	7	262	57
conscious of the fact that	1	65	20
Has/have to do with the fact that	4	113	50
related to the fact that	3	83	51
connected to the fact that	1	8	3
given the fact that	1	689	172
stems from the fact that	0	200	100
results from the fact that	1	21	15
illustrated by the fact that	1	27	22
shown by the fact that	1	19	14
consider the fact that	2	111	27
considering	1	100	23
bearing in mind the fact that	1	2	1
bear in mind	1	4	0
it is a well-known fact that	11	46	4
the fact of	10	2609	370
the fact is that	3	1977	220

Table 2. Comparison between instances of FSs in the learner corpus and COCA.

Two other FSs which present a contrast are used by learners: both *in spite of the fact that* (3) and *despite the fact that* (4) appear a similar number of times in LC (6 and 5

occurrences, respectively), resembling expert use in the academic subcorpus of *COCA* (cfr. 127 and 98 each).

(3) of our country, it has been going on **in spite of the fact that** mining laws forbid it.

As it seems t

(4) are what make us good and decent people. **Despite the fact that**, nowadays, everyone seems to look at

The formulaic sequence *(be) aware of the fact that* is exemplified in (5), together with its variation *(be) conscious of the fact that*, both of them used in similar proportions as those found in *COCA*, a sign of learner sensitivity to expert preference.

(5) on the contrary, a lot of consumers **are aware of the fact that** most of the products they buy are ma

In (6) the FS *has/have to do with the fact that* is exemplified to offer a connection between two factors or behaviours and as an explanation for these phenomena.

(6) One of the main issues of this problem **has to do with the fact that** people, in this case women, are constantly exposed (*sic*) to daily TV programmes, fashion m

Learner use of this FS mirrors that of native speakers. Similar in function are two other sequences encountered in LC: *(be) related to the fact that* (7) and *(be) connected to the fact that*. The latter is neither frequent in LC or *COCA*, and in fact, learners should perhaps be discouraged from using it altogether.

(7) Another reason why it is important to have a counselor at university **is related to the fact that** students become more independent when starting university

Three infrequent FSs in LC present a resultative expression whose use should be encouraged due to the high number of occurrences in *COCA* academic (shaded in light grey in Table 2): *given the fact that*, *result from the fact that*, and *stem from the fact that*. While there is one instance of each of the first two in LC, illustrated in (8) and (9) respectively, the third is entirely absent from it, while particularly frequent in the academic subcorpus of *COCA*.

(8) le for creating a bad influenced on society **given the fact that** most people have damaged their own h

(9) rcise nor eat healthy. These problems **result from the fact that** the vast majority of students avoid

These FSs could perhaps be offered as alternatives to the very frequent *due to the fact that*, and thus make learners' written production richer, more varied and adequate for EAP writing standards.

In order to present examples of the issues raised in their essays, learners have resorted to an instance of each of the following FSs, imitating expert use as evinced in *COCA*:

(10) ce on adolescents. **This is clearly illustrated by the fact that** young girls are at an age in which t

(11) super thin means being healthy. **This is shown by the fact that** the members of the fashion industry

Another typical FS, which is quite recurrent in *COCA* and which appears in LC, is the frame that involves *[adj](be) the fact that*. Learners have made attempts at using these strings as shown in (12) and (13) below:

(12) y difficulties. **Equally relevant to this issue is the fact that** children are also negatively influen

(13) object to be perfected. Perhaps **most alarming is the fact that** media images of female beauty are un

These FSs are indicators of a more developed formulaic competence because of the modification in the canonical word order they display. In *COCA*, however, this frame is introduced by adjectives like *significant*, *surprising*, *disturbing*, *disconcerting*, and *remarkable*, among others, whose acquisition should be fostered in learner academic writing.

Some other FSs that introduce the 3-word cluster present in LC and frequent in *COCA* are *highlight the fact that*; *hold true to the fact that* and *take issue with the fact that*, of which one example has been encountered. In the expert subcorpus these FSs appear with a very high frequency rate (65, 69 and 115 respectively), which might point to the need to include them in learners' repertoire of academic formulaic sequences.

Certain differences discovered between LC and *COCA* academic are related to what learners have actually *not* used in the company of *the fact that*. The most frequent collocates, apart from the typical function words, in the expert corpus for this cluster include verbs such as *reflect*, *ignore*, *evidenced*, *derive* and *reinforce* in their varied forms, and none of them occurs in LC. Instruction on the use of such verbs would benefit EAP learners.

Among the few divergences found between learner and expert FSs involving the three-word cluster under study, we have discovered the inadequate use of *bear in mind the*

fact that, which is scarce not only in the academic subcorpus but also in the general *COCA* (see Table 2).

The comparison between corpora has also shed light on some problematic issues such as mistakes in the LC related to subject position of the cluster under analysis, generated by anticipatory ‘it’, as in of (14).

(14)*First of all, **it must be considered the fact that** (*sic*) learners are not isolated.

They are parts of groups of students that attend to the sam

Even if this type of error is typical of EFL learners (Hewings and Hewings, 2002), it is precisely the insertion of the cluster in question that is conducive to this type of mistake.

3.2. It is a well-known fact that

This FS appears overwhelmingly frequently in LC (11 occurrences). In comparison with the academic subcorpus of *COCA*, this is the only case of the FSs analysed where there are more instances in the learner than in the expert corpus. This phenomenon probably shows overuse on the part of learners, who most likely have perceived this FS and its frequency in the input while unaware that, as part of its restrictions, it is not typical of academic discourse, and have thus generalized its use to cases where it is not common.

3.3. the fact of

This is a quite frequent FS in LC and its use reflects that in *COCA*. Learners, as well as native speakers resort to it to introduce the subject of their utterance as illustrated in (15)

(15) Is on TV create on normal-sized women. Sometimes, **the fact of** wanting to be very slim becomes a dang

3.4. *The fact is that*

Contrary to findings in *COCA* academic, learner use of this FS is quite infrequent. Though three instances have been found in LC, it might be advisable to draw EAP learners' awareness to the recurrence of this sequence.

4. Conclusions

This descriptive study has investigated some FSs typical of academic discourse which learners at this stage are actually familiar with and use productively. It has also presented evidence of overuse of FSs they take to be frequent, failing to reflect expert use. The analysis has further unveiled mistakes triggered by the use of some of these clusters. The information obtained can serve as a compass to guide teachers in this particular context in their selection and teaching of typical FSs in EAP.

One word of caution is needed here as regards the conclusions that can be drawn from this study. The findings derived from the comparison between *COCA* and our learner corpus may provide us with a few guidelines as to how to develop learners' formulaic competence further. These two databases are not entirely comparable because of the differences in their make-up and size. They do, however, point to similarities and divergences from expert use, which should inform the instruction of FSs in EAP. Authors seem to agree that learners' attention needs to be drawn towards larger strings of words surrounding lexical items, to how recurrent they are in expert texts (Römer and Arbor, 2009) and to which restrictions operate in their possible uses. Through this awareness-raising process, learners can be adequately equipped to produce them in their typical linguistic environments, approximating expert language use (Flowerdew, 2001; Granger and Meunier, 2008; Wood, 2002).

Since this is a cross-sectional, exploratory study that captures four cohorts of language learners' written production at one static point in time and given that the essays compiled were the first in the academic year, further research should explore these students' development of their formulaic competence across time.

Notes

1 This paper is based on the partial analysis of database resulting from the study carried out by Julieta Pérez, the student member of research project J023, "Secuencias formulaicas y su adquisición en estudiantes universitarios de Inglés como Lengua Extranjera", subsidized by Secretaría de Ciencia y Técnica, Universidad Nacional del Comahue.

2 Cells in white indicate coincidence in frequency; light grey highlights FSs which should reinforced through instruction; dark grey signals divergence between corpora.

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ESP: From grammar translation lessons to learner-centred blended learning lessons

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1. Introduction

The main objective of this paper is to present the results obtained in a four-year research work carried out at the Faculty of Exact Sciences, Engineering and Land Surveying (FCEIA), University of Rosario (UNR) where English is taught for Specific Purposes (ESP).

Teaching technical English has become a priority at university level as professionals need to interact effectively in a globalized context where this language is the vehicle for communication. However, the teaching of ESP is generally constrained by the number of hours allotted to the subject in the curricula, which inevitably implies setting objectives based on the students' needs that can be reached within such time constraints. Thus, in many Argentinian universities, reading and translation are prioritized as the skills to be developed.

Another important fact is the tendency observed in many ESP teachers to opt for the presentation and explanation of grammar rules (a feature of Grammar Translation Method) on the belief that this practice can be a useful pedagogical shortcut. The adoption of this teacher-centred approach is boosted by the lack of teaching materials designed to cater for this particular situation. Such practices disregard the fact that students can face cognitive challenges and have an active role in the learning process. As Hutchinson and Waters (2002) state, ESP shares the same principles of effective and efficient learning that may take place when learning any other subject or developing any skill.

In line with this view, the teaching of ESP can be framed within both a sociocultural perspective that highlights the importance of mediation (Lantolf 2000, 2002) and a metacognitive approach which understands teaching as a self-regulating process where the student acts as a protagonist, constructor and administrator of his own learning process (Zimmerman & Shunk, 1989).

Bearing the above considerations in mind, this research work was divided into two main stages, each of which pursued a different objective. The first two years were devoted to the analysis of the effect of the development of metacognitive strategies on the students' efficiency and autonomy. This implied a methodological turnover through the careful design of materials which contextualized the teaching of the language and which implemented an autonomizing approach.

Once the positive impact of the use of this metacognitive approach on the students' performance and autonomy was corroborated, the next two years were devoted to adapt the materials to a virtual environment.

The use of ICTs has given way to numerous studies which analyse different aspects of the learning process mediated by digital tools. Alonso (2005) expresses that this type of learning allows for individual pace and adaptation. Garrison and Kanuka (2004) write about the way in which blended learning fosters deeper reflexion. Benson (2001) highlights the way in which students are provided with opportunities to organize, control and evaluate their own learning process thanks to the use of ICTs. Schwienhorst (2003) centres his observations in positive impact the use of technology has on motivation and autonomy. Kuh and Vesper (2001) emphasize the way in which learning is enhanced if the digital tools are used together with what they call "strong" pedagogical approaches.

In the second stage of this research work, the objective was to analyze the effect that the same autonomizing methodology (previously tested in the first stage of the study) combined with the use of ICTs in a blended learning situation could have on students' performance.

To corroborate the hypothesis proposed for each of the stages two experiments were carried out, both of which included an experimental group and a control group and the collection of data through qualitative and quantitative tools.

2. Method

2.1. Research context and participants

This study was conducted at FCEIA where English is a subject delivered in four months (4 hours a week) in all the engineering undergraduate courses with the objective of developing the skills of reading comprehension and translating.

In the first stage, the universe of study consisted of a total of 103 students, all of them adults whose mother tongue was Spanish and who had basic knowledge of English. The experimental group consisting of 56 students was exposed to an autonomizing methodology while the control group of 47 individuals experienced teacher-centered lessons.

In the second stage of the study, there were a total of 69 individuals with the same characteristics described above. They were divided into two groups: 52 students in the control group and 17 students forming part of the blended learning experience.

2.2. Procedure

In both stages, quantitative tests were administered to both groups. The data obtained in the first stage was used to evaluate the impact of the development of metacognitive strategies on the students' performance and autonomy. The data gathered in the second stage was used to measure the impact the same methodology had on the students' performance if imparted in-class or in a blended learning experience.

The data quantitatively obtained in the experimental groups was supplemented with information drawn from a qualitative test which showed the students' perceptions of their learning experiences at the end of each stage.

2.2.1. Detailed description of the pedagogical strategy followed with the experimental group in the first stage

To carry out the experiment of the first stage a year was dedicated to the generation of materials that implemented an autonomizing methodology. During the following year, classes were delivered using the booklet which presented structures in context through a variety of authentic texts. Once meaning was checked, the students were gradually led to notice the new structure. Next, they were asked to fill in a "language discovery" box which helped them become aware of the semantic, structural and pragmatic aspects of the

structure. This type of box acted as a self-regulating tool that also guided the students to become aware of the differences in behaviour between both English and Spanish. All throughout the booklet the activities suggested were carefully organized in an increasing level of cognitive and metacognitive complexity. The teacher acted as a tutor or guide trying to provide opportunities to reflect upon the strategies used, and gradually transferring control over knowledge and processes to the students.

The experimental group used the material specially designed while the control group was taught grammar explicitly without the use of contexts for presentation.

2.2.2. Detailed description of the pedagogical strategy followed with the experimental group in the second stage

The materials used in the second stage implied redesigning the booklet generated in the first stage so as to upload it to the virtual platform “e-ducativa”. It was decided that the control group would work with the paper version of the whole booklet while those students experiencing blended learning would have a reduced paper version consisting of the contexts for presentation and the language discovery boxes. The rest of the activities for practice would be done on-line. In the experimental group, the teacher dealt with the presentation and discovery of new structures in class and immediately after that she shared the corresponding on-line lesson. Every virtual lesson started with a short introduction written in a somehow informal and friendly way which revised the language items discussed in class. This introduction oriented and organized the students throughout the lesson and included hyperlinks of compulsory activities for practice. Students could advance at their own pace, but internal variables were set up so that they could not skip activities. In this way the increasing order of cognitive demand could be controlled. Some activities in the paper booklet had been transformed using Hot Potatoes (free software) which allowed the inclusion of help buttons that proved ideal to make students notice certain language features and reflect upon them. Another advantage of this software was that students could check their answers, get on-line feedback and re-do the exercises.

In the case of activities that implied complex reading comprehension or translation, the texts and exercises were uploaded as PDF files and were accompanied by the corresponding keys. With the aim of maintaining the same autonomizing approach within these activities as well, an indexed number was added on the words or phrases that were

considered potential problems for the students and the corresponding footnotes helped them reflect.

The activities thus created were distributed in 20 lessons, containing around 200 linked files. Every four lessons there was an on-line self-evaluation which allowed the students to measure their progress. Each lesson was made visible to the students once the new structure had been presented in class and in-class quizzes were periodically taken after the on-line self-evaluation tests had been done. Implementing the virtual class implied a great effort to create a space where knowledge could be constructed through the help of a tutor or guide “invisibly” present thanks to the way in which the material had been carefully organized and designed.

The students’ work, advancement and performance on the site were closely followed up using the tools provided by the platform. The internal means of communication were enabled – e-mail, wikis, forums – to help students ease their doubts.

2.3. Materials and task design

The quantitative test given in the first stage consisted of a written translation of a complex noun phrase which contained structures that did not have any direct equivalence with structures in the L1 (the genitive, hyphenated adjectival pre-modification including a word that can function either as an adjective or a noun, coordinated pre-adjectival pre-modification) and which were expected to force student to make recourse to different strategies. To quantify the degree of control over each of the structures, the students were asked to explain how they had carried out the task. In this way, it was possible to establish the correlation between the degree of explicitness (metacognition) and the degree of correctness when translating. The ultimate aim was to find evidence that a higher degree to reflection and self-regulation would result in a higher degree of autonomy and a better performance.

The groups participating in the second stage were tested three times during the term to measure the students’ performance. The tests consisted of translations and reading comprehension activities. The students had to pass every instance of evaluation to keep on attending.

A qualitative test (an introspective questionnaire consisting of multiple choice questions) was administered to both groups at the end of each stage with the purpose of

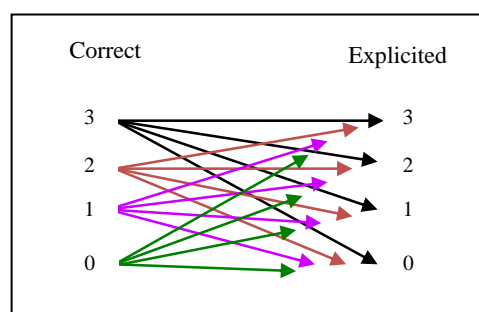
gathering information about the individual perception as for instrumental motivation, personal expectations, the importance of self-regulating instruments, the text types chosen, the methodology to which they were exposed and the teaching medium used (whether digital or paper based).

2.4. Data collection and analysis procedure

2.4.1. First stage

The data collected in the first stage through the translation task was analysed in the following way. First, the number of accurately translated structures by each student was quantified to evaluate the students' performance. Next, the number of times that the students explained the strategy applied to translate each structure was considered to operationalize the independent variable (metacognition). In the case of the structures, it was easy to discern correct from incorrect ones. However, a criterion needed to be previously agreed to decide which explanations were acceptable. Only those explanations that comprehensibly described the strategies used were quantified.

One of the problems encountered was the wide range of possibilities that were opened as a student could have correctly translated the three structures explaining three, two, one or none of the strategies, correctly translated two structures explaining three, two, one or none of the strategies, and so on as it can be seen in Figure 1.



For this reason, it was decided to constitute two categories by unifying in category A those translations containing three or two correct structures since they could be considered as correct or as having a high degree of correctness, and in category B those with one or no correct answers as the final product was incomprehensible.

To analyse the degree of explicitness of strategies, only category A was taken into account for two reasons. The translations in category B did not only have a very low degree of accuracy but also strategies had not been made explicit in most cases.

Next, those students were grouped in category A (three or two correctly translated structures) according to the number of times they had explained strategies. This was necessary to be able to co-relate the degree of explicitness and of accuracy in both groups. This resulted into Category Y, which included individuals who had written three or two explanations and Category Z which had one or no explanations.

The results of the introspective questionnaire from the experimental group were used to gather an in-depth understanding of the students' perceptions and relate them with the results quantitatively obtained.

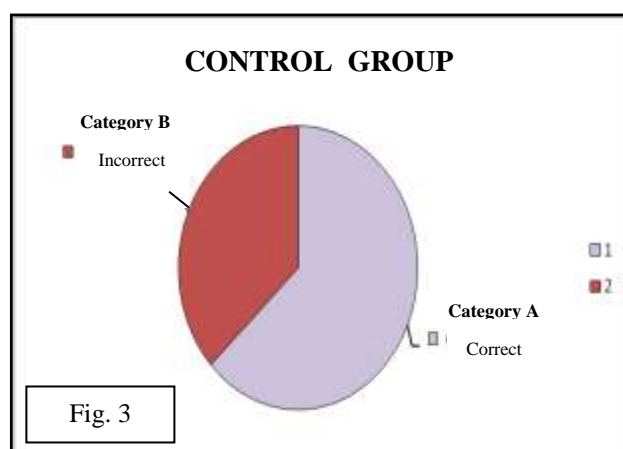
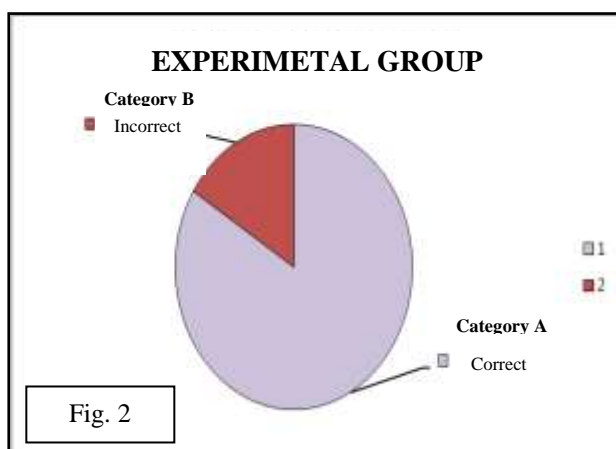
2.4.2. Second stage

In the second stage the data were analyzed considering the number of students who passed the tests or dropped the subject because they had not reached the pass mark in both groups. The qualitative information gathered through the questionnaire from the experimental group was used to interpret the quantitative results.

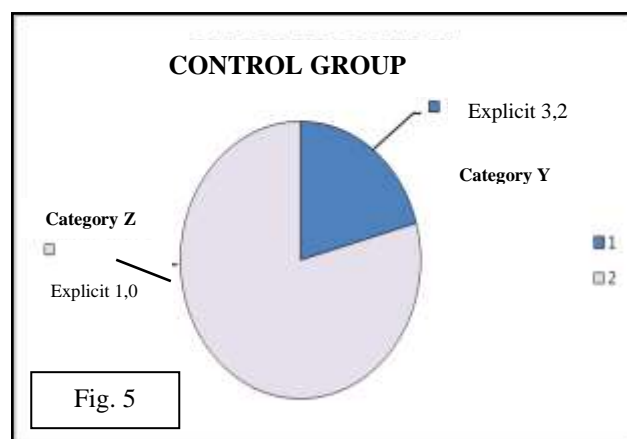
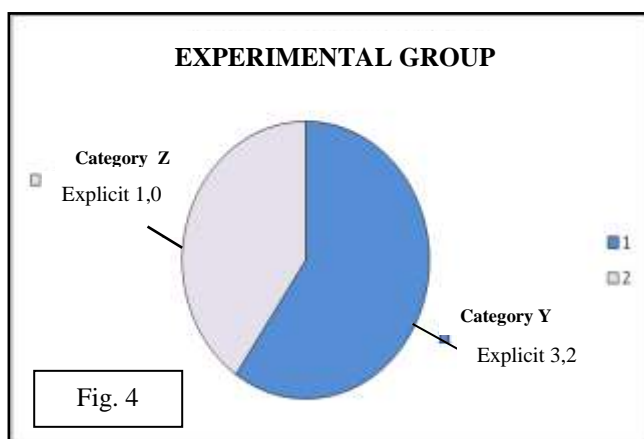
3. Results

3.1. First stage

The quantitative results obtained in the first stage showed that 84% of the individuals of the experimental group had been able to translate with a high degree of accuracy and, therefore, belonged to Category A (Fig.2) while the 16% of the individuals corresponded to Category B. 63% of the individuals of the control group resulted in Category A and 37% in Category B (Fig.3).



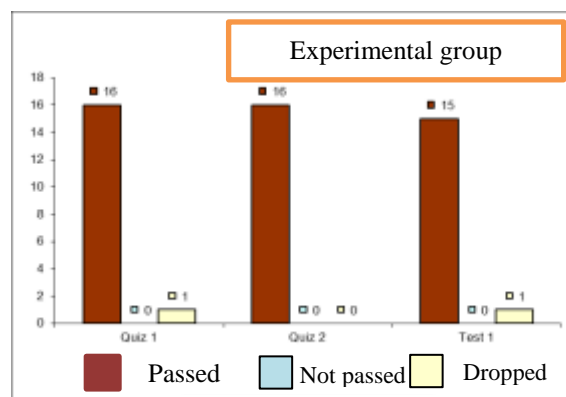
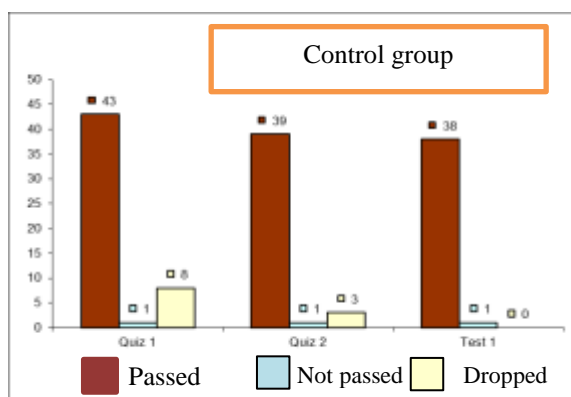
As regards the degree of explicitness, 60% of the individuals of the experimental group were able to explain the strategies used to translate the structures, thus belonging to Category Y. Category Z was made up of 40% of the individuals, who just included one or no explanation at all (Fig.4). The control group had 21% of the individuals in Category Y and 79% in Category Z (Fig.5).



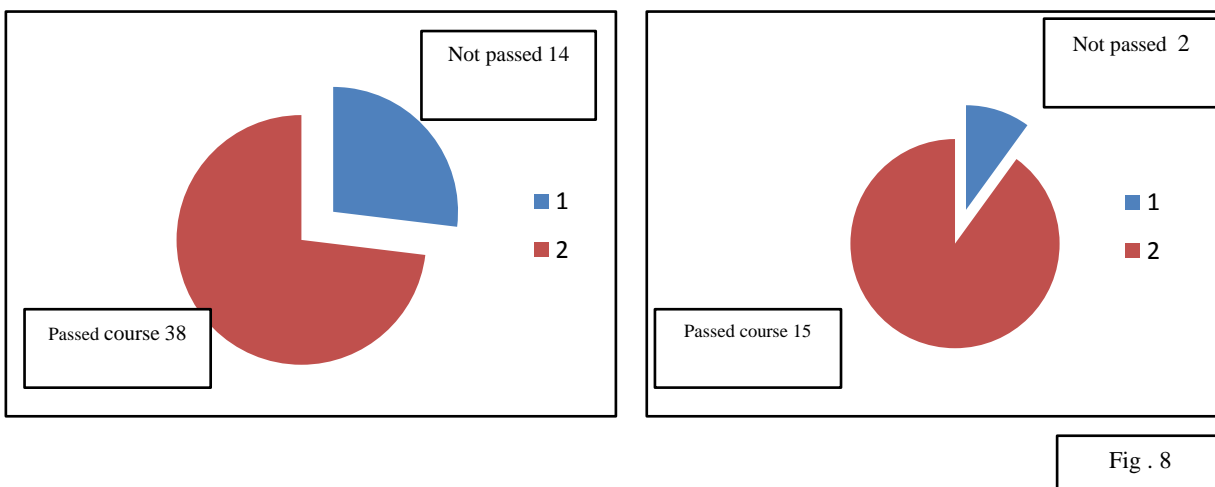
The introspective questionnaire showed that the majority of the students considered the contexts for presentation varied and useful, preferred to be guided to discover the grammar rules and found the self-regulating tools (language discovery boxes) helpful. Almost all the students expressed that their personal achievement expectations were highly fulfilled and found the methodology applied interesting and useful.

3.2 Second stage

The data gathered indicated that the number of students in the control group who attended classes regularly decreased progressively, while the number of students in the experimental group remained almost the same (Fig. 6 and 7).



In Figure 8, it can be observed that 27% of the in-class students did not finish attending the subject while 73% passed the course. Only 11.8% of the students experimenting blended learning classes quit while 88.2% reached the objectives set for the course.



The qualitative results from the experimental group in this second stage were very similar to those obtained in the first stage. As regards the answers to the questions related to the use of the virtual platform, the students manifested that they had rarely had a similar blended learning experience in other subjects. Also, they found the on-line activities and feedback highly profitable and they felt closely scaffolded by the teacher thanks to the frequent use of the communication means enabled. They all stated they would recommend this type of learning.

4. Discussion

The findings corresponding to the first data gathering clearly show that there is a correlation between the development of metacognitive strategies and a better performance as the students of the experimental group outperformed those of the control group in the first stage of this research work. The former group revealed a higher degree of accuracy which was also accompanied by a higher degree of explicitness. The fact that both the teacher and the material designed placed the students of the experimental group in the centre of the teaching-learning process and assigned them the role of protagonists,

constructors and administrators of their own learning process could be the most plausible explanations for such findings.

The use of ICTs combined with the autonomizing methodology, whose effectiveness had been proved, showed a better performance of those students who underwent this experience. The difference with the results obtained by the control group could be explained in terms of the features that characterize the use of ICTs. The students could study at their own pace, could ease their doubts, received personal feedback, and were given opportunities to organize, control and evaluate their own learning process.

5. Conclusion

The results obtained after the four-year research work are encouraging and promising. We conclude that the use of an autonomizing methodology that fosters the development and continuous use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies has a positive impact on learning process and that it can be enhanced through the use of ICTs resulting in better student performance, higher degree of motivation and autonomy. These findings, though still preliminary, allowed us to assess the potential of the ICTs when combined with a methodology that fosters metacognition and opens the way to further research.

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Using ICTs to improve perception skills in EFL listening

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1. Introduction

Two areas in ESL/EFL listening in need of further research are successful perception activities and ways in which ICT can be used to teach L2 listening (Vandergrift, 2011). Listening is considered the most difficult skill to learn because of its temporal nature, the complexity of the listening processes and the special features of spoken language (Field, 2008; Lynch, 2009; Ur, 1984). Unfortunately, the limited class time and the difficulty of attending to learners' individual problems makes listening a skill that is mainly assessed in the form of true/false, matching or multiple-choice but rarely taught in class. This traditional approach has lately been challenged by a *process approach* (Cauldwell, 2013; Field, 2008a; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Vandergrift, 2011). By progressively guiding ESL/EFL learners into the different skills, strategies and processes needed for different types of listening, L2 listeners can take a more active role and transfer that knowledge to future L2 listening situations (Vandergrift, 2011). The L2 listeners' decoding processes should be focused in the first stages. In fact, many listening comprehension problems are caused by decoding mistakes and that is why perception in non-native speakers "is a skill that is a pre-requisite for understanding" (Cauldwell, 2002, p.3).

This contribution aims at showing how five listening sessions were designed on Moodle 2.3 based on the review of possible activities that aid perception skills and the way in which ICTs have been used to design online listening activities. This small-scale action

research project was carried out with intermediate-level students of English doing the first-year course English Language I at the School of Languages (UNC) and the findings have shown that it is possible to design self-access successful perception activities with different ICT tools.

2. Key issues in ESL/EFL listening for perception and ICT tools

Perception is the main aspect in bottom-up processing (Vandergrift, 2011). Skilled listeners are able to accurately and automatically perceive and decode speech (Field, 2008a). There are four main reasons why perception skills are important for ESL/EFL listeners. First, “the number of homophones and homonyms (...) in English is small, while the number of words which can be confused or misunderstood by inaccurate perception is relatively large” (Ur, 1984, p.12). Second, Field (2008a) strongly suggests that ELT teachers adopting a process approach to listening should focus on their learners’ decoding processes in the first stages of their listening training as many listening comprehension problems are caused by decoding mistakes. Third, there are certain types of listening in which perception skills are essential (Field, 2008a). Finally, English learners of all levels need fast decoding skills to deal with the stream of speech that they may experience outside the classroom (Cauldwell, 2013; Field, 2008a; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005).

These are the most common perception problems faced, especially, by A1/A2 level ESL/EFL listeners:

- **Mishearing:** Ur (1984) states that L2 listeners sometimes do not perceive certain English sounds because they do not exist in their L1 or because they exist with some variation. Mishearing can also be caused because ESL/EFL listeners are not used to the stress, intonation and rhythm of the English system (*ibid*).

- Difficulty in recognizing known words: ESL/EFL listeners may not recognize the spoken form of a known word because of the irregular spelling system of English (Wilson, 2008), because they have probably learned the spoken form in isolation (Field, 2008a; Ur, 1984) or because they get confused with the features of natural speech (Field, 2008a; Ur, 1984; Wilson, 2008).
- Incorrect lexical segmentation: Word segmentation is the identification of word boundaries in connected speech, it is language specific and, thus, the main perceptual problem faced by ESL/EFL listeners (Field, 2008). One of the reasons is that L2 listeners cannot use physical marks to identify word boundaries as it is the case with reading (Lynch, 2009; Wilson, 2008). Word segmentation is also difficult as “smaller words are often embedded in larger ones” as it happens with “man” in “manager” (Field, 2008b, p.37). L2 listeners can also encounter segments that can be divided in different ways such as “a sister/assist her” (Field, 2008b, p.37). Moreover, lexical segmentation is also hindered by sound variations in connected speech due to redistribution, assimilation, elision and reduction (Field 2008a).

To help ESL/EFL listeners overcome these perception problems, different activities that focus on perception skills have been suggested:

- Minimal pairs: Using minimal pairs is a useful way to practice accurate aural perception (Ur, 1984). As L2 listeners have to tell if the sounds in a pair of words are the same or different, they focus their attention on the subtle differences between the sounds of the L2. Field (2008a) recommends designing minimal pair exercises with fairly frequent words and Flowerdew and Miller (2005) recommend

using minimal-pair exercises in context to emulate what happens in real-life listening.

- Working with stressed words: Stressed words are important as, based on the given-new principle, new information is stressed while given or recoverable information is unstressed (Rost, 1990). Moreover, stress is used by native listeners of English for lexical segmentation: as stressed syllables are easier to perceive, native listeners rely heavily on stress to identify words in the stream of speech (Field, 2008a). Stress is also useful for comprehension as content words in connected speech are usually stressed (Field, 2008a; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005).
- Working with unstressed words: In connected speech, function words are usually unstressed and in their weak form (Field, 2008a). Perceiving function words is important for comprehension as they sometimes carry essential information (Cauldwell, 2002; Field, 2008a; Ur, 1984). Contractions are also unstressed and important for meaning building (Field, 2003).
- Dictation: Dictation has an important value for perception skills as it makes L2 listeners practice segmenting speech into words (Field, 2008b). Most importantly, gaps in dictation help students see and focus on their particular perception problems (Lynch, 2009).
- Using transcripts: Transcripts have a great value especially for perception skills as they help analyse the difference between the pronunciation and spelling of words (Wilson, 2008). Features of connected speech and word stress can be noticed with transcripts and L2 listeners can compare what they think they have heard with what has actually been said (*ibid*).

ICTs can aid listening comprehension (Cross, 2014, Guichon & McLornan, 2008; O'Brien & Hegelheimer, 2007) and it can be particularly useful for the development of perception skills. Self-access multimedia can be used to work on perception as “cracking the code of connected speech may demand some intensive individual work on the part of the learner” (Field, 2008a, p.162). By controlling the audio, L2 learners can rehear problematic segments and, thus, overcome perception difficulties (Cauldwell, 2002; Field, 2008a). Specially designed software that focuses on the development of perception skills in ESL/EFL listening is beginning to become available. Hulstijn (2003) has come with *123 LISTEN* which allows listeners to choose the mode of listening to a video or audio. Cauldwell (2013) has introduced an iPad application, *Cool Speech*, which helps students improve their perception skills with different listening and pronunciation activities. However, how ICTs can be used to help ESL/EFL learners improve their perception skills has not been much explored yet (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Lynch, 2009; Vandergrift, 2011).

3. Methodology

As the literature suggests, there are some listening activities that can develop perception skills and ICTs can be used to design and implement them. Therefore, in 2013, a small-scale action-research project was carried out with 15 voluntary EFL students doing the first-year course English Language I at the School of Languages, UNC (Universidad Nacional de Córdoba), Argentina. The course is taught to students doing their 5-year degree in English Language Teaching, Translation or Research. Its goal is to develop the students' macro skills and help them reach a B1 CEFR of English. The participants had to complete five online listening sessions designed on Moodle 2.3 during their winter break in July.

Vandergrift (2007) recommends L2 listening researchers to use more than one method of data collection to get greater insights and add reliability and validity to the research. Therefore, personal journals after each session, the student's records of the online activities, a final questionnaire and pre and post IELTS listening tests were analysed to evaluate and reflect upon the effects of the action. Students could write their journals in English or Spanish and the questionnaire was in Spanish. Inductive coding was used to analyse the journals and the open questions in the questionnaire.

4. Design and implementation of L2 listening for perception activities on Moodle 2.3

Except for session 5, all the sessions had the same structure:

1. A welcome greeting with revision of the previous session, objectives of the session and description of the activities,
2. Listening Activity 1 strategically designed to draw students' attention to the topic of the session,
3. Explanation of the topic with examples from the first activity,
4. Listening Activity 2 with practice of what was taught in the explanation,
5. Revision of the session and suggestions to further practice the topic at different difficulty level.

The type, source, content and delivery of the audios were essential to design appropriate and motivating perception activities (Table 1). The listening sessions 1-3 used graded/scripted audios as "students may learn best from listening to speech which, while not entirely authentic, is an approximation to the real thing, and is planned to take into account the learners' level of ability and particular difficulties" (Ur, 1984, p.23). Sessions 4 and 5 used authentic audios so that students could listen to speech at its normal rate of

delivery and with its typical features of spoken discourse (Field 2008a, Lynch 2009, Wilson 2008). Since the listening sessions aimed at perception skills, the audios were quite short (one to three minutes) and of very good sound quality. Except for the quote which was read at quite fast speech for the purposes of “fast dictation”, all the audios had a normal delivery and only one or two speakers participated in the audios. Speakers using standard British or American English were included. The tapescripts were included at the end of each activity.

LISTENING SESSION	TYPE	SOURCE	CONTENT	DELIVERY
1	scripted	ELLLO	phone message from Mark telling the listener to do some things in his house as he is away	normal speed American English
	scripted	BC LearnEnglish	joke about Sherlock Holmes and Mr Watson	normal speed British English
2	scripted	ELLLO	picture game based on what a hotel receptionist says at check-in	normal speed American English
	scripted	Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab	conversation between a taxi driver and a passenger visiting New York	normal speed American English
3	scripted	One Stop English	conversation between two friends at a clothes shop	normal speed British English
4	authentic	CNN	news report about Pope Francis' visit to Rio	normal speed American English
	authentic	BCC	interview with Prince Harry about the royal baby	normal speed British English
5	authentic	England TV from Visit Britain	short programme about Liverpool's highlights	normal speed British English
	authentic	Skype	short conversation between an English speaker and myself about the Beatles	normal speed British English
	authentic	Skype	John Lennon's famous quote read by a native speaker	quite fast speed British English
	authentic	YouTube	official video clip of The Beatles'	normal speed British English

Table 1. Audios for the listening sessions.

The sessions were sequenced progressively according to their level of difficulty.

4.1. Listening session 1: Sounds often confused or difficult to perceive


The aim of this session was to make students aware of English sounds which are often confused or difficult to perceive by Spanish speakers and to teach students the compensatory strategies “predicting” and “guessing” which would help them overcome perception difficulties throughout the sessions. For Activity 1, students had to listen to the telephone message and choose between two minimal pairs that were selected based on the sound discrimination difficulty that Spanish speakers have and on possible words that collocate in the context (Figure 1). Students then read a short explanation of the English sounds often confused or wrongly perceived by Spanish speakers.

LISTENING ACTIVITY 1: MULTIPLE-CHOICE WITH MINIMAL PAIRS

For this first activity, you will listen to a man called Mark leaving you an important message on the phone.

Please, follow these steps to do the activity:

- 1- First, learn how to use the audio player. To listen to the audio, click on the "play" button and click on the same button to stop the audio. (Para escuchar el audio, hagan click en el botón de play y hagan click en el mismo botón para parar el audio)



If you cannot listen to the audio, click [here](#) to listen to it from its original source
[Audio taken from ELLLO site <http://www.elllo.org/apuj/Games/G011-PhoneCall.html>]

- 2- Read the tapescript below and have a look at the words that you have to choose. Notice that the words are very similar, they are called "minimal pairs" as they differ minimally in one or two sounds. The words are important to understand the phone message correctly so you will have to pay close attention to the audio!!
- 3- Now listen to the audio and choose the word that Mark says. You can replay and pause the audio as many times as you want and you can even listen to specific parts of the audio by dragging the playing cursor. (Pueden escuchar y detener el audio cuantas veces quieran! También pueden arrastrar el cursor para escuchar una parte específica del audio).

Hey, hello. Hey, Oh, man I'm so glad I got you on the phone. This is Mark. Hey, listen, I really need you to do me a favor. I'm in New York. I was supposed to come home but it looks like I need to stay in New York for two more days, so can you help me out?

The first thing I need you to do is to check my mail. I should have a lot of mail. It will be in the front door and it really piles up and I have an important that's coming so can you take that, take the mail out and put it on the kitchen table.

Also, I left enough food and water for my dog to be sure, can you just check and make sure the dog has food and water? And please the dog if you have time. I'm sure he's

Figure 1. Listening activity 1.

The true/false quiz with the Sherlock Holmes' joke gave students the chance of practising what they had learned about confusing sounds and strategies. Students were then offered the tapescript and an explanation about the advantages of using tapescripts. The session finished with links to interactive exercises with minimal pairs confusing for Spanish speakers from the *American English Pronunciation Practice* site and online dictations of letters and numbers from the *Listen and Write* site.

4.2. Listening session 2: Stressed words.

This session aimed at helping students realize the existence, function and importance for stressed words in English. Activity 1 was a listening game with pictures which could successfully be completed if attention was paid to stressed words. Students were then asked to listen to the conversation as many times as needed to complete the tapescript with all the stressed words missing (Figure 2). Next, students learned about stress words in English and practiced noticing stressed words with a multiple-choice with the taxi conversation. Finally, some further listening activities from the [ELLLO](#) and [Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab](#) sites were suggested where listening out for stressed words was essential.

As you may have noticed, you can easily succeed in the activity if you can identify the stressed words in the audio, that is if you can notice the words that are given more prominence (that "stand out") by the receptionist.

Let's listen to the audio again but this time trying to listen out for the stressed words!!

2. Listen to the audio, read the tapescript and fill in the gaps with the missing words. You can use upper or lower case but if you need to write numbers, please, write the numbers using letters (i.e. write "one" instead of "1"). Remember that you can listen to the audio as many times as you want, good luck!

This is the same audio of the listening game: 

Tapescript:

hello ✓! welcome ✓ to the hotel ✓! We have ✓ everything ready ✓ for you. Uh, you've already ✓ checked ✓ in online ✓, so first ✓ let me tell ✓ you about your room ✓. Um, you've order ✗ the delux ✗ room and it comes ✓ with one ✓ large ✓ king ✓ size bed ✓, and uh in your room ✓ we have a work ✓ area with a desk ✓ and chair ✓. Uh, luckily ✓ for you, this room has just ✓ been remodelled ✗ so it has been ✗ furnished ✗ and new wallpaper ✓, so it looks really nice ✓ so you'll have one of

Incorrect
Sorry, wrong answer!
The correct answer is: furniture
Mark 0.00 out of 1.00

OK, here is your room ✓ key ✓ this is a modern ✓ key, so what you need ✓ to do is slide ✓ this into the door ✓ and slide ✓ the key ✓ into the door with the holes ✓ facing ✓ the door and you'll see a light ✓ come on and it'll open ✗ the door, so that's how ✓ you get ✓ in the room.

also ✓, for all guests ✓ we offer one free ✓, complementary ✗ beverage ✓ at the bar ✓, so the bar ✓ is located outside ✓ of the hotel by the pool ✓. It's also near

Figure 2. Gap-filling with stressed words.

4.3. Listening session 3: Unstressed words

This session attempted to raise students' awareness of the existence, function and importance of unstressed words. The session started with a true/false quiz based on the unstressed words of the shop conversation (Figure 3). Students then read about unstressed words and listened to the shop conversation as many times as needed to fill in the gapped tapescript with unstressed words. The further practice section offered a link to a dictation with unstressed contractions from [SpellingCity.com](https://www.spellingcity.com/).

Maggie gets a bit angry with John because he does not want to look at the brand of the girls' jeans.

Select one:

☒ True ✓

☐ False

Check

Well done! She actually insults him in a low voice by saying "spoilsport" which means "someone who spoils other people's fun" (LDOCE) (Spanish: mala onda). You can listen to this at minute 00:32 in the audio.
The correct answer is 'True'.

John thought that Maggie was spending that day.

Select one:

☐ True ✗

☐ False

Check

Sorry, wrong answer! John says "Anyway, I thought you WEREN'T spending today." You can listen to it at 00:40 in the track.
The correct answer is 'False'.

Maggie has to write 800 words for Tuesday.

Select one:

☐ True

☒ False ✓

Check

Well done! Maggie says "I've got an eight hundred-word essay to write BEFORE Tuesday". You can listen to it again at 00:42
The correct answer is 'False'.

Figure 3. True/false with unstressed words.

4.4. Listening session 4: Features of connected speech

This session aimed at helping students realise why recognizing words in fast connected speech can be troublesome and how they could use what they had learned in the sessions to deal with perception problems caused by fast speech. First, students had to watch [the CNN news report about Pope Francis](#) and complete the statements with words from the video. In all the cases, the missing word(s) was/were affected by a feature of connected speech (redistribution, assimilation, elision or reduction). In the feedback, students learned why the pronunciation of the words they were to complete was altered (Figure 4).

In a Rio slum, the Pope shushed rambunctious boys, prayed with them and blessed them ✓.

Well done!

The reporter says "blessed them" but, because the inflection "-ed" is between consonant, the "t" is not pronounced and the /ə/ in "them" is also omitted so you hear /blesəd̩/. This is another example of ELISION in connected speech.

The correct answer is: blessed them

Pope Francis asks the young "Do not lose trust ✓, do not lose hope".

Well done!

The reporter says "not lose trust" but the "t" in "not" is not pronounced because in connected speech, the final "t" in negation is usually omitted when it is not followed by a vowel. This is another case of ELISION in connected speech.

The correct answer is: not lose trust

Because of extreme security, the Pope found it sometimes hard to interact with the ✗ flock.

The reporter does not pronounce the /h/ in "his" and links the words "with" and "his" so what you hear is /wɪðtɪz/ said very fast. This is another example of REDISTRIBUTION, i.e. linking sounds of different words in connected speech

The correct answer is: with his

As pop-artists do, the Pope threw many skull caps ✓ to the crowd.

Figure 4. Gap-filling with features of connected speech.

For activity 2, students had to complete statements about the [BBC interview with Prince Harry](#). Students were then encouraged to read the automatic YouTube subtitles and to compare them with the script to realise that recognizing words in fast speech is difficult even for computers. For further practice, students were offered links to the [Breaking News English](#) dictation site and the interactive dictations of [Chanel N5 commercial](#) and [The Great Gatsby Trailer](#) from the *Listen and Write* site.

4.5. Listening session 5: Consolidation

This final session aimed at helping students revise all the sessions with four listening activities. First, students had to do a multiple-choice activity with the [Liverpool programme](#) from the *VisitBritain* site. Then, students listened to the Skype conversation about The Beatles between their teacher and an English friend to complete a true-false activity based on the exact words said by the native speaker. Activity 3 was a combination of *fast speed dictation* and *dictogloss*: students had to listen and write down a famous quote by John Lennon read quite fast by the native speaker of the Skype conversation. Finally, students had to complete the gaps with the lyrics of The Beatles' song *Here Comes the Sun*. The session ended with some final comments and a call for continuing practicing listening.

5. Results and conclusion

Journals were the most effective way of getting the students' impressions of the sessions.

Most of the participants completed their journals which reflected that:

- They liked learning about English sounds often confused or wrongly perceived by Spanish speakers as it helped them become aware of possible listening mistakes;
- They found filling in the gaps with stressed and unstressed words “fun”, “dynamic” and “challenging”;
- The transition from graded to authentic audios was hard; and
- The perception problems in the last session were easily tackled as they enjoyed the topic (The Beatles).

These reflections were mirrored in the average marks (Chart 1). As the level of difficulty of the listening activities increased with the sessions, the marks decreased

gradually. The difficulty of session 4 caused a sudden drop and the students' motivation in the last session boosted the average mark.

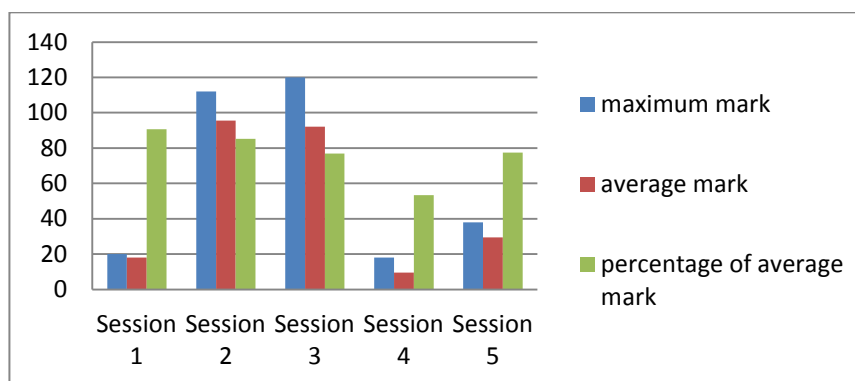


Chart 1. Students' average marks.

In the final questionnaire, all the students stated that they liked the sessions and found them useful (Chart 2). Most felt that, thanks to the sessions, they could recognise words in an audio suitable for their level more easily and were better at identifying the missing words in a gap-filling. However, some students were neutral with the idea of being better listeners thanks to the sessions. This reflects what Field (2008a) anticipates: it is difficult to demonstrate progress in listening in a short period of time and perception is only one of the componential processes that skilled listeners need to master. The students seemed to have enjoyed the benefits of using ICTs to learn listening as they all stated that they liked doing the activities on Moodle. In the open questions, all the students answered that the listening sessions were worth their time and effort because they helped them improve their listening skills, they learned a lot and they enjoyed the activities.

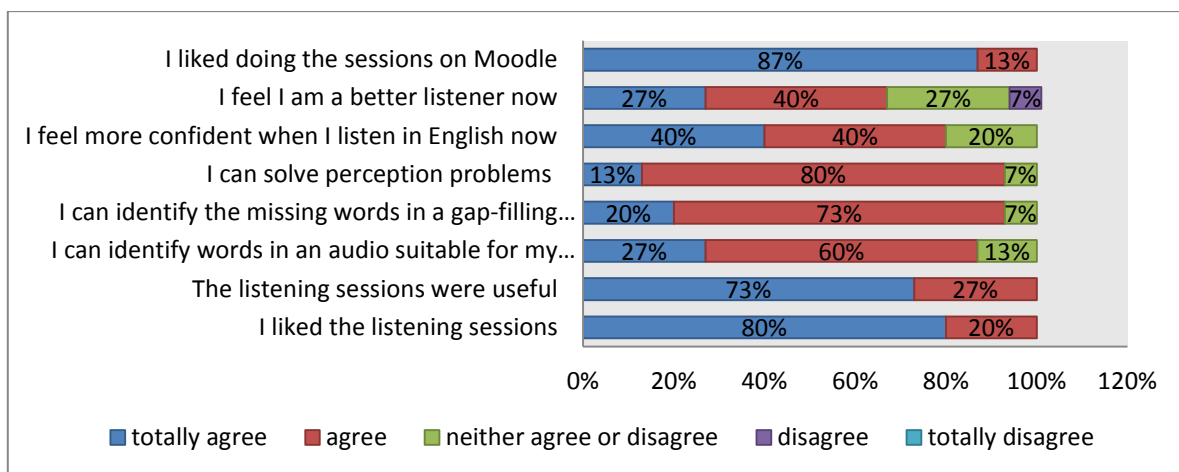


Chart 2. Results of the Likert-scale statements.

Comparison of the average marks of the pre- and post-tests shows that there was a slight improvement in the students' performance (Chart 3).

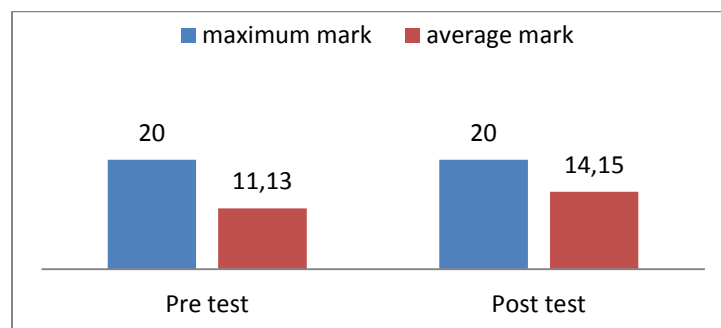


Chart 3. Pre and post test results.

Based on the data collected, it seems that true-false, multiple-choice and gap-filling activities on Moodle that focus on specific words from motivating audios, offer immediate feedback and systematically teach students different aspects to improve perception are quite successful. Future sessions should also include activities that focus on syntactic parsing (Field 2008a), spoken language (Lynch 2009, Flowerdew & Miller 2005), meaning-building (Field 2008a) and useful cognitive and metacognitive listening strategies

(Vangergrift, 2007). In fact, Field (2008a) states that a *process approach* to L2 listening should offer a staged programme where the listening components are targeted systematically and progressively. In this way a listening course on Moodle will be complete as it will make students feel that they have learned the processes, skills and strategies necessary to decode automatically, become better listeners and get ready for the real world once the course is over.

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B-learning in an EFL college class: Creativity, critical thinking and collaboration

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1. Introduction

The current interest in pedagogical applications of digital technologies to language learning is mainly due to an increased awareness of their potential for language learning coupled with the growing number of computers and easier Internet access in many educational contexts worldwide. This is also accompanied by a general increase in computer literacy among teachers and learners. Since the 1980s, issues related to the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) have moved from the margins to the mainstream and at present they are a central concern in SLA research, theory and practice (Chappelle, 2005). This is reflected in the varied body of literature dealing with the potential relationship between ICT and language learning pedagogy.

It is increasingly recognised among researchers and practitioners in Applied Linguistics and SLA that the changes brought about by the introduction of ICT in traditional, face-to-face classroom practices and distance learning programmes should be accompanied by a systematic re-evaluation of the conception of learning and teaching processes. These transformations call for a more flexible curriculum and a new understanding of how knowledge is constructed, as well as an increased focus on

autonomous and collaborative learning. Changes need to be made in areas such as curriculum design, communication modes, class management, teachers' and students' roles, and task design (Chappelle, 2005; Gitsaki, Ya'akub & Honan, 2010). Appropriate uses of networked computers and the World Wide Web can bring about dramatic changes in pedagogical practices and help to improve the quality of higher education (Bender, 2003; Bruffee, 1999; Fitch 2004). Nonetheless, in spite of the alleged benefits of computer-mediated education, there is a need for more in-depth empirical research on the processes of ICT applications to language learning in particular contexts (Beatty, 2003; Chappelle, 2005; Gitsaki et al., 2010). This research seeks to yield insights into how best to use new technologies in different language learning settings in an integral way. As regards university settings, Web-based learning is still not a common practice in higher education around the world, and Argentinian universities are no exception (Lion, 2006; Salbusky, 2007). The pedagogical use of digital technologies in university contexts deserves further attention and it is the focus of the study reported here.

The challenge for researchers and educators alike is to apply, analyse and assess Web-based language learning (WBLL) in an integral manner and with a strong theoretical foundation focusing on particular educational settings (Egbert, 2005). The main issue to be studied is *how* variables such as *context*, *task*, *tool*, *language* and *people* influence learners' achievement in CALL. Egbert (2005) considers these variables to be the key components of the CALL equation in learners' achievement. She also warns against the tendency to evaluate technologies rather than language learning and stresses the importance of examining our research and pedagogical perspectives because the outlook of the researcher will determine the outcome, the implications and the conclusions he or she arrives at. In this respect, Egbert argues that “a strong foundation in SLA research and theory will help

us to explain our findings in terms of language gains, even when the measure of such gains is complicated” (p. 7). The need for research studies to adopt a holistic perspective of L2 learning and to be framed along sound theories of SLA and methodological approaches is thus clear. The present study was in part meant to satisfy this need. It is grounded in communicative and socio-constructivist approaches to L2 learning and focuses on *how* the introduction of Internet-based activities into traditional face-to-face classroom work supports collaboration among college learners and contributes to the application of higher order thinking skills in the completion of a b-learning project.

2. Context and participants of the study

This study formed part of a larger research project (Gava, 2012) which was conducted at the Faculty of Languages of the National University of Córdoba (UNC), Argentina, over a period of ten weeks. Twenty-four students participated in this study. These students belonged to an intact English Language II class, which is a compulsory course of the undergraduate study programmes in EFL Teacher Training, Translation and Research at the Faculty of Languages. The students had access to a multimedia classroom with networked computers.

3. Research questions and objectives

The purpose of the present study is to explore specific ways in which the use of blogs may contribute to the development of two skills of critical importance to L2 undergraduate learners: collaborative language learning and the use of higher order thinking (i.e. creativity and critical thinking skills). To this end, it sought to answer two main questions: (a) Can group blogging foster students' creativity, critical thinking and the collaborative

construction of knowledge in an EFL undergraduate class? (b) If so, how does group blogging contribute to the development of students' creativity, critical thinking and the collaborative construction of knowledge in that EFL class? In order to explore possible answers to these questions, we set the following main objectives:

- To analyse the participants' application of critical thinking skills, creativity and collaboration in the construction of knowledge of the target language in the group blogs.
- To develop a classification of instances of knowledge development in an EFL online learning task, based on the analysis of the blog entries.

4. Research design

The design of this study is based on a socio-constructivist and communicative approach to L2 learning and it takes into account the variables included in the CALL equation proposed by Egbert (2005): *context*, *task*, *tool*, *language* and *people*. Thus, the WBL task was integrated in the language activities of a traditional, face-to-face class *context*. These tasks consisted in an online collaborative project carried out with the help of an online communication *tool*: blogs. This tool was chosen for its pedagogical potential (Campbell, 2003). The free online publishing software chosen was Blogger, which allows users to customise the layout of entries, insert written texts, pictures and hyperlinks, upload videos and interact with readers through a comments section. Thus, this tool facilitated the development of the language task and the collaborative participation of learners.

The activities were planned to suit the L2 *language* level of the *students* in the course. The participants formed six groups of four students to create blogs on topics related to natural and man-made disasters and their impact on the environment. These topics

formed part of one of the content units in the course syllabus. The focus of analysis was the participants' language output in the blog entries. A qualitative research approach (Hatch, 2002), which allowed for an inductive analysis and a detailed description of the findings, was followed for the analysis of the data.

5. Research findings

As a result of the analysis of the blog entries, a threefold classification was developed. The classification includes patterns which indicate the participants' application of critical thinking skills and collaborative interventions in the group blogs. It seemed appropriate to frame this classification following the description of intellectual activity in Bloom's Taxonomy (1956/1971) because this taxonomy captures different levels of cognitive ability, including *knowledge* at the lowest level of mental activity, *comprehension*, *application*, *analysis* and *synthesis* as representing increasingly more complex levels of intellectual activity, and *evaluation* as the highest level of critical thinking skills. The three main patterns found in the data were *creativity in the use of resources*, *L2 learning awareness*, and *collaboration through reflection and evaluation*. These types of patterns include several sub-patterns that describe the various manners in which critical thinking skills and collaborative knowledge were manifested in the students' group blogs. Frequency counts are not included in this report since the focus here is only the identification and description of each pattern of students' L2 online output.

As regards the first pattern of this classification, i.e. *creativity in the use of resources*, the findings reveal the learners' creativity in the presentation and arrangement of information and multimedia resources used in the blog entries. Twelve sub-patterns of learners' creativity emerged from the analysis of the blog entries (see Table 1). Creativity is

an indication of the learners' application of critical thinking skills, mainly because it is based on *knowledge* —the foundational level of all intellectual activity in Bloom's Taxonomy— and also because it reflects two other levels of intellectual activity: *comprehension* and *application*. The learners' *knowledge* of the topic is reflected in the information included in the entries. In other words, what was included and what was left out show both the participants' understanding of the topic and their recognition of relevant ideas. Moreover, the creativity in the use of resources, through the definitions, summaries and related illustrations chosen, shows the students' *comprehension*. Instances of *application* were identified in the data selection made by the learners in order to complete the language task with minimum direction on the part of the instructor. All in all, the frequent use of multimedia resources to develop the topics of the blogs as well as the selection and creative arrangement of information shows the learners' application of critical thinking skills.

Table 1: Sub-patterns of learners' creativity in the use of resources

I.	Picture + definition (natural phenomena or environmental problems)
II.	Picture + definition (natural phenomena or environmental problems) + focus on content-specific vocabulary (highlighted terms or hyperlinks to dictionary definitions)
III.	Video + definition (natural phenomena or environmental problems) + focus on content-specific vocabulary (highlighted terms or hyperlinks to dictionary definitions)
IV.	Video related to the content of an entry + comment or question to peers
V.	Picture + summary of course reading materials
VI.	Picture + summary of course reading materials + focus on content-specific vocabulary (highlighted terms or hyperlinks to dictionary definitions)
VII.	Picture + summary of online materials
VIII.	Picture + summary of online materials + focus on content-specific vocabulary

- (highlighted terms or hyperlinks to dictionary definitions)
- IX.** Picture + summary of printed sources + focus on content-specific vocabulary (highlighted terms)
- X.** Video related to the content of previous or following entry
- XI.** Joke + comment
- XII.** Picture + comment

As regards the second pattern, particular features which indicate the participants' *L2 learning awareness* were identified in most blog entries. These features include the focus on semantic fields through content-specific vocabulary hyperlinked by the students to dictionary definitions and glossaries, and also the use of different resources to develop the topic of group blogs, such as online articles, videos, encyclopedias, dictionaries, a course reading packet and various websites. The learners' work on lexis and the use of these resources evidence their critical thinking skills at the levels of *application*, *analysis* and *synthesis*, three of the six strata of cognitive abilities identified in Bloom's Taxonomy.

The learners' *application* of informative knowledge was observed in the selection and use of data to complete the language task with a minimum of teacher's direction in a context which was new to them, i.e. blogging. It is worth mentioning that practically none of the students had created a blog previous to their participation in this study. Second, they organised the content of entries clearly and coherently, which shows the students' prior *analysis* of the material. This in turn seems to suggest that the learners engaged in intellectual activity through the *synthesis* of information and selective use of texts and multimedia resources.

Ten combinations of features which are indicative of the students' L2 awareness and of the possibility that they were developing their L2 skills through the completion of this b-

learning project were identified in the students' blogs (see Table 2). These include definitions of key terms and concepts, summaries of topics and subtopics, focus on content-specific vocabulary through the use of hyperlinks, highlighted terms and glossaries, and hyperlinks to websites.

Table 2. Sub-patterns of learners' L2 awareness

I.	Focus on lexis: highlighted content-specific vocabulary and collocations.
II.	Focus on lexis: hyperlinks to dictionary definitions of content-specific vocabulary.
III.	Summary of course reading materials + highlighted content-specific vocabulary and collocations
IV.	Summary of course reading materials + hyperlinks to dictionary definitions of content-specific vocabulary
V.	Summary of other printed sources (not included in the course reading packet)
VI.	Summary of online materials + highlighted content-specific vocabulary
VII.	Summary of online materials + hyperlinks to dictionary definitions of content-specific vocabulary
VIII.	Summary of online materials + hyperlinks to websites or online articles
IX.	Glossary of content-specific vocabulary
X.	List of useful links

Collaboration through reflection and evaluation is the third category in the classification of instances of critical thinking and collaboration in the L2 task carried out through blogging in this EFL class. It was found that group members stated their opinions by assessing ideas and information and making recommendations for the readers of their blogs. They also posed questions at the end of entries; readers (classmates in this case) answered these questions and sometimes also praised their classmates' work. These types of contributions seem to have served a dual function. Through the comments and questions,

learners assessed the ideas presented in blog entries, and at the same time, interacted with classmates, which in turn contributed to the further development of the blog's topic. Blogging, therefore, allowed this group of learners to engage in a reflective online dialogue, an activity that appears to have contributed to the development of collaborative knowledge. These results show that the participants in this study applied higher order thinking skills, not only through analysis and synthesis, as identified in the previous category, but also through *evaluation*, the highest level of intellectual activity in Bloom's Taxonomy. The four patterns of collaboration through reflection and evaluation found in the data are included in table 3 below.

Table 3: Sub-patterns of collaboration through reflection and evaluation

I.	Recommendations to visit websites
II.	Questions to peers —with or without a preceding reflective comment
III.	Peer comments in response to questions
IV.	Spontaneous peer comments or opinions about the content of entries (i.e. the comments and opinions were not prompted by peers' questions).

The threefold classification presented above accounts for the various ways in which the learners appeared to have developed knowledge through this online medium. More specifically, the learners' creativity in the use of resources, their L2 learning awareness and collaboration in the L2 task became apparent in their use of multimedia resources, written texts and hyperlinks, as well as the questions and reflective comments posted in blog entries, all of which contributed to the development of each of the topics in the group blogs. Thus, these learners' L2 written output reveals *how* this online medium may be conducive to the development of critical thinking and the collaborative construction of knowledge in the language class, which are key features in the joint production of knowledge (Beatty,

2003; Bender, 2003; Bruffee, 1999; Lion, 2006; Warschauer, Shetzer & Meloni, 2000).

6. Conclusion

This study has shown that the use of blogging in an EFL college class promoted the students' creativity, critical thinking and the joint construction of knowledge in the target language. Two major implications for WBLL can be derived from this study. Firstly, as the findings indicate, group blogging to complete an L2 project encouraged collaborative interaction among the EFL learners and allowed them to make creative and meaningful use of a variety of data and multimedia resources available on the World Wide Web. In this respect, Warschauer (1997) has pointed out that “the most potent collaborative activities involve not just finding and using information, but rather actively making use of technologies to construct new knowledge together” (pp. 476–477). The second main implication is that student bloggers can become active constructors of their own learning and learning environments. In other words, students can use blogging not only to interact with one another and experiment with hypertexts and multimedia but also to create their own configurations of learning materials, which might be conducive to the application and development of higher order thinking.

This study also presents some limitations in terms of scope and context of application. In the first place, this research was carried out with a relatively small number of participants, which facilitated detailed account of the data; however, the results may not be generalised to other populations. In the second place, although the threefold classification of knowledge development created here captured a variety of patterns of students' interaction and creative use of online resources for language learning, it may not fully apply to the dynamics of online language tasks in other collaborative environments

different from blogging, such as WebQuests, wikis or social networks, to name just a few.

In light of the implications and limitations of this study, some suggestions for further research emerge. This study has proposed a set of descriptive categories grounded in the data. If further explored, these classifications may throw light into virtual team dynamics in EFL classes. Moreover, by interweaving aspects related to collaboration, the application of critical thinking skills and learners' autonomy in virtual learning environments, future research may help teachers and students alike to make more effective uses of online environments for EFL learning.

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Using self-monitoring strategies to enhance university students' pronunciation skills

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1. Introduction

The ability to monitor one's pronunciation is one of the key objectives undergraduates at the School of Languages, UNC, are expected to achieve throughout the three years of English phonological training they undergo. During that period of instruction, students are encouraged to work individually and in pairs to develop and improve pronunciation skills. Self-monitoring strategies are those previously stated actions needed to be able to check one's own production in order to achieve an aim which, in this case, is improving one's own pronunciation. Due to the limited amount of time devoted to listening to learners' production during a lesson, it is considered of paramount importance that students develop strategies to monitor their own pronunciation. Class time is not thought to be enough to master the skills needed for successfully completing the course. In class hours, students are usually encouraged to work in pairs while the teacher listens to and gives them feedback with the purpose of helping them become aware of their strengths and weaknesses and, consequently, improve their pronunciation. Out of class, learners are encouraged to practice daily and autonomously with the materials prepared for the course. For independent learning to be achieved, it is imperative that students perceive their mistakes so as to work

on them, which justifies the in-depth analysis of the importance of these strategies. This investigation aims at promoting the importance of developing self-monitoring strategies to enhance university students' pronunciation skills by helping them to reflect on how these strategies have helped to improve their pronunciation.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Self-monitoring

In line with theories of self-directed learning and learner autonomy, self-monitoring is usually defined as one of the strategies needed to manage one's own learning by making judgements on one's learning outcomes and achievements. Among the benefits of implementing self-monitoring strategies in the learning process (Smith, 2002; Trammel, Schloss, & Alper, 1994), researchers identify an increase in student engagement in the course, on-task behaviour during lessons, completion of homework assignments out of class, academic performance and general learning skills that can be maintained over time and applied to other subject matter. Cooper et al. (2007) state that in order to develop self-monitoring skills, a set of sub-skills needs to be worked on: goal setting, self-observation, self-recording, self-evaluation, self-instruction, and strategy instruction. Some of these theorists include the observation, recording and evaluation by an observer as another essential element in the process of becoming aware of one's strengths and weaknesses as well as making the teaching of these strategies explicit in the lesson. They also highlight the importance of comparing students' first performance with later ones to reinforce the feeling of success. Taking all this into account, for the sake of our research, we will define self-monitoring as the ability to become aware of one's own level of oral production, to set goals for improvement after comparing one's own production to the target behaviour

described in the goals for the course and to guide oneself through the process of acquiring that desired performance. With this definition in mind, we established the following objectives to be achieved:

1. Students should be able to clearly define a target behavior as described in the objectives for the course
2. Through self-observation and self-recording and the feedback received from peers and teachers, students should be able to identify their pronunciation problems, how much they impede understanding and the frequency with which they occur.
3. After identifying the areas to improve, students should be able to set clear goals to adjust and improve their performance with repeated out-of-class practice.
4. Students should be able to compare their first performance to their final one and reflect on how both differ.

These four steps go along with the methodology presented in the corresponding section. To go along with the goals set for Phonetics and Phonology I, students are required to show sound knowledge of the content presented and practiced throughout the course and to show the ability to perceive the features under study as well as to be able to produce them correctly.

2.2 Assessment

Regarding the object of study of this research, it is important to clarify that, as is described in the syllabus of *Phonetics and Phonology I*, the criteria for the assessment of pronunciation encompass the micro and macro levels as proposed by Morley (1994). Consequently, at the moment of assessing students and encouraging self-evaluation, it is expected that the assessors take into account these two levels of pronunciation and that the final grade provided mirror the objectives expressed in the subject syllabus. In this model, which adopts a communicative approach, Morley suggests a ‘dual-focus’ framework and highlights the importance of pronunciation as an essential part of communication. According to the author, the elements that make up pronunciation can be classified into two levels: micro and macro. The former centers on the phonetic-phonological competence; that is, it focuses on the production of vowels and consonants, stress, rhythm, intonation, pauses and adjustments in connected speech. At the micro level, it is possible to focus on the isolated sounds or on the production of features of rhythm or intonation. On the other hand, the macro level is concerned with general elements of communicability in particular settings and a goal of developing discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence (Morley 1994, p. 65). At this level, it is possible to focus on precision and on clarity as well as on fluency and intelligibility in general. It is clear that, as Morley (1994) says, both levels are inseparable, since the macro includes the micro and the micro is essential to the macro. However, the distinction between these two levels has helped to approach the teaching of pronunciation more effectively in the subjects of Phonetics and Phonology at the School of Languages, UNC. It is through the implementation of these two levels that teachers assess student performance and, because of this, the elements described

above were used to create the checklist to be used in this research, which includes the following items:

1	Vowels	Stressed	
		Unstressed	
2	Consonants	Initial	
		Medial	
		Final	
		Clusters (initial/final)	
3	Intonation	Statements	
		Questions	
		Other	
4	Stress and prominence	Word-level	
		Phrase-level	
5	Adjustments in connected speech		
6	Additional comments		
Mark			

Table 1. Checklist for self, peer and teacher assessment.

As can be seen, items 1 to 5 relate to Morley's micro level, leaving item 6 for general comments in terms to communicability.

3. Methodology

To carry out this study, ten students were asked to record themselves at the beginning of the year. In this first recording, the students were required to read a text from the course materials and to comment on their own performance by completing the checklist provided for self-assessment. These recordings were analysed by the teachers who also completed the same checklist with feedback on their production. A third checklist was completed by a classmate who listened to the recording as well. The ten students participating in this project received the original recording together with the three checklists and were asked to listen to it again and to work on their mistakes by paying attention to the feedback received. Students were advised to use this feedback as the starting point of their practice and to work

on the reading of that material as many times as necessary until they felt confident about their performance. At that point these ten students were asked to submit a new recording with the reading of that same passage. Once the recording was received, students were asked to complete a questionnaire with their reflection. The questions included were the following:

- Do you consider it important to be aware of the weaknesses in your own production? Why?
- Was it easy for you to detect your own mistakes? Or was it easier to listen to your classmate's?
- Once you received the three checklists, did you agree on what each of them said? Which one did you find more useful? Why? What other type of feedback would you like to get from peers/teachers?
- Did the checklist help you concentrate on the weaknesses in your pronunciation? Or would you prefer to spot your mistakes without any guidance?
- How did you feel about receiving feedback from a peer? And how did the feedback from the teacher make you feel?
- Would you like to work like this in class more often to improve your pronunciation?

To analyze the materials, the first performance of each of the ten students was compared to that produced after reflecting and working on their weak areas. The feedback provided by each of the assessors (student, peer and teacher) was also compared in order to find similarities or differences in type (extent, content, micro and macro levels) and, finally, the

answers to the questionnaire were used for a final reflection on how students saw the process of acquiring self-monitoring skills while improving their pronunciation.

4. Results and implications

4.1 Level of performance

Once the first and second recordings were contrasted, we found an increase in the level of production of nine out of the ten students participating in the project, as determined by the mark awarded to them by the teachers. These nine students showed an increase of at least one grade higher than the one they received for their first recording. As regards the level of performance perceived by the students, an increase was also determined as all ten students rated themselves between 1 and 2 grades higher than their first recording. Moreover, when it comes to the feedback given by peers, the same increase could be observed and some positive comments were present in the feedback form that were not there before. The results just mentioned were used to encourage students to record themselves, to try to perceive their own mistakes and to get a partner to hear to their own production for further improvement.

4.2 Morley's micro and macro levels

After a detailed analysis of the checklists we could see that, when assessing their own production, students paid careful attention to the micro level and could make only very general comments about their performance at the macro level, mainly concerning speed of delivery and hesitations. Regarding the micro level, comments aimed mostly at the choice of vowel and consonant sounds and only rarely at the choice or use of intonation patterns, stresses or adjustments. When giving feedback to their peers, students tended to comment on the use of intonation, stress and prominence more than the individual production of

segments. Very few peers made comments about the macro levels of production, referring only to speed or the use of pauses and how they affected fluency. For obvious reasons, teachers were more detailed in their feedback and made use of all the boxes from the micro and macro levels in the checklist to give students a better insight into their production skills. Teachers were the only ones who used the checklist to give positive feedback on production, to include praise and encouragement and to ask students to review theoretical concepts covered in class to improve specific areas.

4.3 Students' final reflections

After reading students' final reflection, we detected a high degree of acceptance of this type of work. The words useful, helpful and thought-provoking appeared in all of the comments provided by the ten students. When asked about the importance of becoming aware of their own mistakes all students agreed that it was an essential first step in the path to improvement; many recognized the difficulty they had in spotting their own weaknesses, and, for this reason, favoured the work carried out, as it allowed them to listen to themselves several times in order to find their mistakes. Most students also found it easier to identify the mistakes made by their peers than those they themselves made. Some found peer-feedback useful and a few even said that the time spent by teachers and peers on helping them was something they appreciated and that pushed them to keep working on their pronunciation.

The content included in the different checklists differed depending on the giver of feedback. When comparing the feedback produced by students (self and peer assessment), students considered the work done by the teachers to be more complete, precise, clear and detailed. Many referred to the assessor role teachers adopt in final exams, which made the

feedback provided by the teachers to be the most relevant of the three. However, some mentioned having felt scared, surprised or even shocked when they first received the teacher feedback, as it had a much larger number of mistakes than they had originally expected. In spite of this, participants all thanked the work done by teachers and said they were grateful for such detailed feedback. It was interesting to notice how two students mentioned that peer correction had been an important factor for improvement as having to spot a mistake another student had made, led them to reflect on their own, making it a more beneficial and enriching process.

Regarding the steps followed to monitor the participants' production and adjust it to reach a higher level of production, one student described the checklist as thorough and easy to read, which helped to identify more mistakes than when working without a tool for self or peer assessment. As regards the procedure in general, all students found it helpful and stated that they would like to work in this way more often in order to improve their pronunciation and do better in exams. Nevertheless, some students mentioned that face-to-face feedback is sometimes more friendly and can be easier to understand. One student said that a combination of both would be ideal since oral feedback, the one regularly given in class, could be more specific and easier to remember if accompanied by the type of feedback provided in the checklist.

5. Conclusion

In this paper we showed how self-monitoring strategies can be used in the pronunciation class to help students become aware of their strengths and weaknesses as a first step to increasing their level of production. The steps that guided this work reflected the subskills presented in the theoretical framework for achieving the ability to monitor one's own

learning: goal setting, self-observation, self-recording and self-evaluation were presented in the first part of this work where students had to record themselves and identify their own and their peer's production. Self-instruction, and strategy instruction were mainly present in the feedback provided by teachers. The checklist presented reflected the goals for the course and was based on Morley's theory of dual focus. The results and final comments made by the students helped us determine that this type of work is not only beneficial for the students but also a suitable complement to current classroom practice. We believe that more work and research needs to be done in the field of phonetics and phonology so as to improve the tools used to enhance students' perception of their own production and their self-monitoring strategies. Being part of this project has been a very enriching experience since we were able to put into practice our knowledge about Phonetics and Phonology. Moreover, working hand in hand with other teachers and last-year students gave us the opportunity to improve professionally in a way it is only possible by taking a more active stance towards learning. We highly recommend that other students become involved in research groups at the School of Languages.

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Innovation from/for the new millennium: Where do Argentinian universities stand?

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1. Introduction

When an ELT conference includes expressions such as “the new millennium” and “latest trends”, colleagues may think about innovation and curriculum change with/for/from teachers and learners in primary, secondary, and higher education (see Hall, 2011; Hall & Hewings, 2000; Hyland & Wong, 2013a). They can also think about changes in language education through technology (see Hockly, 2015; Whyte, 2015) and beyond the classroom (Richards, 2015).

With less frequency, we may think about university-based initial teacher education programmes as spheres at the forefront of innovation and change. While there are publications which discuss processes of curriculum reform in our country at tertiary level (Banegas, 2014; Banfi, 2013; Ibáñez & Lothringer, 2013), studies on innovation in university-based initial English language teacher education (ELTE) programmes are scarce. Thus, the aims of this exploratory, syllabus-based analysis paper are (1) to identify degrees of innovation at a group of Argentinian universities, and (2) the extent to which innovation is context-responsive or context-rooted.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Innovation and change

The terms “innovation” and “change” may be used interchangeably as both refer to notions around novelty and difference (Waters, 2009). However, Hyland and Wong (2013b) observe

that innovation carries connotations of constructive and planned change in which we have different degrees of agency.

The association of innovation to novelty may be assessed as subjective and perceptual because it depends on the contexts of change (Markee, 2015). What may be deemed as innovative in one context could be seen as “more of the same” in another. Context is central to understanding and generating innovation. It is also crucial for the complex processes of dissemination and diffusion through our social systems.

If innovation means change, then it could be envisioned as a manifestation of paradigm change in a broader socio-historical context beyond the confines of the ELT classroom or department. Changing paradigms is a process which occurs in time through different stages. It does not happen overnight and it does not mean destroying whatever preceded our intervention. Innovation is gradual and it may take different, sometimes competing and even opposing, forms when it is actualised in our multiple scenarios. In the field of language education, Tomlinson (2013) suggests that an innovation “aims to be an improvement on what already exists.” Along similar lines, Connolly (2015) observes that innovation “is part of an evolutionary process: small, forward-thinking changes that cumulatively have a big effect.” These quotes are helpful because they highlight the need to envision change as a constructive process which stresses evaluation, perspective, and knowledge generation.

2.2. Innovation in ELTE

With the advent of the sociocultural turn in ELT, Johnson (2013) believes that such a turn is crucial in ELTE, particularly at the initial stages. With reference to novice teachers and student-teachers, the author adds:

what they learn will be fundamentally shaped by the quality and character of the activities they engage in within their SLTE programs.

when novice teachers enter SLTE programs, they are exposed to the latest theory that reflects the profession’s current stance on what constitutes theoretically and pedagogically sound L2 instruction.

Following Johnson's words above, we may agree that ELTE programmes need to strengthen and problematise the links between in-context practices and research-driven theories, but the latter may need to be as updated as possible and include publications contextualised in our immediate or regional realities. Nevertheless, we should bear in mind that ELTE programmes are expected to provide future teachers with the foundations of the profession and this may entail the reading of foundational literature. Therefore, while classic authors are wished to be found in the different subjects/modules of the programme, it is desirable that current authors who reinterpret and actualise the former and put forward new insights are also included with the aim of working on change and development.

In addition, access to ELTE programmes syllabi and other pieces of information should also become easily available. In an era where technology interacts with concepts such as autonomy and self-access discourse practices, people interested in embarking on an ELTE programme should be able to find information related to the course. In this regard, opening to the public what institutions offer and produce is one of the key factors in promoting sustainable innovation (Oppenheimer, 2014).

3. The study

With the aim of determining degrees of innovation at a group of Argentinian universities, I set out three working research questions:

1. How easy is it to access online the syllabi of an ELTE programme?
2. How updated are such syllabi in terms of their core reading bibliography?
3. To what extent does the bibliography include the works of Argentinian colleagues?

Therefore my study had three driving categories: (1) accessibility, (2) updatedness, and (3) contextualisation.

My research sample consisted of references/reading bibliography in subject syllabi, particularly those related to content knowledge (e.g. English Grammar, Phonetics, Literature) and subject pedagogic content knowledge (e.g. Professional Practice, Practicum)

from the following universities:

1. Facultad de Ciencias Humanas, Universidad Nacional de La Pampa (UNLPam)
2. Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Universidad Nacional de Cuyo (UNCUYO)
3. Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Universidad Nacional de Tucumán (UNT)
4. Facultad de Filosofía, Humanidades y Artes, Universidad Nacional de San Juan (UNSJ)
5. Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de la Educación, Universidad Nacional de La Plata (UNLP)
6. Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias Sociales, Universidad Autónoma de Entre Ríos (UADER)
7. Facultad de Humanidades, Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata (UNMDP)
8. Facultad de Lenguas, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba (UNC)
9. Facultad de Lenguas, Universidad Nacional del Comahue (UNComa)
10. Instituto Nacional Superior del Profesorado Técnico, Universidad Tecnológica Nacional (UTN)

The selection criteria for such universities were: (1) offering an ELTE programme (Profesorado), (2) having a website and (3) representing different parts of the country. Data collection spanned from 21.02.15 until 02.04.15, and data analysis was carried out through descriptive statistics.

4. Results

4.1. Accessibility

All the universities in my sample offer information online about their ELTE programme. The following pictures attest to these findings:



Picture 1. [Profesorado de Inglés](#). UNMDP.



Picture 2. [Profesorado en Inglés](#). UNComa.

However, the situation differs as regards online access to subject syllabi as shown in Table 1.

University	Subjects in the programme	Syllabi available	Hyperlinks broken	No syllabus
UADER	34	unavailable		
UNC	36	35	1	0
UNComa	36	9	8	19
UNCUYO	35	6	no hyperlinks	29
UNLP	36	26	3	7
UNLPam	30	15	15	0
UNMDP	30	unavailable		
UNSJ	31	unavailable		
UNT	30	30	0	0
UTN	38	38	0	0

Table 1.Syllabus online access.

Table 1 shows the total number of subjects students need to complete in order to graduate as teachers of English followed by the number of syllabi which can be found online either following a hyperlink to download a PDF file or as an html page. In some cases, there are broken hyperlinks or no hyperlinks. It can be observed that while UADER, UNMDP and UNSJ do not offer open access to their syllabi, UNComa and UNCUIYO offer less than one third of the syllabi. In contrast, only three universities, UNC, UNT and UTN, offer (almost) every syllabus online.

4.2. Updatedness

For reasons of space I show results concerning some subjects within the content knowledge and professional practice strands. As regards the content knowledge strand I included subjects such as English Language, Linguistics, Discourse Analysis, Sociolinguistics, Phonetics and Phonology, English Syntax/Grammar, English Literature, and Culture of English-Speaking Peoples among others. As for the professional practice strand I included: Specific Didactics, Practicum, Professional Practice, and ICT & ELT, among others.

Table 2 below shows my corpus in terms of the number of syllabi analysed. This table also includes the number of total bibliographical references analysed. By

bibliographical references I mean those titles usually for learners (e.g. books, coursebooks, journal articles), or which were part of a syllabi without any further specifications.

University	Syllabi	References
UNC	20	942
UNComa	9	285
UNCUYO	5	87
UNLP	14	564
UNLPam	13	599
UNT	19	423
UTN	30	544
TOTAL	110	3,444

Table 2.Total working corpus.

Through tallying I classified the references under four time categories. Table 3 below summarises updatedness for each university. The figures in red highlight the decade where universities seem to be placed judging by the percentage of references found.

University	References	Pre 80's		80-89		90-99		00-09		10-14	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
UNC	942	62	6	140	15	329	35	357	39	55	5
UNComa	285	7	2	33	12	117	41	106	37	22	8
UNCUYO	87	7	8	8	9	40	46	31	36	1	1
UNLP	564	55	10	79	14	155	27	221	39	54	10
UNLPam	599	54	9	93	15	231	39	198	33	23	4
UNT	423	41	10	73	17	170	40	117	28	22	5
UTN	544	26	5	56	10	204	37	238	44	20	4
TOTAL	3,444	252	7	482	14	1,246	36	1,268	37	197	6

Table 3.Overall updatedness.

If we consider both extremes, readers may notice that the number of references before 1980 is higher than those between 2010 and 2014. From my analysis I excluded literary works (e.g. Shakespeare's plays) as we may consider them timeless classics. According to my analysis, the oldest reference (references here and below are shown as found) is included in English Grammar I (UNLP):

CURME, George O./Hans Kurath (1931). Syntax [3rd volume of A Grammar of the English Language]. Boston, D.C. Heath & Company.

Other "oldies" are:

Grammar I (UNCUYO): Quirk, R.; Greenbaum, S. et al. A Grammar of

Contemporary English. London: Longman Group. UK 1976.

Syntax II (UNT): Halliday, M. and Hassan R. (1977). Cohesion in English. London: Longman.

Such titles may indicate that ELTE programmes encourage a historical view which may allow future teachers to understand the development of knowledge in our field.

In contrast, among the most updated references we may find are:

English Diction II (UNLP): Hidalgo Navarro, A. y Cabedo, A., 2014, 'On the importance of the prosodic component in the expression of linguistic im/politeness'. En: Journal of Politeness Research. Volume 10, Issue 1, Pages 63–96, ISSN (Online) 1613-4877, ISSN (Print) 1612-5681, DOI: 10.1515/pr-2014-0004. DE GRUYTER MOUTON. UK.

English Language III (UNT): DUMMET, Paul, HUGHES, J., STEPHENSON, H. Life – Advanced. Hampshire, UK: Heinle Cengage Learning, 2014.

4.2.1. A look at some areas

When we examine some areas of enquiry across universities we find differences in their updatedness. I will focus on four broad areas: English Literature, Phonetics, English Language, and Specific Didactics.

Those subjects subsumed under English Literature tend to have the highest number of references. In those subjects in particular I only examined those titles which refer to literary criticism rather than literary works. Table 4 condenses the features found among subjects and across universities.

University	References	Pre 80's		80-89		90-99		00-09		10-14	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
UNC	213	57	27	25	12	65	30	55	26	11	5
UNComa	136	7	5	24	18	58	43	40	29	7	5
UNCUYO	27	5	19	2	7	16	59	4	15	0	0
UNLP	172	32	19	14	8	33	19	84	49	9	5
UNLPam	215	39	18	45	21	87	40	41	19	3	2
UNT	58	16	28	13	22	22	38	7	12	0	0
UTN	122	13	11	14	11	53	43	41	34	1	1
TOTAL	943	169	18	137	15	334	35	272	29	31	3

Table 4. Updatedness: Literature.

In general, Literature appears to be placed in the 1990s with a high influence from the 1980s and before. However, the picture is heterogeneous. For example, some syllabi include online resources:

English Language III (UNComa):

http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/english/melani/novel_19c/thackeray/angel.html

As regards Phonetics (including Laboratory and Diction), readers will find below (Table 5) a more limited universe as there were fewer syllabi available in this area.

University	References	Pre 80's		80-89		90-99		00-09		10-14	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
UNC	52	4	8	18	35	18	35	9	18	2	4
UNLP	97	4	4	9	9	26	27	44	45	14	15
UNLPam	29	6	21	5	17	11	38	7	24	0	0
UNT	118	4	3	19	16	57	48	31	26	11	9
UTN	42	3	7	7	17	22	52	10	24	0	0
TOTAL	338	21	6	58	17	134	40	101	30	27	8

Table 5. Updatedness: Phonetics.

Table 5 attests to how the area seems to be placed in the 1990s with a higher tendency over the 2000s. However, this area includes titles published before the 1980s:

Phonetics II (UNC): Crystal, D. and Davy, D. (1969). Investigating English Style. London: Longman.

Phonetics III (UNLPam): KINGDON, R. (1959) The Groundwork of English Intonation. London: Longmans. Chapter 3.

Table 6 shows updatedness in English Language.

University	References	Pre 80's		80-89		90-99		00-09		10-14	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
UNC	148	0	0	25	17	57	39	51	34	15	10
UNComa	149	0	0	9	6	59	40	66	44	15	10
UNLP	138	12	9	42	30	62	45	21	15	1	1
UNLPam	127	9	7	28	22	48	38	36	28	6	5
UNT	54	1	2	6	11	20	37	20	37	7	13
UTN	88	2	2	7	8	33	38	39	44	7	8
TOTAL	704	24	3	117	17	279	40	233	33	51	7

Table 6. Updatedness: English Language.

Once again, the 1990s seem to be the preferred decade by lecturers in charge of this subject. However, it is also in this area where syllabi include lists of websites, motion pictures, and online newspapers among other digital resources which are between 2010 and the present.

Last, the broad area of Specific Didactics appears condensed in Table 7.

University	References	Pre 80's		80-89		90-99		00-09		10-14	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
UNC	169	0	0	20	12	61	36	75	44	13	8
UNLP	54	0	0	8	15	23	42	22	41	1	2
UNLPam	146	0	0	8	5	43	29	82	56	13	9
UNT	37	0	0	2	5	7	19	28	76	0	0
UTN	172	2	1	13	8	48	28	99	57	10	6
TOTAL	578	2	1	51	9	182	31	306	53	37	6

Table 7. Updatedness: Specific Didactics.

In contrast to the areas analysed above, Specific Didactics enjoys a more updated status. Some syllabi also include references to websites and repositories.

5. Reading Argentinian authors

Updatedness and innovation may also be linked to the extent to which universities are aware of the developments in their own contexts. As I explained above, one possible instrument to measure this issue of contextualisation is through the number of Argentinian-authored contributions included in a syllabus (Table 8).

University	References	Arg. refs.	
		n	%
UNC	942	92	10
UNComa	285	8	3
UNCUYO	87	1	1
UNLP	564	14	2
UNLPam	599	35	6
UNT	423	39	9
UTN	544	47	9
TOTAL	3,444	236	7

Table 8. Argentinian references.

The table above shows that the presence of bibliography authored by Argentines is limited. However, the picture is heterogeneous when we look at the data in detail.

For example, UNC has a total of 92 Argentinian references, however, 48 of those references are found in only one subject, Culture and Civilization of English Speaking Peoples II. More interestingly, around 46 of such references belong to contributions authored by the lecturers in charge of the subject and are included in conference proceedings and edited collections. What is also worth noting is that these references illustrate that content is more relevant than the language of communication. The cited works are in Spanish and English.

In contrast, Practice III (UNLPam) contains 20 references and these include a whole myriad of authors and texts which refer to our context and curriculum development. The following examples illustrate this feature:

Materiales Curriculares: Lengua Extranjera Inglés. Educación Secundaria – Ciclo Básico (2009). www.lapampa.gov.edu.ar

Dussel, I. y Southwell, M. (2007) Lenguajes en plural. Revista El Monitor de la Educación. Ministerio de Educación, Ciencia y Tecnología de la Educación.

6. Conclusions

Readers should note that I worked on a limited sample conditioned by the selection of some universities only and, more importantly, by the sole inclusion of syllabi which were openly available on the university websites.

As regards accessibility, we may say universities such as UNC, UNT, and UTN seem to offer more access to their courses. In addition, this may be seen as a stronger dialogue between these universities and the community, especially potential students and lecturers.

In terms of updatedness, while there are signs some areas are moving forward, it should be noted the 1990s still dominate the academic scene (but see Table 3). Nevertheless, I should acknowledge the fact that lecturers may include different and more recent materials than those which appear listed as a subject develops in real time.

Last, the extent to which bibliographies include the works of Argentinian colleagues seems scanty. This feature of our programme should be seen as an invitation to publish our contributions in peer reviewed forums and to engage in the practice of socialising the works of colleagues as well as our own. Every year there are many conferences around the country which produce conference proceedings as outputs in Spanish and English. If those presentations have been accepted and published, we may assume that some are worth including at the stages of initial teacher education.

In conclusion, innovation in (language) education is a complex process and it takes time to reach all of us. What is vital is that innovation emerges from our context with the awareness of the work done around us and beyond (see Ruiz, 2014).

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Teaching reading strategies in the primary school classroom through picture books

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1. Introduction

In daily practice, it becomes evident that students face difficulties with reading comprehension. This observation is confirmed in the results of the reading evaluations not only in Argentina but also in different parts of the globe. PISA evaluations, carried out by UNESCO, reveal a decrease in the reading comprehension levels of primary and secondary school students. Besides, analysis of the material used in the classrooms is evidence of the divorce there exists between a classroom material that relies heavily on the written mode and texts students encounter in their daily lives that rely on people's capacity to understand the intertwining of different modes to create an ultimate meaning (Serafini, 2012). Therefore, there is a need to create new pedagogic practices that will allow us to reverse this process. We believe this is necessary since the ability of reading comprehensively has a fundamental role in people's lives.

This research is restricted to present-day social reality, in which every person becomes an audience of multimodal messages in which the text and the image are combined to provide different meanings. This is why the concept of literacy is in a process of change. What does knowing how to read mean in the 21st century? Knowing how to read does no longer imply being able to decode letters that form words, but reading words and images understanding that there is a semantic association between them that will lead to the uncovering of particular meanings. Picture books allow us to share with children a book where they can experience the world of images, sounds and words.

The selection of the material for this study was based on the learning theory proposed by Ausubel, Novak and Hanesian (1978), in which they state that in order for the learning to be significant, the ideas in the teaching material should be connected with the previous knowledge of the students so that the new knowledge can be closely linked to the old knowledge. The selection of our pictures, like *Intercambio Cultural* by Isol (2010), is based on their value as generators of meaning, emotions and analysis.

This paper presents the results of a research project in which children were taught to read picture books with the aid of language strategies applied to reading tasks. In this paper we share a learning experience in which our students were taught language strategies to foster their reading skills.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Language strategies in reading

The teaching of reading strategies is key to empowering students to enhance their own learning by making them aware of the different paths they can follow in order to solve problematic situations on their own (Oxford, 2011). When students are exposed to and encouraged to use these strategies from an early age, it is likely that, once these processes become automatized, they will become habits. In other words, explicit teaching of the reading strategies at very early stages of learning will likely lead to the development of skilful readers.

Oxford's (1990) classifies language strategies in three different categories of language strategies: memory (retrieving information), cognitive (understand and use new language), and compensatory (use language despite existing gaps in knowledge). Memory strategies help learners store large numbers of words. It is our capacity to store and retrieve information from our lexicons that makes us better readers as our knowledge of the skill becomes procedural knowledge. These strategies are particularly helpful in relation to picture books since they work with the association of word and image. As Oxford (1990) points out

Linking the verbal with the visual is very useful to language learning for four

reasons. First, the mind's storage for visual information exceeds its capacity for verbal material. Second, the most efficiently packed chunks of information are transferred to long-term memory through visual images. Third, visual images may be the most potent device to aid recall of verbal material. Fourth, a large proportion of learners have a preference for visual learning. (Oxford, 1990, p. 39)

Cognitive strategies help students manipulate and transform the target language by practicing (repeating, finding patterns), receiving and sending messages (skimming and scanning), analysing and reasoning (taking elements from L1 to understand L2) and creating structure for Input and output. Finally, compensation strategies allow students to use the language either for compensation or production of language despite students' limited linguistic knowledge. Some activities that require the use of compensation strategies are guessing, using mime and gestures, and switching to mother tongue (Oxford, 1990).

2.2. Reading multimodal texts

Working with multimodal texts implies working with a new concept of reading. As Kress states “reading has to be rethought given that the common sense of what reading is was developed in the era of unquestioned dominance of writing” (Kress, 2010, p. 17). In times in which visual images are pervasive and often take over the power of the written word, the concept of reading has been stretched out to make room for a new concept of reading that entails the combination of modes to create ultimate meaning. Kress understands “[r]eading as taking and making meaning from many sources of information, from many different sign systems” (Kress, 2010, p. 17). In other words, readers will be exposed to a wide range of messages built from different composing elements that come from different semiotic systems. Skilful readers will have to know how to read each individual element and notice how each element contributes to creating an overall meaning. Furthermore, students will have to understand the dynamic essence of reading since nowadays readers become active readers who, in turn, become authors of their own messages (Kress, 2010, pp. 18-19).

Picture books are an example of multimodal texts. The ultimate meaning of the

picture book is created by a careful intertwining of different modes: linguistic (written words), spatial (layout and design of characters and objects on the page), movement (created by the dispositions of lines in the pictures), body language (gestures and positioning of the body) (Martens, Martens, Hassay, Loomis & Aghalarov, 2012, p. 287). Also, some of the books chosen for this research are actually told from the perspective of a child, making it easier for students to establish emotional connections with the material and, thus, perceive it as relevant.

In these books the meanings are created by both the verbal and the visual modes. Unlike illustrated books, in picture books, both the verbal and the visual mode have the same weight on meaning production. Thus, the way in which we read picture books has to follow the logic of space, not of time. The way readers access the text depends entirely on the readers themselves and on what draws their attention.

2.3. Reading an image

In his book, D. A. Dondis (1974) expresses that as in written texts syntax orders words appropriately to create meaning, the same happens in visual texts: images also have a syntax that orders the visual system. Dondis (1974) states that readers create meaning as well as the artist producing the image. Students well know that in order to read a text they should read from left to right, top to bottom, and line by line. In picture books apart from following this conventional way of reading the text, students should learn how to read the image and consider it as a kind of text that has to be read in order to understand the book. Images have been carefully designed by the authors and everything in them has some meaning.

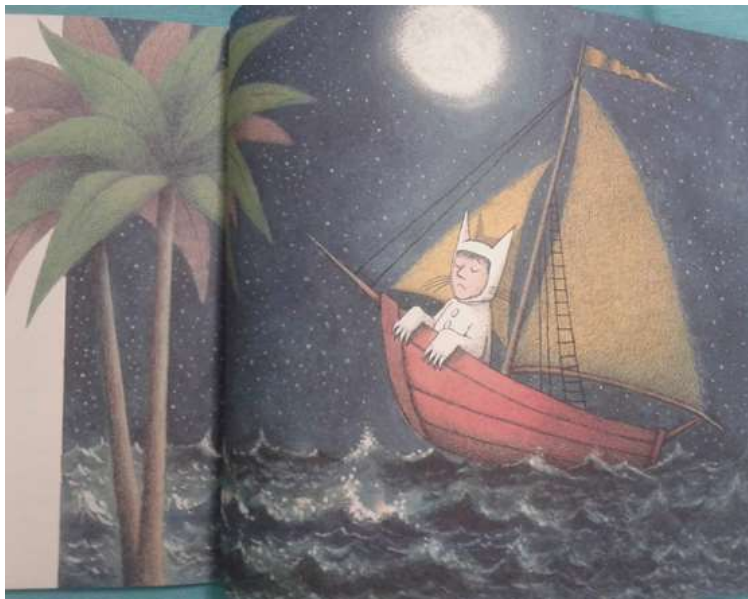
In order to be visually literate it is necessary to understand the significance of individual elements in the image such as colour, tone, line, texture, among others. It is the combination of all these elements in an image that creates meaning in the stories. One of the most distinctive elements that catches children's attention is colour. Different colours can transmit feelings. For example, yellow can evoke a feeling of happiness and white, feelings of purity. It is important to bear in mind that the meanings evoked by colours may

vary from culture to culture.

In the following section, we have selected pictures from different picture books to exemplify how each of these elements is significant in the creation of meaning.

Dot

The dot represents the “simplest, irreducibly minimum unit of visual communication” (Dondis, 1974, p. 40).



Picture 1. Creation of meaning by means of dots. *Where the wild things are*. © 2013. M. Sendak

Line

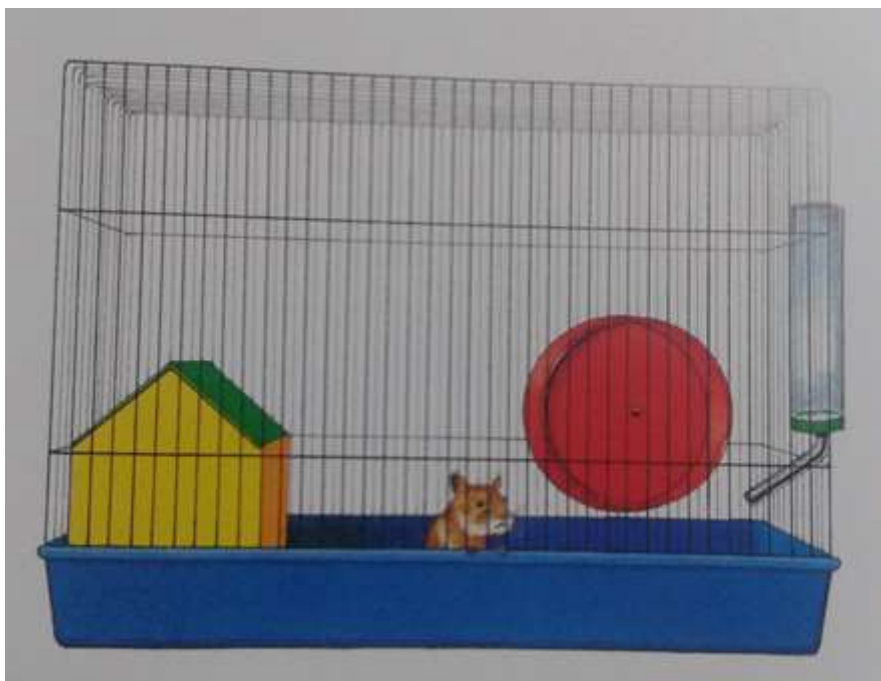
Lines are a bigger unit of visual communication. “When the dots are so close to one another that they cannot be individually recognized, the sensation of direction is increased, and the chain of dots becomes another distinctive visual element, a line” (Dondis, 1974, p. 42). Lines help to direct the viewers' attention to or away from a particular focus.



Picture 2. Creation of meaning by means of lines. *Zoo*. © 1994. A. Browne

Shape

Line describes shape. Shapes are flat and simple figures (Dondis, 1974, p. 44).



Picture 3. Creation of meaning by means of shapes. *Zoo*. © 1994. A. Browne

Direction

There are different visual signs that convey the meaning of direction. “Every basic shape expresses three basic and meaningful visual directions: the square, the horizontal and vertical: the triangle, diagonal; the circle, the curve. Each of the visual directions has strong associative meaning and is a valuable tool in making visual messages” (Dondis, 1974, p. 46). The square usually represents stability, straightness and balance. The triangle symbolizes tension, conflict and action. And the circle is used to express protection, warmth and repetition.



Picture 4. Creation of meaning by means of visual directions. *Piggybook*. © 1994. A. Browne



Picture 5. Creation of meaning by means of visual directions. *Voices in the park*. © 2001. A. Browne



Picture 6. Creation of meaning by means of visual directions. *El bosque*. © 2004. A. Browne

Tone

Tone is understood as “the intensity of darkness or lightness of anything seen” (Dondis, 1974, p. 47). Tones help to set different moods for an image and influence the viewers’ interpretation of the characters’ feelings.



Picture 7. Creation of meaning by means of tone. *El bosque*. © 2004. A. Browne

Colour

Together with tone, colour is used to express the characters’ feelings towards other people or their surrounding context. “Colour provides information. It has symbolic meanings” (Dondis, 1974, p. 50).



Picture 8. Creation of meaning by means of colours. *El bosque*. © 2004. A. Browne

Texture

Texture taps upon the memories collected by our sense of touch. “Texture is the visual element that frequently serves as a stand-in for the qualities of another sense, touching” (Dondis, 1974, p. 58).



Picture 9. Creation of meaning by means of texture. *El zoo de Joaquín*. © 2011. P. Bernasconi

Scale

Scale is a visual meaning making sign that provides us with information about the characters' perception of what is going on around them; e.g.: the idea of powerlessness projected by an element that is a higher scale in relation to the main character. “All visual elements have the capacity to modify and define each other. The process, itself, is the element of scale” (Dondis, 1974, p. 59).



Picture 10. Creation of meaning by means of visual scale. *Zoo*. © 1994. A. Browne

Dimension

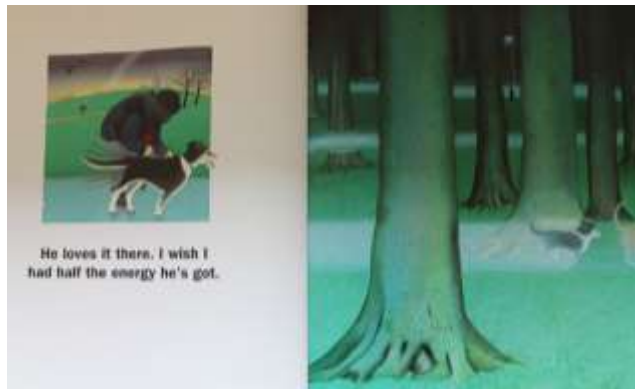
Dimension offers viewers a representation of the characters' point of view. The value placed on a person, object, etc will be registered in the design of the image. “Representation of dimension in two-dimensional visual formats is also dependent on illusion” (Dondis, 1974, p. 62).



Picture 11. Creation of meaning by means of the representation of dimension. *Voices in the park*. © 2001. A. Browne

Movement

The element of movement is clearly conveyed by the use of straight lines. “The visual element of movement, like dimension, is more often implied in the visual mode than actually expressed. The eye also moves in response to the unconscious process of measurement and balance through the “felt axis” and left-right, top-bottom preferences” (Dondis, 1974, p. 67).



Picture 12. Creation of meaning by means of movement. *Voices in the park*. © 2001. A. Browne

3. Research

3.1. Setting

This research explored how language strategies applied to the reading of postmodern picture books can have an impact on the reading proficiency of L2 young learners. This research was carried out with 75 children from a 3rd grade of a semi-private primary school in city of Córdoba. The material selected was based on students' age, accessibility to reading material and topic related to the unit students were learning. The picture book selected was *Intercambio Cultural* by Isol since it allowed us to deal with different language topics students have studied such as animals and the modal verb “can” to talk about abilities. This book also lends itself easily to the teaching of values. The book is written in Spanish so teachers had to adapt it into English.

3.2. Methodology

This is a case of action research so we worked with our own classes. First, books were selected taking into account students' age, language level and topics suitable to match the content of the syllabus. Once the appropriate material was selected, different activities were planned taking into consideration the integration of reading comprehension strategies with content and language instruction (Oxford, 1990). We also talked to the art teacher of the institution to see if, from her subject, she could help to carry out this project by teaching students how to read images. She introduced the groups of students into the basics of reading pictures like the use of line, colours, emotions and feelings provoked by them, among others. To make it clear to the art teacher what our objective was, we shared with her the book *Picture This: How Pictures Work* by Molly Bang (2000). This is a book that provides readers with a thorough analysis of how images work in picture books.

When we started working with *Intercambio Cultural*, we taught and asked students to work with (cognitive) reading strategies like prediction, establishing associations and guessing from context cues by looking at the cover of the book. Students were also encouraged to guess the emotions of the characters by reading the visual content of the cover page. During the reading of the picture book, students were asked questions that helped them to focus their attention on different cues that would allow them to predict, establish further associations with context cues, with previous knowledge and with their own lives, and link words, sounds and images. These activities meant that students had to use compensatory and cognitive language strategies when reading. The comments that students made during the reading and post reading tasks made evident that students could successfully draw on the different modes to understand the meaning of the text. Students on their own also created phonological associations between words that shared similar sounds or that were minimal pairs. This association works as a proof that students were carefully paying attention to the auditory mode since they had a clear purpose to do it: a change in sound could spark a different meaning represented by the visual or written mode. Students were reading picture books multimodally. As a post reading activity, students were encouraged to respond to the text by creating a drawing. The drawing activity was an extension activity in which students had to find connections between the content of the picture book and their daily lives. While students were drawing, teachers talked to students

who were crafting images according to what they had learnt in the art class and during the analysis of the text. The language used to talk about their drawings showed that they were able to retrieve knowledge and use the appropriate grammar and language that had been previously taught.

The use of the different language strategies was assessed through observation of whole class reading strategy instruction using picture books; the talking drawing technique (Paquette, Fello & Jalongo, 2007) and interviews were used after students were exposed to certain strategy instruction. Some students were interviewed separately during break time. Individual interviews (Appendix) were carried out in Spanish since students lack the language level to talk about the topic of language strategies. The first questions were always general questions about the story to set the mood for the interview. All the other questions made students reflect on their reading comprehension skills. All different modes of assessment showed that students were able to analyse the text and comprehend it successfully.

3.3. Results

Through classroom observation, it was noticeable that students' level of motivation was high. Most students were happy with the degree of novelty and challenge that the material presented. The pre teaching of image cue to understand pictures proved to be extremely valuable to put compensatory strategies to use. Students showed that they are excellent readers of images and more than once they surprised the researchers by gathering more meaning from the images than the researchers had been able to do. Due to students' motivation to understand the story, they were receptive of teachers' explanations of language strategies and they risked their use whenever they thought it would be appropriate. Students were also eager to help their weaker peers to put these strategies to use by repeating the teacher's explanations or by explaining parts of the narrative. In this way, students could retrieve more knowledge of the content topics (animals and the modal auxiliary verb can) and, at the same time, reinforce language strategy instruction. The Talking Drawing strategy is a strategy that helps researchers dwell on each individual learning process (Paquette, Fello & Jalongo, 2007), so researchers could inquire about the

strategies that weaker students in their classroom had put to use and how effective they had been for them. The individual interviews (Appendix) confirmed that students thought that reading strategies were effective for the understanding of texts.

4. Conclusion

In order to teach language strategies in reading in the second language classroom, it is necessary first to provide students with basic content knowledge. After acquiring this knowledge, students can concentrate on the reading task ahead. Picture books proved to be motivating for students who were focused on task, were receptive of teachers' instructions and participative in the different classroom interactions. The teaching of art cues to understand the multimodal texts was a powerful tool for students to unravel deeper meanings hidden in texts and understand how the different meaning making signs work together.

Due to the visual, auditory and verbal input of the stories, students were willing to invest time and effort in understanding the text. The use of different reading strategies proved useful for all students since even the weaker ones could actively participate in whole class activities and were able to produce meaningful responses in the post reading task.

These positive results in whole class and individual tasks evidence the fact that the explicit teaching of reading strategies has a positive effect on the reading comprehension strategies of young learners. At the same time, the results establish a solid ground to suggest that multimodal texts are materials that easily lend themselves to the teaching of reading strategies since they catch students' attention and motivate them to be on task during extended periods of time.

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APPENDIX

1. ¿Te gustó la historia? ¿Qué parte te gustó más?
2. ¿Qué te ayudó a entender la historia?
3. Las estrategias que te dio la seño, ¿te sirvieron para entender el texto de una mejor manera?
4. ¿Qué estrategia te sirvió más? ¿Por qué?

Sewing the injuries of exclusion by teaching English through literature

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1. Introduction

The National Law of Education n° 26,206 has made it a priority to develop inclusion in Argentinian schools by expanding educational opportunities to all members of society in diversity of levels and modalities. In addition, the incorporation of an intercultural perspective in EFL teaching has greatly contributed to developing integrating language practices, which feature a more reflexive approach to FL cultures as well as new ways of looking at Spanish-speaking cultures. In this scenario, literature has become a door to new opportunities, a mirror to discover others and to reflect upon ourselves.

When students encounter literature in their mother tongue they do it for pleasure most of the times. Then, why should not we raise our students' awareness of the feeling aroused when reading stories or poems in English? Moreover, literature becomes a vehicle for students' cognitive and social development as they see problems from different viewpoints, deal with abstract concepts and get involved in high level thinking processes. When students are exposed to stories, poems or songs illustrating diversity of cultures and human relations, they are provided with opportunities to establish connections with their own experiences.

The idea of diversity in Education arose during the last decades of the twentieth century with the aim of overcoming the homogenized look and providing more inclusive approaches and strategies acknowledging the differences among people, the citizenship rights and the responsibilities of the states (Anijovich, 2014).

In this way, a pedagogical approach that considers diversity an inherent human condition, and therefore a value to respect, is the one that acknowledges that each person is born with different biological load and s/he develops in multiple social, cultural economic and educational contexts. In education, inclusion implies similar opportunities to learn to all students independently from their social and cultural conditions as well as their different

abilities. However, these opportunities should provide personalised experiences framed by National Curriculum.

EFL teaching through literature should entail inclusive practices. This paper seeks to show ways of materialising them into three target groups highly stigmatised as excluded from mainstream: the access to equal educational treatment in the case public secondary students with Autistic Spectrum Disorder; the access to formal economic resources as in the case of youngsters in vulnerable socioeconomic situation taking part in an English programme from a nonprofit foundation and freedom in the case of young adults deprived of liberty attending an English workshop at a Federal Penitentiary Facility. Through the intercultural approach this paper shows how stories are instrumental in catering for the special needs of ASD students; how modern and simple songs foster the motivation for learning of economically deprived teenagers in the seeking of better life prospects; and how poems are useful in pulling down bars and exercising liberty in the case of young adults deprived of freedom.

2. Why literature?

Being language and culture so closely related, it seems easy and almost natural to imagine that it is through literature that the learning of a foreign language occurs. There are texts everywhere and they are present in diverse genres: songs, chants, rhymes, sayings, stories, fables, plays, quotes, and novels among others. Diversity of voices in diverse contexts show the way in which English speaking peoples see and perceive the world. However, it is still necessary to provide substantial reasons for using literature in the EFL class.

Collie and Slater (1999) contribute with some relevant ones. First, the use of literature in English teaching is highly motivating. Collie and Slater (1999) believe that if students are familiar with literature in their mother tongue, discovering some literature in English can provide interesting and diverse perspectives of shared situations as well as thought-provoking reflections towards both languages.

Second, it provides access to cultural background. Literary texts in English reflect the rich and fascinating diversities of our world. They are written by author living in many different countries and widely varied cultures. At the same time, literature seems to provide a way of contextualising how a member of a particular society might behave or react in a specific situation. As John Cobertt (2007, p. 41) puts it,

the *intercultural* learner is one who is linguistically adept (although not *native speaker* proficient) who has skills which enable him or her to identify cultural norms and values that are often implicit in the language and behaviour of the groups he or she meets , and who can articulate and negotiate a position with respect to those norms and values.

Thus, the response to cultural aspect of literature should always be a critical one, so that the underlying cultural and ideological assumptions in the texts are not merely accepted and reinforced, but questioned, discussed, deconstructed, evaluated and reconstructed.

Finally, literature encourages language acquisition as well as it expands students' language awareness since it provides a particularly appropriate way of stimulating this acquisition as it provides meaningful and memorable contexts for processing and interpreting a new language.

3. What does inclusion mean in education?

UNESCO Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education (2009, p. 8) defines inclusive education as the process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out all learners and can thus be understood as a key strategy to achieve EFA (Education for all). As an overall principle, it should guide all education policies and practices, starting from the fact that education is a basic human right and the foundation for a more just and equal society.

Thus, inclusion is seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all children, youth and adults through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities and reducing and eliminating exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision that covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children. (UNESCO: 2003)

In relation to this, Marchesi and Martin (1998) classify equality in education in three levels:

1. Equality in the access: All students should have a place to be included at school.
2. Equality in the educational treatment: Similar curricula, resources and mandatory stages should be offered to all students. However, they should be adjusted

considering their diversities, which means revising ways of organising teaching and evaluation.

3. Equality in the results: All students can achieve good results independently from their diversities.

Along these lines, Argentinian National Law of Education 26,206 fully acknowledges diversity and favours inclusion. Thus, in its article 11 clauses *f*, *k* and *n* state the goals and aims of the national educational policy:

f) To assure the conditions of equality, respecting differences among people without admitting gender or any other type of discrimination.

k) To develop capabilities and offer opportunities to study and learn necessary for lifelong education.

n) To provide a pedagogical proposal for temporary or permanent disabled people which allows the highest level of development of their possibilities, integration and the complete exercise of their rights.

In this scenario, It becomes crucial for educators to acknowledge diversity by recognising students characteristics and to establish a personalised teaching-learning process as well as to be able to foster inclusive settings from which diversity could be understood as a point of departure to expand any learning experience from instructive to educational for all the members of the class.

4. How does literature sew the injuries of exclusion?

4.1. Literature to expand possibilities of developing abstraction

The 2014 3rd ESO English class at Dr. Maradona Public Secondary School attended three periods of forty minutes of A1-A2 English lesson every week. The group consisted of fifteen 14-year old students and two of them suffered from Autistic Spectrum Disorders.

Valdez (2015:33) defines ASD as a developmental disorder and states that every educator who attempts to grasp ASD should do it from an evolutionary perspective. Similarly, Alberta Learning Program for Students with Special Needs (2003, p.9)

characterise people with Autistic Spectrum Disorders as having language and communication difficulties including delay or lack of expressive language, repetitive speech, restrictive vocabulary, tendency to insist on a topic, inappropriate facial expressions, unusual gestures, lack of eye contact and difficulties with the pragmatic of the conversation.

Being excluded from the possibilities of acquiring mainstream levels of abstraction in language learning due to this developmental disorder, my ASD students presented a limited scenario for the teaching and learning processes. Therefore, teaching English through literature allowed me to adapt to that situation and maximise their possibilities of acquiring knowledge.

In this case I worked with the story *Stand Tall Molly Lou Melon* by Patty Lovell. All the activities were thought considering the scaffolding in object-picture-word in the abstraction process of ASD students. The unit was called “people” and the aims were:

- To recognise and use vocabulary related to physical appearance
- To recognise and use vocabulary related to personality
- To identify parts of a story
- To recognise specific vocabulary from the story
- To reflect upon the importance of being unique and accepting others differences.

Before reading the story I provided post-it blocks for students to label and to stick on their partners all the body parts they knew. So we could concentrate in new vocabulary. After that I showed a picture of the Molly Lou Melon, the main character of the story, and asked them to describe her. She was very short, and had enormous eyes, with short, black curly hair and dark complexion. I wrote the title of the story on the board and asked the students to make some predictions and I recorded them on the board. ASD students were very concrete in their answers.

Then I started telling the story with digital visual support. While telling the story, I stopped and had the students make questions and text-self connections in English and in Spanish. There were only eight new items of vocabulary to concentrate on four related to physical appearance and four expressions about personality. They were short, buck teeth, squeaky voice, fumble finger, shrimp, buck tooth beaver, sound like a sick duck and make

the something all wrong. I introduced each of them with flashcards and vocabulary cards so that they were able to connect each object with each word.

As post-reading activities, students retold the story collaboratively in an oral form and then individually in a written one. For this activity they divided a sheet of paper in four sections and wrote first, next, then and last in each section. They had to draw a picture and write one sentence of what happened in each part of the story.

After that and in order to make text-self connections and to reflect upon the importance of being unique and accepting others' differences, each student drew a Venn diagram where they wrote Molly Lou Melon on one side and his/ her name on the other. Students had to write the way in which the two were alike in the middle, write the way the two were different in the circles by using the vocabulary about physical appearance and personality they knew and they had learned.

Then, they shared their productions by reading them aloud and reflect upon the importance of accepting others by answering these questions: *What was different about Molly Lou Melon? How did Molly Lou's grandma make her feel special? Why did Ronald Durkin feel foolish? How did Ronald Durkin change? Have you ever felt like Molly Lou Melon?* These reflections were done in English and in Spanish. Last, students listen and read the poem Millions of People by Jane W.Krows as a follow up of the class.

Literature and English teaching entail inclusive practices when through some specific activities like the ones described above, students are able to use the foreign language to communicate with others, to develop coherent ideas relating the text and themselves and to make the text-self reflections as well as to reflect upon values. Pedagogically speaking, ASD students are included to the rest of this public school class when through Literature and English teaching, in this case, they are able to achieve their highest possible level of abstraction like the rest of the students.

4.2. Literature to motivate: The sky is the limit

The second instance of EFL teaching through literature inclusive practice in diverse contexts is the one developed at "Pescar" Foundation English programme for youngsters in vulnerable socioeconomic in the city of Río Grande. "Pescar Argentina" Foundation is a non-profit organisation which main goal is to foster and develop actions focused to strengthen the link between education, youth and work. In order to achieve that, the

foundation has different activities among which the programme “Pescar Centre- Educating for work” outstands. This consists in the implementation of educational centres that provide personal and vocational training to young people from vulnerable contexts. The program seeks to foster the global development of young people motivating them to adopt new routines, attitudes of coexistence and citizenship with the aim of recovering the meaning of the “Work Culture” and promote the full social and labour insertion. The centres work in company through social franchise model and make Pescar networks at national level.

As these youngsters attend an English programme as part of the vocational training, every session of this workshop is planned for students to develop the four skills and to put in action the English they learn at school in varied contexts, from diverse voices and with multiplicity of strategies. From this perspective, literature works as a motivational resource for the chosen literary expressions are songs.

For Gilakjani (2012, p.1) the success of any action usually depends on the extent to which individuals strive to attain their purpose, along with their desire to do so. In general, people have come to refer to this psychological factor – the impulse that generates the action – as motivation. As the term itself indicates, it is a —motive force, something that prompts, incites or stimulates action. Regarding EFL learning motivation could be defined as external if the reasons for learning a foreign language are outside or intrinsic or internal if they will is strictly personal (Scrivener, 2011).

Without cognitive limitations, this target group faces exclusion due to the difficulties to have access to the formal methods of wealth production and limitations in economic resources to upgrade social and educational living standards. Therefore, having access to knowledge in this case becomes essential in this case. Framed in a unit called “Dreams” in which students have the opportunity to speak about their goals, the plans for the future and visions there are three songs that triggered this issue. *S.I.N.G* by My Chemical Romance, *Gold* by Britt Nicole and *Fireworks* by Katy Perry.

Teaching English through literature by means of modern and simple songs triggers the intrinsic motivation to generate the necessary will to achieve goals and aims in life. Working with songs provides not only the linguistic development through the practice of the listening and speaking skills but also the development of social and cognitive skills by establishing connections between the text and themselves, providing opinions and in that way developing their critical thinking. This deployment of strategies as a whole supplies

the sample of a better life project. This is made evident when after finishing the programme, almost all young adults continue their superior studies. These results show concrete evidence of inclusion as these students are the first persons in their families to have access to university studies.

4.3.Literature to exercise freedom :The soothing power of poetry

The third instance of EFL teaching through literature inclusive practice in diverse contexts is the one developed at Ezeiza Federal Penitentiary Facility with young adults deprived of liberty attending an English workshop by means of reading and writing poetry to experience emotions.

Poetry is everywhere, across language and culture. They can tell stories of events or describe beautiful scenes. Poems connect us with the past and the world around us through universal emotions like love, hate, grief and wonder. Moreover, using poetry in EFL teaching promotes cooperation and communication as well as individual expression in the foreign language. Poetry can be used as a valuable resource to introduce and practice language by exposing students to authentic models-real language in context (Brumfit & Carter, 1987). According to Tomlinson (1989). using poetry contributes far more to the development of language skills in real contexts than "a total concentration on the presentation and the practice of language items"(p.42). Poems provide students with an opportunity to enrich their vocabulary in a new way by offering meaningful context, in which they could be used and hence be remembered more effectively (Lazar, 1996; Norstrom, 2000).

Poems encourage students in developing their creativity while providing a break from regular classroom routines (MacKay, 1987). As students study the poems, they can simultaneously discover interesting ideas for creative writing. According to Collie and Slater (1987), "using poetry in the language classroom can lead naturally on to freer and creative written expression" (p.72).

From this perspective, learning English in a workshop to expand learning possibilities of people deprived of liberty, the idea of using poetry started as a means of gentle, non-threatening communication since techniques for teaching intonation, using adjectives, verbs, pronunciation and syntax as well as for offering the students other means of expressing feelings are easily explored with poems. However, as these young adults are

excluded from developing individual liberties because they are serving sentences in a Federal Penitentiary, reading and experimenting with poetry not only expands their possibilities of expression of their emotions but also made them aware of the power of words. Besides, facing the task of writing poetry in English implies immersing themselves into an endless linguistic search compared to the linguistic context inmates live in, where the prison code outlines communicative situations.

I decided to work with thematic units introduced by poetry. This time the unit was called “Patterns” and dealt with the fact that all languages use patterns and the patterns make languages easy to remember and fun to learn. Starting with mere recognition and repetition of simple linguistic patterns in English to get familiar with the language, students felt comfortable and confident enough to make some changes in the provided patterns and create their own. Thus, they were able to write ABC poems, acrostic poems, shape poems, haiku poems among others. In this case, teaching English through literature becomes an inclusive practice since allows these people deprived of liberty feel similar to a free people in the search for beauty.

5. Conclusion

Inclusive education entails that children, youngsters and adults should have similar opportunities of learning independently from their social and cultural condition as well as from their different skills and capacities. However, having similar learning opportunities does not imply that they should be standardised. On the contrary, it is about providing educational opportunities that focus on diversity within national curriculum documents and that are at the same time appropriate to the special needs of each person avoiding the fragmentation of the educational system. To make this change in education we should consider an inclusive society where the lack of equality should be questioned and discussed in order to achieve social cohesion and where positive attitudes and values are key to develop practices for inclusive education (Arró, 2004).

Likewise, the shared experiences of teaching English through literature by means stories, songs and poems from an intercultural approach to these three target groups: ASD students at public secondary school, youngsters from vulnerable economic contexts and young adults deprived of freedom provide real instances of inclusive practices in which literatures sews the injuries of exclusion.

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Cooperation across borders: Designing an intercultural space for blended learning

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1. Introduction

This paper describes the experience of designing a blended learning intercultural space for students of Spanish Language II at Salerno University through the cooperation between their course lecturer and myself, an EFL teacher educator specialised in learning technologies, based in Argentina. It surveys the theoretical and practical considerations informing the project's design, describes its implementation and presents reflections by the students and teachers involved.

2. Context

This paper reports part of a wider research project: "[Construcción de espacios interculturales en la formación docente: competencia comunicativa intercultural, cultura regional y TIC](#)"⁽¹⁾. The aim was to explore the development of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) in a context mediated by learning technologies (LT).

The starting point was the video [¿América o las Américas?](#) (duration: 8 minutes) designed by some members of the project, which introduces the diversity covered by the term “America” as well as a survey of the processes of independence and state formation in the 19th century. As Besso Pianetto, Donato and Pozzo (2015) explain, available materials which introduce historical topics meant for native speakers use specialised theoretical terms and/or demand an advanced linguistic competence that makes them unsuitable for the teaching of Spanish as a foreign language. On the other hand, materials designed for foreign learners are found lacking in coherence and rigour, or focus exclusively on grammatical aspects, or reinforce regional stereotypes. In contrast, the rationale for the series of videos starting with *¿América o las Américas?* is to create potential intercultural spaces that will be actualised in each view. The script itself, written by History lecturers in initial teacher education, presupposes its educational use, but the profuse use of visually attractive elements contributes to its motivational impact without any overt didacticism.

This video was used in a Spanish Language II class taught in the second year of a three-year degree programme in Foreign Language and Culture at the Humanities Department of Salerno University. The students' initial language ability is CEFR B1, with an expected B2 level at the end of the course. The cultural component of this programme centres on the study of Literature, and does not integrate History systematically. The course lecturer, however, applies a CLIL approach in which the use of the language of, for and through learning contributes to the development of ICC, and has chosen the socio-cultural history of Spanish-speaking countries in America as the content of learning (see Theiner, 2015 for a theoretical background and details of materials and topics selected). Seeing that she had a limited background in the use of LT, we set up an international partnership to which I contributed my experience in this field in order to design a blended learning intercultural space for the development of ICC in the 2014-2015 academic year.

3. Theoretical framework

Blended learning (BL) has been defined by Garrison and Kanuka (2004) as the “thoughtful integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences”, (p. 96), and Picciano (2009) stresses that this integration should be carried out in “a planned, pedagogically valuable manner” (p. 8). As Bair and Bair (2011) point out, “the particular combination of instructional strategies and technologies to be blended will depend on the needs of the students, the instructor, and the particular course content” (p. 12).

Both in distance education and in blended learning settings a Learning Management System (LMS) is a frequent choice, which Lai and Savage (2013, p. 5) attribute to practical considerations such as the ease for content distribution and the control of communications and administrative matters (2013, p.5). However, its focus on the delivery of materials means that implementations “tend to perpetuate the traditional instructivist models of education” (Lubensky, 2006). Yet it is true that LMSs today offer a number of customisable features and enable the integration of rich non-textual content and links to external elements. As Lane (2009) points out, it is in the hands of faculty to make LMSs serve their own pedagogic objectives instead of being enslaved by default settings.

In their discussion of online learning materials, Schwartzman and Odetti (2011) contrast the concept of educational materials, which has the sole aim of transmitting

information, and of didactic materials, which adds to the former the aim of having the reader understand and learn, and has thus been structured to conform to a sequence and specific learning objectives. From this perspective, didactic materials include not only those centred on contents, but also instructions, guidelines and even the presentation of the course syllabus, for example, and they should integrate different semiotic modes on the understanding that textual form and design are also part of the content. Schwartzman and Odetti regret that digital materials are often simply digitised versions of paper formats for online reading or printing, and even if they are hypertexts, the links to other texts (or even images or videos) are conceived as supplementary, that is to say following the same logic as footnotes in hard copies. In contrast, Odetti (2013) advocates the use of multimodal materials accompanied by tasks that call for meaningful questioning and interaction to encourage higher order cognitive processes. In addition, Sankey, Birch and Gardiner (2010) have reported that students consider multimodal resources enjoyable to use and beneficial for their learning.

4. From Rosario to Salerno, and back

4.1. Preliminary considerations

From the outset of the project it was agreed that the course lecturer in Italy would have the leading role, so that LT would be introduced to “guide, enhance and support student learning” (Lai & Savage, 2013, p. 7). Given the size of the class (76 students enrolled, with only about half attending face-to-face lessons) and the limited contact hours (two hours a week with the course lecturer, in two terms extending from October to December and from February to May), we opted for the design of a virtual classroom within the LMS belonging to IES “Olga Cossettini”, where I work, which would be used exclusively by this class and where we could integrate the content generated.

It was essential to gauge the experience that the Italian students had in online environments before making any further decisions, so I devised a questionnaire about their online activity, which was administered by their course lecturer in a face-to-face meeting. There were 23 respondents, 21 of them aged between 19 and 21. The summary of answers, which can be found in Appendix A, showed that even though the students use multiple devices to access the Internet, of which the mobile phone is the most popular, and spend a significant amount of time online, in their daily life they do not engage in the production of

online content or use email regularly. More importantly, they are not acquainted with Web 2.0 tools.

Consequently, we decided to resort to a few user-friendly tools, preferably with an interface in Spanish. I wrote simple tutorials for them, the course lecturer opened a Facebook group to communicate more efficiently and she organised students in ten groups, each of which appointed a secretary responsible for the submission of cooperative tasks.

4.2. Design

My primary concern was to make the LMS environment simple, attractive and easy to use for the students and the lecturer herself, who had no previous experience either (see Appendix B). In the general customisation I removed any elements that would not be used during the course and changed some labels so that functions would be as transparent as possible. For the home page I selected two skyline photographs, one of Rosario and the river and one of Salerno and the sea, to suggest differences and similarities between the cities. I kept the content of each of the 15 lessons to a maximum of two screens to avoid unnecessary scrolling, hyperlinked files with longer texts so that they could be downloaded when closer reading was required, and used bold type and font colour consistently to highlight information and instructions. The LMS automatically lists all related content (files, sites, activities) at the bottom of the lesson, but I also hyperlinked them to the text of the lesson.

As regards the non-textual elements, a number of photographs, videos and maps were provided by the course lecturer, but I personally looked for images that would make the text more meaningful to the students, such as book covers for the extracts from primary sources or photographs of monuments to American historical figures located in Europe. I embedded all images and videos instead of hyperlinking them so that they would be automatically integrated with the text and therefore perceived as a multimodal unit.

4.3. Activities and tools

The course lecturer first drafted the work that would turn the educational video *¿América o las Américas?* into didactic materials suitable to the aims and needs of her class and emailed them to me. I studied her plan, selected some web tools, shared them with her, and then we held a Skype session in which we discussed options and analysed the feasibility of

certain courses of action. What followed were countless emails over the months – sometimes ten a day– and several other Skype sessions to give shape to the course as it unfolded, making adjustments in view of the students’ performance and response. I must underscore the open-mindedness of my colleague, who was eager to explore a number of resources which were new to her and was willing to modify some of her initial ideas to make up for the limitations of some tools or to profit from their features.

The tools used are detailed below, with links to the activities designed.

Free online tools (either with both a Spanish and an English interface, or with customisation that makes knowledge of English unnecessary)

a- Predictions and summary (collaborative work): *Lino* <http://linoit.com>. This online bulletin board allows the choice of colours for stickers without user registration and provides an embed code. It was used several times during the course with good participation levels. (To see examples of [predictions](#) and [summary](#), you should click on the hyperlinked words.)

b- Video activities (individual work): *Educanon* www.educanon.com. It enables the teacher to create a course, register students and insert exercises such as open questions, fill in the blanks or multiple choice in videos already available online. The resulting activity can be embedded and individual scores and mistakes can be analysed. This was used for the initial video comprehension activities and was completed by 24 students. (To see the [example](#), you should click on the hyperlinked word.)

c- Timelines (collaborative work): *TimelineJS* <http://timeline.knightlab.com>. It only requires filling in a Google Spreadsheet to link a variety of multimedia materials to text, order them chronologically in categories and embed the timeline while still under construction. No sign-in is required. It was used once but a number of students had difficulties using it. (To see the [example](#), you should click on the hyperlinked word.)

d- Matching and labelling (individual work): *Educaplay* <http://en.educaplay.com>. This platform offers a variety of exercises (puzzles, jumbled sentences, wordsearch, etc.) that can be shared as a link or integrated in an LMS as a SCORM package (we used the latter option). Few students completed them and we later discovered that the LMS did not provide details of student performance. (To see examples of [matching](#) and [labelling](#), you should click on the hyperlinked words.)

LMS dependent tools

a- Tests (individual work): The options offered by the LMS are matching, multiple choice and fill in questions, which are corrected automatically. They were used for practice (not assessment) on two occasions: one exercise on spelling (15 answers) and one on the capitals of American countries (19 answers).

b- Forms (individual work): This tool is meant for surveys but it was used for open ended questions in response to two videos comparing agricultural land reform in [Mexico](#) and [Spain](#). Feedback was provided by email.

c- Document submission (cooperative and individual work): This was used for the analysis of temporal constructions, tenses, cohesion, pronoun reference, argumentative force, tone and attitude and for writing activities involving response to materials, research and intercultural reflection. For a few of the exercises a key was emailed back upon submission, but most of them received individual correction and feedback online and were then discussed in the classroom.

4.4. Closing stage

At the end of the course a Skype interview was set up at the University computer lab for the students in Salerno to interact with the teacher who had designed the video *¿América o las Américas?* in Rosario. The students showed great enthusiasm and involvement (the turnout to class was unexpectedly high) and the Argentinian teacher was impressed by the depth of some questions and the learners' eagerness to interact in spite of limited linguistic resources for some of the topics.

Questions had been planned in class in advance, and, seeing that several referred to the LMS itself and the institution in Rosario which hosted it, I decided to create a final lesson called *Backstage* and a forum to address those queries, since time constraints prevented their inclusion in the Skype session. This lesson's content was covered by 31 students, but none posted in the forum, presumably owing to the fact that the exam period was starting when it was set up.

5. Students' feedback

Together, the course lecturer and myself designed a final survey for students, which was administered through a form in the LMS and was completed by 19 respondents, all of whom had been actively involved in the online component.

As regards the LMS itself, 4 students stated that it was very easy to use, and 15, that in spite of some initial problems they had quickly learnt how to manage it. In connection with the activities, as shown in Figure 1, the main areas of difficulty identified involved dealing with the demands of cooperative work and of the historical and socio-cultural content addressed.

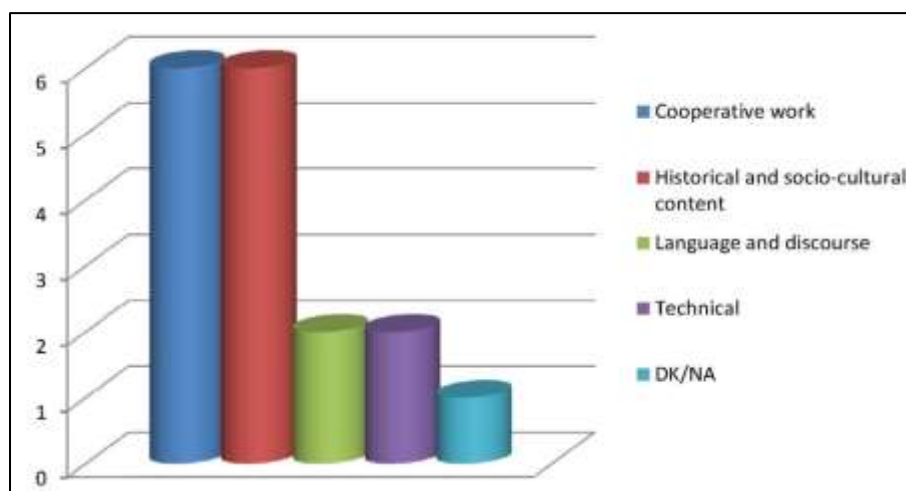


Fig. 1: Difficulties experienced.

Regarding the usefulness of the online activities (Fig. 2), students valued all aspects, particularly those related to content learning rather than the foreign language.

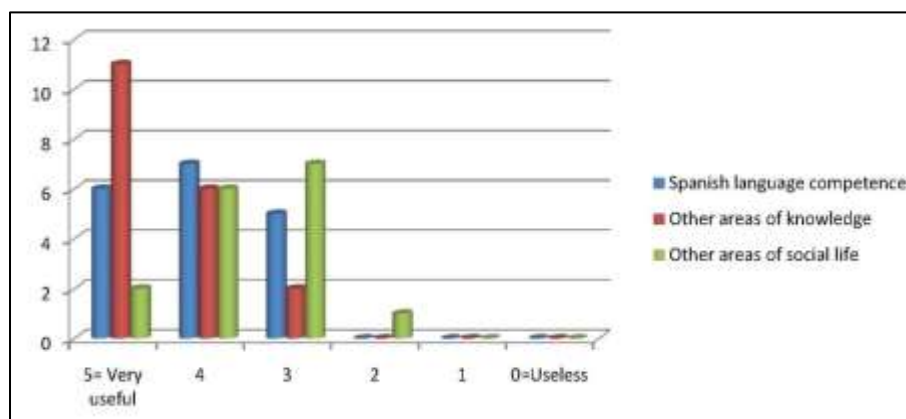


Fig. 2: Usefulness of online activities

With reference to the positive impact on their learning of the different components (Fig. 3), self-check exercises received the most favourable review. We can posit as an explanation the immediacy of the feedback and the perception that these exercises would be more similar to those in final exam. Videos, images, maps and the Skype meeting were

assessed very positively (Over 75% of the students gave them either 4 or 5 on the usefulness scale).

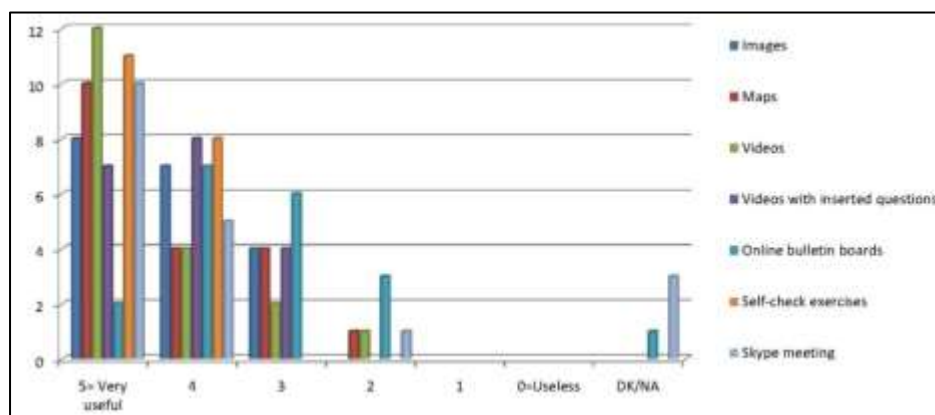


Fig. 3: Benefits for learning process

When asked to put forward suggestions for future work, several students mentioned that more time would be welcome to complete tasks and asked for more individual activities and for interaction and collaboration with students and teachers in Argentina. We would like to quote two responses regarding online work in particular:

Creo que el campus virtual es una buena aún así necesita demasiado tiempo. En todas maneras no tengo sugerencias porque creo que es muy claro y fácil. (Student 1)

Seguir asociando videos a los trabajos de escritura. Las imágenes dan una mayor intensidad sobre los temas tratados. (Student 2)

6. Students' performance

The course tutor notes that attendance rates were consistently higher than in the previous academic year, which she attributes to the fact she dealt with many of the online activities in the classroom, either to clarify expected outcomes or to address issues arising from student performance.

The final exam pass rate was also much higher: 61.5% vs. 40.2%. Only one student who had been a member of the groups working on the LMS failed, though his low attendance record suggests that he had not been actively involved.

7. Final remarks

Conclusions regarding ICC itself are the subject of another article by the research group (forthcoming), but this experience strongly suggests that the development of a BL intercultural space has a positive impact on learning, at least as long as certain conditions

are met. Firstly, pedagogical considerations must prevail over technical choices so as to ensure that full advantage is taken of technological environments instead of allowing their behaviouristic logic to permeate teaching. Secondly, the online and classroom interface must be coordinated and multimodal resources need to be integrated with textual ones so as to offer students a wider range of affordances to enhance learning.

Considering that teachers often lack the time and resources to create effective BL environments, we believe that the answer lies in cooperation. We have shown it can work across borders. What stops us then from looking for partners in the same school or anywhere in the world?

Notes:

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Appendix A: Students' online activity

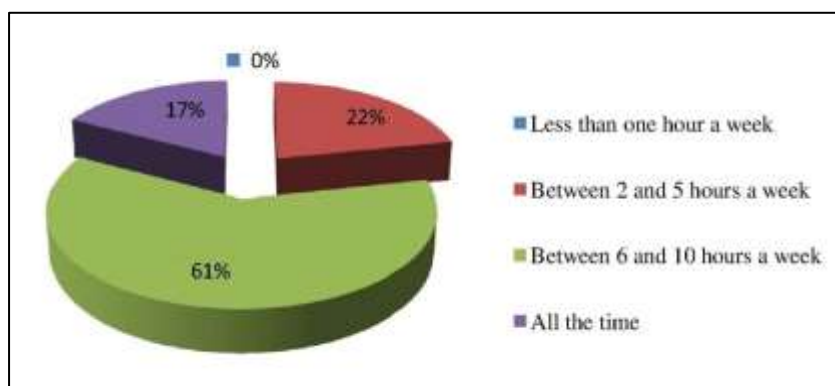


Fig. 4: Frequency of access

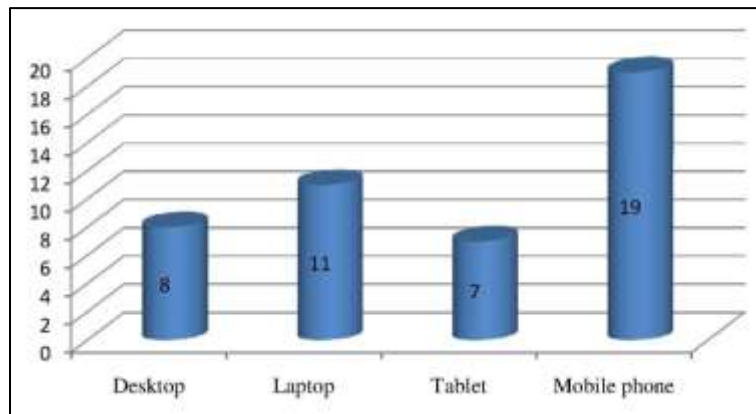


Fig. 5: Method of access

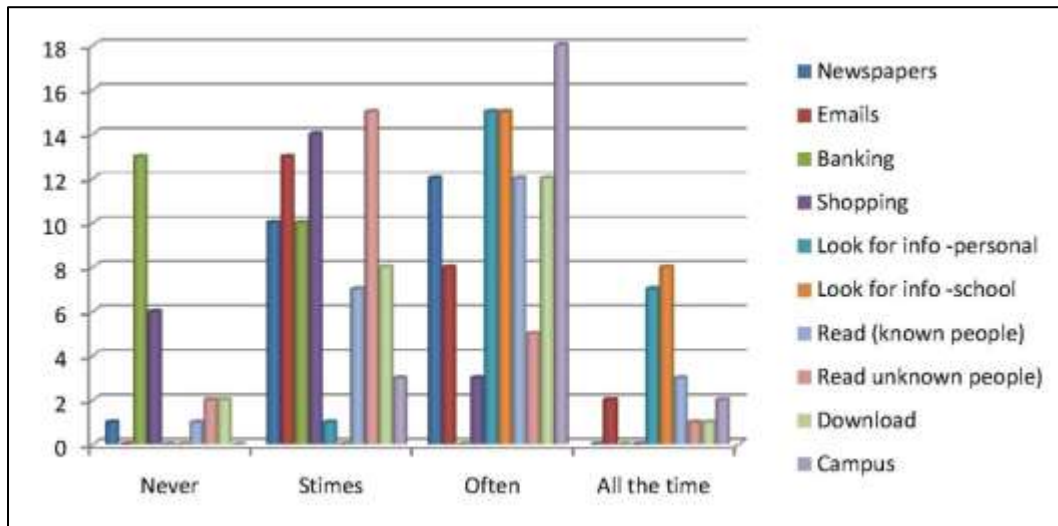


Fig. 6: Online activities (specific tasks)

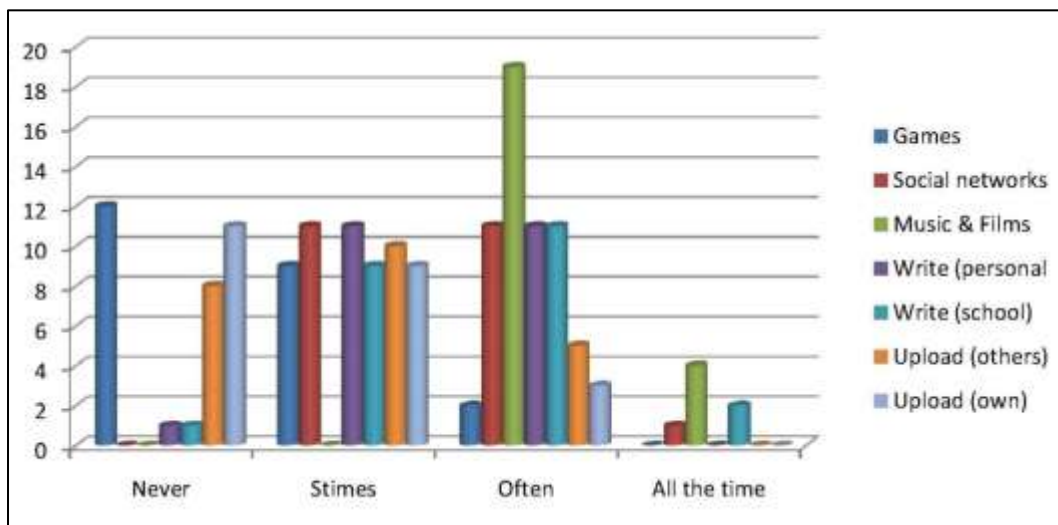


Fig. 7: Online activities (entertainment and content production)

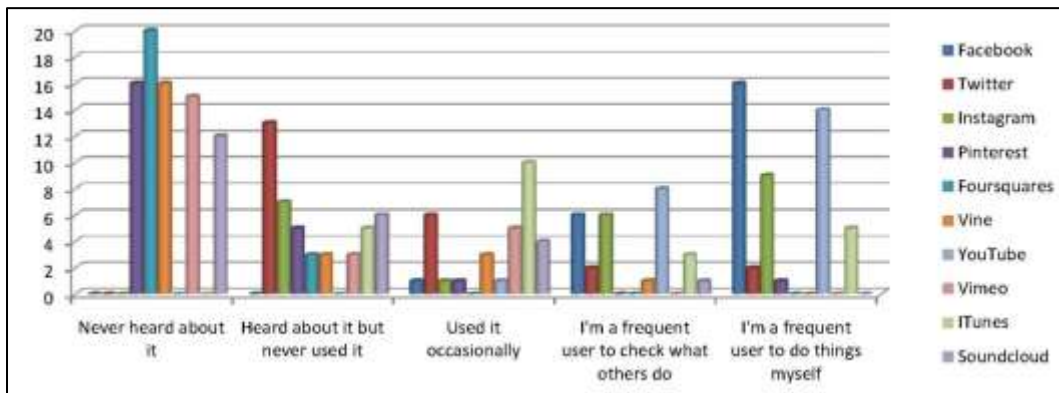


Fig. 8: Tools and apps (social purposes)

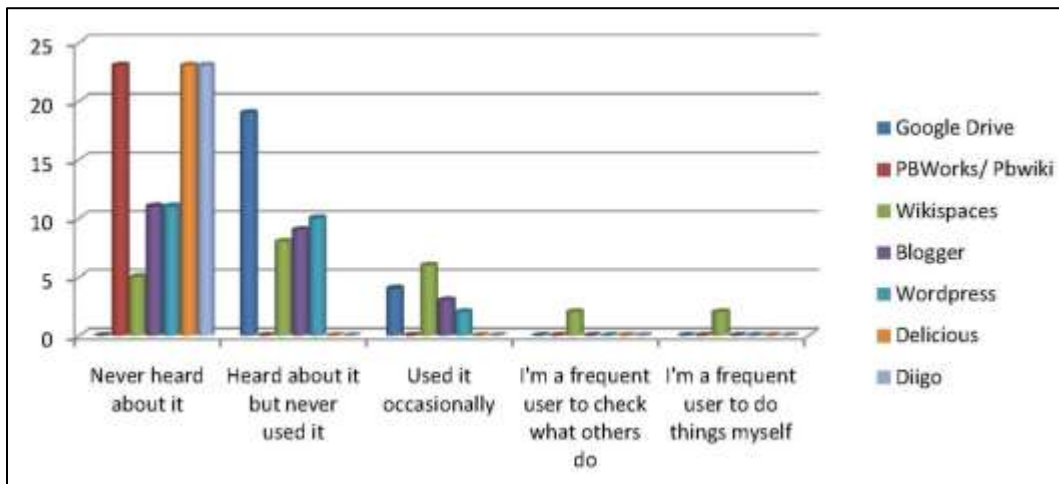


Fig. 9: Tools and apps (academic purposes)

Appendix B: Screenshots from the LMS



Fig. 10: Home page



Fig. 11: Tutorial

Fractured tales for future teachers: Genre-based writing pedagogy in teacher training

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1. Introduction

One of the challenges of teacher training (TT) in Argentina is the need to reorganize and unify curriculum designs for foundation training programmes for the tertiary level throughout the country. Nonetheless, new curriculum designs continue to address contents in three basic areas: General Teacher Training, Subject Specific Training and Professional Practice Training, hindering the integration between theory and practice. The case of language teacher trainees is further complicated by trainees' need to continue learning the language throughout the four-year programme while learning the necessary teaching skills for effective professional practice often with that same language as a code, which might be understood as a particular idiosyncrasy of these EFL learners.

The current functional conceptualization of English as a Lingua Franca (Canagarajah, 2007; Jenkins, 2006) stresses the transactional dimension of language in transcultural communication, thus the focus of language teaching has started to place particular emphasis on the skills needed to achieve communicative effectiveness, while linguistic accuracy appears to be secondary to broader pragmatic competence. However, that approach would be detrimental to English language teacher trainees, who are meant to integrate into national and international academic communities as educators and modellic language users, displaying expertise in both teaching and the English language. Hence, unlike other EFL learners, trainee teachers should achieve native-like proficiency as well as comprehensive linguistic understanding. Furthermore, they are likely to teach English according to the tenets of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in primary and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in secondary school with specific disciplinary orientations, thus, the need to provide the future professionals with sound theoretical foundations to adapt their teaching to various

contexts and fields. Therefore, it is necessary to find ways for trainees to learn a writing pedagogy that could be applied and adapted for specific contexts.

Teaching writing has always been considered an essential skill in ELT. The traditional product approach provided little in the form of teaching strategies; then the process approach identified four recursive interactive stages in writing: (1) prewriting, (2) composing/drafting, (3) revising, and (4) editing, yet the focus remained on the outcome. The Cognitive Process theory – first introduced by Flower and Hayes (1981) in *A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing* and later revisited by Hayes (2012) in *Modelling and Remodelling Writing* – explores expert writers' cognitive processes and provides a series of axioms, explained, modified and expanded in later research. The initial working model was made of three elements: the task environment, writer's long-term memory, and writing processes necessary to complete the task. Even though each of these intellectual planes appears to demand specific cognitive processes, the complexity of creative composition by expert writers demands their constant juggling and juxtaposition to suit the writer's micro and macro goals at each stage. The task environment defines both the "rhetorical problem" the writer is to solve (the writing assignment in the college situation) and the written text itself, since writers are expected to create units of meaning with certain generic and registerial coherence as well as cohesion.

While the authors provide a clear outline of the cognitive processes, non-native writers may lack knowledge of the culture specific norms that inform their choices in guiding purposes, establishing relationships, and shaping their texts. Hyland (2003a) introduces Genre-based pedagogies to provide explicit explanations on how rhetorical choices are determined by social contexts. The Genre-based Pedagogy is based on the notion that, genre refers to abstract, socially recognized ways of using language that members of a community usually have little difficulty in recognizing similarities in the texts they use frequently and are able to draw on their repeated experiences with such texts to read, understand, and perhaps write them relatively easily (Hyland, 2007, p. 149).

This type of instruction emphasizes the culture specific aspect of genres and the need for EFL teachers to gain awareness of culture specific features as well as the

methodological techniques to enhance their own and their students' rhetorical effectiveness, by exploring the sociolinguistic context of texts.

The aim of this paper is twofold: first, I describe the application of Genre-based writing pedagogy in a TT syllabus; second, I assess graduates' perception of the benefit of this methodology in aiding personal writing skills, their understanding of the composition process, the importance of generic conventions and the semiotic resources of the language.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides a detailed account of the context, subjects, topic selection, objectives, evaluation criteria and activities included in the unit of work designed for the study. Section 3 provides an account of the data collection instrument in this qualitative research. Section 4 presents the results and discussion. Section 5 concludes the paper and identifies future lines of work.

2. The study

2.1. The participants

Teacher trainees at ISFD y T N°10 complete a 4 years' training program, along which they are expected to produce and study different kinds of texts both in English and Spanish. This TT programme requires students to take a 7-month foundation course to guarantee an Intermediate level (CEF B1) for admission into the formal TT training; in this course 4 hours a week are devoted to writing skills. Written Expression is also part of the curriculum for freshmen (4 hours a week), and sophomores (4 hours a week). During these courses the "expressive model of writing" is applied to foster students' creativity and confidence in the use of the language.

In Written Expression III, students have 5 weekly hours of instruction. The course is divided in 4 units, dealing with the production of dialogues, fables, reviews, re-narrations of folk tales, and discursive essays. While formal grammar is not compulsory in Written Expression III, needs analysis has yielded the need to include both grammar, as remedial teaching, as well as creative writing for the sake of motivation and instrumental use of such texts as teaching materials in the future. The unit of work presented in this paper has been

used since 2007, with alterations in the choice of texts for reception, writing prompts and vocabulary domains. The subjects interviewed have all finished their training and are currently working in varied contexts. Six graduate teachers were asked to assess the teaching methodology and applicability in their teaching contexts.

2.2. Topic selection

The creative genres selected for the course are based on the types of texts used in primary and secondary schools; the ubiquity of fairy tales and characters in mass media and even didactic material provides a feasible framework for the introduction of these stories in the TTC curricula, as teacher trainers need to develop critical reading skills to eventually foster non-sexist attitudes and better equip young learners with the skills to defy stereotypical behaviour and discrimination.

The genres chosen for reception and analysis were folk tales and fractured tales, the last ones serving as models for written production. Folk tales are entertaining stories containing elements of popular and practical wisdom that were orally transmitted for centuries, as a way of teaching and sharing cultural values. As classic versions tend to present a rather patriarchal and traditional conception of society, authors such as Tanith Lee and Margaret Atwood, among others, have created their own versions of the texts, subverting and problematizing both ideological and aesthetic elements of the genre. Hence, fractured tales result in thought-provoking quittings to the originals that offer fruitful topics for analysis and discussion.

2.3 Objectives

The objectives of the unit of work were provided in the course syllabus given to the trainees at the beginning of the course; these were later used to design the questionnaire for data collection, and they are listed in the following section.

2.4 Assessment

The unit of work included two types of assessment: formative and summative. Formative assessment is meant to monitor students' learning and provide ongoing feedback on personal strengths and weaknesses as writers, as well as to identify problems and areas for improvement. This type of assessment was instrumental in monitoring the process of text production and was carried out cooperatively by means of class discussions, peer-correction and instructor-student interviews. Summative assessment was used to grade students' productions using the analytical scoring instrument devised for this particular unit. As this instrument was used with trainee teachers, it is worth mentioning that it has the extra benefit of evidencing the way genre and text analysis can guide the formulation of objectives and desirable outcomes.

Fairy Tale assessment criteria

Task: 10

- Recognizable relation with the source tale
- Introduction, climax and resolution
- Use of dialogue
- Use of stock characters
- Use of description for both characters and setting

Content: 10

- Originality
- Clear relation with the clues or instructions provided
- Resolution consistent with characterization, conflict and conventions of the genre

Coherence: 10

- Complete sentences
- Consistent point of view and referencing
- Clear narrative cohesion
- Consistent tone

Grammar: 10

- Accurate use of narrative tenses
- Subject-verb agreement
- Accurate use of adjectives, adverbs, gerunds and infinitives.
- Functional use of emphasis and relative clauses.
- Direct speech

Vocabulary: 10

- Informal register
- Idioms that express comparison and phrasal verbs
- Specific verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverbs.
- Accurate use of simple collocations

2.5 The activities

The task sequence for this unit of work has also been designed following the task cycle proposed by Feez (1998) and explained by Hyland (2007). In this case, this arrangement has resulted particularly suitable because of its flexibility. Since the outcome for the unit is not a single text but a brief collection of stories, students were able to re-enter the task cycle at any stage after producing the first re-narration.

Building the context: revealing genre purposes and the settings in which it is commonly used.

- Discuss students' knowledge about Folk literature in general and Fairy tales in particular
- Share ideas about favourite characters and what makes them special
- Discuss the moral of each of the tales and personal feelings about those teachings from an adult perspective.
- Read and discuss "Fairy-Tales Discourse: Toward a Social History of the Genre" by Jack Zipes; "Peasant Tell Tales: The Meaning of Mother Goose" by Robert Darnton.

Modelling and deconstructing the text: analyzing representative samples of the genre to identify its stages and key features and possible variations.

- Analysis of representation of children, women, men, family relationships, social order, generic conventions, narrative strategies and linguistic features of famous fairy tales: "The Gingerbread Boy", "Snow White", "Rapunzel", "Sleeping Beauty", "The Twelve Dancing Princesses"
- Analysis and comparison of representation of children, women, men, family relationships, social order, generic conventions, narrative strategies and linguistic features in fractured tales: "Thorns" (re-narration of "Sleeping Beauty"), "Blood Red" (re-narration of "Snow White") "The Popsicle Boy" (re-narration of "The Gingerbread Boy")

Joint construction of the text: guided, teacher-supported practice in the genre through tasks which focus on particular stages or functions of the text.

Fractured Tale 1 Students carry out these tasks:

1. Brainstorm ideas for a re-narration of Snow White for a specific rhetorical situation (speaker: first person narrator, audience: teenagers or adults, and purpose: entertain). Main element to include: Snow White is a male.

2. Share and discuss ideas in class and get feedback and suggestions on content, originality and plot.
3. Produce a plan.
4. Write draft 1: Include different narrative tenses, flashbacks and dialogue.
5. Share draft 1 in class and get feedback on plot, characterization, intertextual relation with original story, use of narrative tenses, flashback and dialogue.
6. Write draft 2: Edit and improve draft according to feedback received, including specific vocabulary and idioms.
7. Email draft 2 and get feedback on improvements and use of language.
8. Edit and email final draft.

Fractured Tale 2 Students carry out these tasks:

1. Brainstorm ideas for a re-narration of “The Gingerbread Boy” for a specific rhetorical situation (speaker: first person narrator, audience: teenagers or adults, and purpose: entertain). Main element to include: edible girl. Humorous tone.
2. Produce a plan to share and discussed in class and get feedback.
3. Write draft 1: Include different narrative tenses, flashbacks, chant or repetition, and dialogue.
4. Share draft 1 and get feedback on plot, characterization, intertextual relation with original story, use of narrative tenses, flashback, colloquial dialogue, etc.
5. Write draft 2: Edit and improve according to feedback received and include structures of emphasis, specific vocabulary related to food and cooking, and idioms.
6. Email draft 2 and get feedback.
7. Edit and email final draft.

Independent construction of the text: independent writing by students monitored by the teacher.

Fractured Tale 3 Students carry out these tasks:

1. Brainstorm and produce a plan to be shared and discussed in class.

Re-write “The Twelve Dancing Princesses” using as a cue the following introduction:

Detective Gardener Climbs Royal Ladder

“It’s a dream come true! This is the proof that wit and ingenuity can beat social order,” explained Mr. Locke, professor of philosophy at the University of Edinburgh. The news of the young gardener who managed to marry into royalty has made the headlines around the world.....

2. Write draft 1.
3. Share draft 1 with a peer and get feedback on plot, characterization, intertextual relation with original story, use of narrative tenses, flashback, colloquial dialogue, etc. They use the assessment criteria as a guideline.
4. Write draft 2: Edit and improve using peer’s feedback and include structures of emphasis, verbs followed by gerunds/infinitives, specific vocabulary related to family relationships and household and idioms.
5. Email draft 2 and get instructor’s feedback.
6. Edit and email final draft.

Fractured Tale 4 Students carry out these tasks:

1. Brainstorm and produce a draft to be shared and discussed in class; peers provide feedback on content, originality, plot, characterization, intertextual relation with original story, use of narrative tenses, flashback, colloquial dialogue, etc.

Re-write your favourite Fairy Tale, change the setting (19th century, London) Point of view (1st person narrator or 3rd person limited narrator)

2. Write draft 2: Edit and improve using peer's feedback and include all the structures studied in the unit plus specific vocabulary on a topic of their choice (Selected from *English Vocabulary in Use Upper-intermediate/advanced*)
3. Email draft 2 and get instructor's feedback.
4. Students edit and email final draft.

Linking related texts: relating what has been learnt to other genres and contexts to understand how genres are designed to achieve particular social purposes

1. Students choose one of their stories to be samples of fractured tales for future students, and – if they are willing – publish them in the instructor's webpage for the subject.

The final stage in this cycle is only completed once the students need to apply their knowledge of genres to analyze other types of texts. In this case they will compare fairy/fractured tales with discursive essays.

3. Assessment instrument and data collection

This is a single exploratory case study analyzing former trainees' opinions, attitudes, and perceptions towards a specific unit of work; although non-experimental in nature, a qualitative research instrument was sent to ten students chosen at random. The subjects were required to answer questions about the year when they had taken the subject, the main

age-group they worked with, tick objectives achieved in the unit on writing fractured tales, and general comments.

Data collection was limited by the fact that graduates rarely remain in contact with the institution upon graduation. The teachers who completed the interview were between 25 and 32; one took the subject in 2009, three in 2010, and two in 2011. When asked about their students, four stated they teach mostly teenagers, one mostly children and one mostly adults.

4. Results and discussion

Personal writing skills		
Enhance your creativity	4	66.7%
Produce your own teaching materials	2	33.3%
Adapt materials to young learners	4	66.7%
Use informal and colloquial vocabulary in meaningful contexts	4	66.7%
Practice grammar patterns in a meaningful context	3	50%
Gain awareness of cohesive devices	5	83.3%
Expand your vocabulary	6	100%
Improve your strategies for self-correction	6	100%
Edit texts	4	66.7%
Use specialized dictionaries	5	83.3%
Understanding of the composition process		
Gain awareness of the writing process	5	83.3%
Generic conventions and linguistic choices		
Gain awareness of grammatical choices and choose the most suitable for the genre	5	83.3%
Gain awareness of genre-specific linguistic conventions	5	83.3%
Gain awareness of the rhetorical situation (context, speaker, audience message, and purpose) in texts in general	6	100%
Improve critical reading skills to spot sexism, stereotypes and discrimination	4	66.7%

Analysis evinces the effectiveness of this teaching pedagogy to enhance both trainees' comprehension of the writing process and writing skills. All the teachers agreed on the effectiveness of this methodology to enhance their awareness and understanding of the functional nature of language, and the importance of situational contexts in the process of composition. When asked whether creative writing should remain in the curriculum, they all stated that it should. One of the teachers explained that "[she] enjoyed Creative Writing so much, that [she] even think about writing tales for children in the future." Another claimed that "it is important to teach creative writing because it fosters imagination..." while a third wrote that "[she] greatly enjoyed creative writing as it helped [her] exploit [her] full potential as a writer..."

5. Conclusions

This brief exploratory research yields encouraging results. Results suggest the effectiveness of both genre pedagogies and the use of creative writing as an instructional context; both have been assessed as engaging instrumental means of exploring both the importance of generic analysis in TTC and the writing process. The main strengths of this study are the application of the methodology in the production of multiple texts and the use of retrospective self-evaluation by participants, yet a larger sample might allow further generalizations. Complementary research should also explore the impact of peer correction and IT resources on novice teachers' practice.

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Self-monitoring based on agreed-on assessment criteria in EFL writing

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1. Introduction

Fostering learner autonomy has become more important than ever before and, as a result, the relevance of language learning strategy training is widely acknowledged. Strategies-based instruction is a learner-focused approach to teaching that emphasizes explicit integration of learning strategies in the classroom, which may assist students in learning the target language more effectively. Despite the importance of metacognitive strategies, Lam (2009) argues that there is need for further research in English as a second and foreign language. Besides, some studies show that learners use strategies only sporadically. In fact, investigations of second and foreign language learning have revealed that students use crucial metacognitive strategies, such as self-monitoring, less often than cognitive and social affective ones.

2. Writing assessment

Many EFL students face difficulties in passing writing examinations since they are unfamiliar with different forms of assessment and the criteria used to evaluate their writing. This reveals the importance of developing writing assessment practices that enhance the teaching and learning process. Among these practices, teachers need to make choices as regards assessment types and criteria.

When it comes to types of assessment, a distinction is made between *formative* and *summative* assessment (Goodman & Swann, 2003; Hyland, 2003). The former is not normally graded so it has a teaching function. On the other hand, the latter is formally

graded. According to Brown (2007), formative assessment may serve a useful function since it can familiarize students with the demands of writing in a non-threatening way. Because formative assessment is a teaching tool, it should be closely tied in with adequate feedback. Apart from teachers' feedback, there are ways in which students themselves may contribute to assessment. These may involve peer feedback, through which students evaluate the work of other students, and self-assessment, through which they evaluate their own work.

As to assessment criteria, teachers may use criteria without showing them to students but we take the view that such criteria should be transparent. Therefore, these should be discussed with students to make the teachers' interpretation of the criteria explicit and to achieve a joint understanding of what is valued in writing. An important decision teachers have to make when establishing assessment criteria is whether to break down the grade to identify strengths and weaknesses or simply award an overall grade. The former is referred to as *analytic evaluation* and the latter as *holistic evaluation*. In this study, teachers prepared guidelines for self-monitoring based on their assessment criteria turning a holistic scoring scale used for final exams into a set of questions intended to make students reflect on the content, organization and language use of their essays for the purposes of formative evaluation.

3. Language learning strategies

Language learning strategies are the ways in which students learn how to improve their skills in a second or foreign language (Oxford, 1990). Taxonomies of language learning strategies have been published by various authors (O'Malley & Chamot, 1994; Oxford, 1990; Rubin in Weaver & Cohen, 1997). According to Oxford (1990), strategies can be classified into direct and indirect. Direct strategies deal directly with the language (e.g. cognitive strategies). Indirect strategies deal with the general management of learning. In this class, we find metacognitive strategies. These strategies, which help learners regulate their learning, include three strategy sets: centering learning (e.g. overviewing), arranging and planning learning (e.g. setting goals) and evaluating learning (e.g. self-monitoring). Their role is to oversee the learning process by enabling learners to think ahead of the task, plan for it, and assess how well they have done it.

Research reveals that learning strategies influence proficiency in a second or foreign

language. In fact, researchers have found that the use of strategies typifies good language learners (Green & Oxford, 1995; Oxford, 1990; Weaver & Cohen, 1997). In spite of the support that the strategy movement has received, the emphasis has primarily been on the teaching process. More recently, however, language teaching has become more learner-focused with an emphasis on helping students become less dependent on the teacher. As a result, no longer does the teacher act as the source of instruction. Instead, learners are sharing the responsibility and becoming more autonomous (Benson, 2001).

Learner autonomy has been defined as "the capacity to control one's own learning" (Benson, 2001, p. 291) and as "a process that enables learners to recognise and assess their own needs, to choose and apply their own learning strategies or styles eventually leading to the effective management of learning" (Peñaflorida, 2002, p. 346). In fact, successful mastery of a foreign language depends to a great extent on learners' autonomous ability to take initiative and make progress beyond the classroom and the teacher (Brown, 2007).

4. Research review

Metacognition has been of interest to language researchers since the mid-1970s as it enables learners to become aware of what they learn (Brown in Wong Mei Ha & Storey, 2006). In fact, since the 1990s, self-reflection has been considered a meaningful process in learning. The methodology of assessing learning has shifted from the teacher to the student. In fact, students' self-monitoring has become an essential element to raise language learners' awareness and promote their autonomy. The usefulness of self-assessment as a tool for assisting learners is widely accepted by researchers. Indeed, Moritz (in Kato, 2009) regards self-assessment as a component of learner-centered and self-directed foreign language learning.

As regards metacognition and the writing skill, evaluating is essential. Nevertheless, even if research has explored the criteria teachers use to evaluate foreign language writing, little attention has been paid to the factors that students value when assessing their own writing (Edstrom, 2006). Students' perspectives, however, are an important source of information for teachers and should play a central role in shaping the teaching and learning processes. In fact, a review of writing research found that teacher feedback was most effective if it was focused on student self-assessment (Hillocks in Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990).

A study by Xiang (2004) investigated the use of self-assessment in Chinese students' writing and revealed that it is effective to improve the organisation of their compositions. Along similar lines, Kasper (in Wong Mei Ha & Storey, 2006) incorporated self-reflection into ESL writing and found it useful in giving learners control over their writing as they engage in goal-directed behaviour and increase their competence. Wong Mei Ha and Storey (2006) studied the relationship between metacognition and the performance in writing of a group of ESL learners at university who were put in self-editing groups. The findings suggested that both awareness of and ability in writing were enhanced.

This review of studies indicates the paucity of work on the impact of metacognitive strategy instruction on writing and provides a justification for more research.

5. The current study

The metacognitive strategy of self-monitoring used in this study consists in checking one's written production while it is taking place by identifying and trying to eliminate mistakes. This strategy was selected from Oxford's (1990) and O'Malley and Chamot's (1994) taxonomies of language learning strategies.

6. Materials and methods

The context of this study is the School of Languages, National University of Córdoba. The sample consisted of 33 students belonging to two intact classes enrolled in English Language II, an upper-intermediate course belonging to the second year of English Language Teaching, Translation Studies and Licentiate programmes. Two EFL teachers that received training in how to conduct strategies-based instruction also participated in this study.

A multi-method approach to assessing the effects of strategy instruction was used. The following strategy assessment tools were employed: writing tasks to measure changes in observable strategy use, and written surveys to help students reflect on their strategy use before and after instruction.

The students received metacognitive strategy instruction in self-monitoring for one month. The instructional approach adopted was explicit strategy instruction, which consisted of the two components suggested by Weaver and Cohen (1996): strategy training

and strategy integration.

During strategy training, the teacher raised the students' awareness of metacognitive strategies for the writing skill modelling and providing examples of the strategy of self-monitoring. The students made annotations on the margins of their writing tasks to self-monitor their production. Guidelines for self-monitoring on the basis of agreed-on assessment criteria were used to help students become aware of such criteria and reflect on the types of comments they made while self-monitoring their essays. These guidelines included questions about content, organisation and language use (i.e. lexis, syntax, punctuation).

After strategy training, self-monitoring was integrated into writing tasks to provide contextualised strategy practice. These tasks were analyzed to assess the effects of strategy instruction by measuring the changes in observable strategy use in students' essays after instruction. The annotations made by the subjects while self-monitoring were classified into three categories: content, organisation and language use. This information was used to determine the impact of strategy training in students self-monitoring and their awareness of assessment criteria.

The data obtained from the written surveys were analyzed to determine the students' perceptions of their use of self-monitoring before and after instruction, and their awareness of the teachers' assessment criteria.

7. Results and discussion

The analysis of observable strategy use after strategy training reveals that 91% of the students who participated in this study applied the strategy, which led to improvements in content, overall organisation and language use. These results show that most students considered that they needed feedback regarding language use and the organisation of their essays. These are some representative examples of self-monitoring from the data:

- I'm not sure about the use of the article here. I assumed that the reader would have a reference and I decided to keep it, but I'm still not 100% sure.
- Personal confession: I really dislike using these transition signals. Sometimes, they come out naturally and I feel comfortable with them -like the one that connects the second supporting sentence or the one that introduces the conclusion- but most of the times I have to force myself to use them!

- I found it quite hard to avoid repeating the information from body paragraph I. I tried to focus on “training” rather than “qualifications” and I even had to adjust the outline.

These findings seem to indicate that self-monitoring may be conducive to language learning, especially to greater learner autonomy, which, as research suggests, contributes to improved performance in the editing stages of the writing process (Peñaflorida, 2002).

The results of the pre-study survey showed that the majority of the students was not familiar with self-monitoring techniques and that they did not apply them to the writing skill prior to their participation in this study. Indeed, only 9% of the students said that they knew the strategy of self-monitoring; however, only one of them explained how to apply the technique. This student stated that it consists in reflection on the topic of the composition that leads to some adjustment of the conclusion in the revision stage, which reveals an incomplete understanding of the strategy.

The results of the post-study survey throw light on three main aspects of the writing process: students' use of self-monitoring strategies, their approach to revision, and their awareness of the teachers' assessment criteria. As regards the students' use of self-monitoring, 91% of the participants in this study said that they use the self-monitoring strategy taught in this course. In their opinion, the strategy helps them to engage in a sort of dialogue with the teacher in order to clarify doubts about their writing. They also maintained that self-monitoring facilitates the correction process since they become more aware of their own mistakes. The findings also revealed that, sometimes, students feel they cannot fully rely on their own assessment because they do not consider themselves as an authority to assess their writing or because their corrections do not coincide with those made by the instructor. Moreover, 9% of the participants said that they did not use the strategy because they could not think of any possible errors in their writing tasks. Despite this, in the post-study questionnaire, most students said that self-monitoring was useful since it helped them revise their essays and that they would like to continue using the strategy in future writing tasks.

In relation to the students' approach to revision, the findings revealed that all the participants in this study revise and edit their essays before writing the final draft. According to their self-perceptions, 91% of the participants did not have any difficulty in

applying the strategy, whereas 9% of them said that it was sometimes hard to think about possible mistakes in their own written productions. There is an interesting variety of approaches on the part of the students at this stage of the writing process. Twenty-five per cent of the students explain that they begin the revision of their essays by checking their content. For instance, they make sure that paragraphs are clearly connected in terms of meaning and that the main idea is well developed. Then, they center their attention on language issues such as grammar, spelling and punctuation. Many students, in fact 40% of them, make explicit reference to features pertaining to language use and the organisation of the essay, such as coherence, cohesion, use of connectors, syntax, vocabulary, punctuation, prepositions, spelling and style. Some students merely enumerate these aspects in a seemingly random sequence, whereas others prioritize them by checking the organizational aspects of the essay first and then focusing their attention on aspects of language use and mechanics, such as syntax, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation. Only 13% of these participants say that they take into account the readership. As one of them puts it, *"I reread my essay to check that the reader can follow the thread of ideas."* The remaining 22% of the students use different approaches at the revision stage. The following comments illustrate the various approaches these students use.

- I always focus my attention on the use of prepositions and collocations. Then, I check if each paragraph makes sense.
- I first revise my composition against the outline. Then, I check the word count and make adjustments if it is necessary trying to keep the same ideas. Finally, I check syntax and layout.

Regarding the students' awareness of the teachers' assessment criteria, the findings of the post-study survey show that 78% of the students knew the aspects that teachers focus their attention on when grading their essays after having agreed on them. They referred to specific aspects such as content and organisation, coherence, following instructions, syntax and lexis. Interestingly, however, 22% of the participants admit that they still are not aware of the correction criteria followed by the teachers.

These findings suggest that metacognitive strategy training encourages learners to take control of their learning processes by evaluating their own writing performance as their observable strategy use and self-perceptions seem to suggest. Even if it is often assumed that students can become autonomous on their own without any kind of

scaffolding on the part of the teacher, this is not always the case. As a result, encouraging learners to use metacognitive learning strategies for EFL academic writing may contribute to greater learner autonomy, which may eventually lead to "the effective management of learning" as Peñaflorida, (2002, p. 346) maintains.

8. Conclusion

Unlike previous studies (Gava, González de Gatti & Dalla Costa, 2013; González de Gatti, Dalla Costa, Gava & Kofman, 2012) in which students' self-monitoring was not based on assessment criteria, in this study, metacognitive strategy instruction based on assessment criteria has led to more positive effects on students' strategy use and self-perceptions. Finding out the aspects students notice as they self-monitor their writing has potential as a pedagogical tool since teachers can take informed decisions to tailor a course to students' needs. Besides, the use of this strategy provides opportunities for empowering students to develop autonomous writing skills.

As regards the limitations of this study, the results may not be generalised to a population outside this context. Therefore, the findings should be viewed as hypotheses to test with other groups of students. Moreover, the value of this work should be confirmed by larger studies that trace students' strategy use over a longer period of time.

Further studies could assess whether students' use of metacognitive strategies in leads to higher scores in writing tasks. They could also focus on strategy transfer, on variation in strategy use by proficiency level, and on the roles of teachers and students in strategies-based instruction.

The outcome of this study will be used to outline more comprehensive research that provides training in a wider range of strategies aimed at enhancing writing skills and promoting learner autonomy.

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Academic writing: A key challenge for higher education students

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1. Introduction

This work is part of a research study belonging to *Programa de Incentivos* at UNVM, period 2014-2015. The project “Teaching Configurations in Teacher Training Colleges at UNVM” consists of three lines of research, each of which corresponds to one of the three Teacher Training Colleges, namely, Spanish Language and Literature, Mathematics and English Language, and to two subjects: General Didactic and Specific Didactic. Our line of research “Audience, Purpose and Subject in Academic Writing” has been carried out by the English Teacher Training College (henceforth ETTC). The main purpose behind this study is to try to provide an answer to one of the many current challenges of teaching at university level: how to deal with students’ academic literacy process.

According to Paltridge and Starfield (2013) literacy implies interaction between teachers and students. However, teaching practices have proved such a statement not to be always the case. Only on few occasions is this interactive activity made explicit to students since they are expected to be already equipped with writing strategies when they start university. We should bear in mind that writing is key to develop, evaluate and transform knowledge. If we want our students to gradually start to partake in the scientific community, we have to aim our teaching practices towards that goal. Thus, in this paper our main objectives are:

- To show what the students at ETTC understand about academic writing (hereafter AW).
- To demonstrate what aspects of AW present major difficulties to the students of English Language.

- To specify what strategies the students apply when writing an academic text.
- To suggest measures to be taken that focus on the fundamental pedagogical need of working collaboratively throughout the curricula.

2. Theoretical framework

In the introduction we refer to the concept of academic literacy. We adopt Carlino's definition of literacy as "those notions and strategies that are necessary to not only integrate the discourse community of a discipline, but also to participate in those activities that imply the writing and analysis of texts required to learn at university"(2003, p. 410).¹ We define AW as the ability to respond to the demands for the development and spread of knowledge, which implies a social practice through the use of disciplinary written language, being English the predominant one (Coffin et al., 2003; Hyland, 2007; Wiggins, 2009). AW often implies playing a familiar game by completely new rules that are often unstated" (Irvin, 2010, p. 3). It is a foregone conclusion that taking part in a game whose rules are ambiguous or confusing can be complex. In fact, this productive macroability can be regarded as a valuable instrument among teachers to assess students' knowledge via diverse activities such as answers to questions, paragraph writing, essays in tests or final exams, compositions and papers, research reports, among others.

To achieve academic competence is an arduous task due to the diverse writing conventions, which vary according to the field or discipline in question as well as the language used to write (Leky & Carson, 1994). In addition, systematic training in AW is needed in order to offer students the adequate tools for them to gradually become part of the academia. More often than not those who want to be members of the scientific community lack such resources. The challenge for trainers of teachers-to-be consists in stimulating and orienting our students toward an academic culture. One way to guarantee that our trainees get involved in the scientific community is by training them in the use of writing strategies essential to elaborate texts that present the distinctive characteristics of an academic work.

At ETTC the writing macro-skill is taught following a process approach to learning. This process involves revising and editing the text at different stages (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Carlino, 2004; Flower & Hayes, 1981; Reid, 2000). Writing an academic text implies solving problems through the use of adequate strategies at the

various phases of writing. For the sake of brevity, we will briefly refer to the stages involved in this process and the strategies that students should be encouraged to use in their writing assignments. The first phase of the writing process encompasses drafting the composition –selecting and narrowing down a topic, deciding on the communicative purpose of the text, defining the audience and generating ideas, in which a myriad of writing strategies can be deployed (Ziraldó et al., 2015). Once the composition is drafted the main idea is written and the whole text is outlined. The second phase involves composing the text itself through rewriting. Last, a third phase consists in editing or revising the composition in which peer revision is recommended before the final revision by the instructor (Carlino, 2008; Reid, 2006). At ETTC peer revision is carried out with the help of editing guides designed by English Language teachers. These guides focus on text organization in terms of content, form and language use.

3. Methodology

The two-stage exploratory research from which this paper derives is still in process. The first part (2014) was a descriptive study about the use that professors make of teaching-learning strategies to promote AW which considers three elements as being key in every academic written work, viz., purpose, audience and subject. The study also concentrated on students' perceptions of what AW entails. In order to gather such data, 48 students and 12 professors at the ETTC answered a survey and a questionnaire, and the researchers analyzed the programs of the English Teacher Training course. Syllabuses of English Language I to IV were examined in order to probe whether any of the three constituents of AW was estimated as a key topic within the development of writing as a macro-skill, specifically, in paragraphs and essays. For instance, the analysis of textbooks on AW deployed in one of the subjects (English Language IV) showed that the vast majority disregards these three elements in writing instructions. Data triangulation allowed us to focus on those areas of AW which should be explicitly taught.

The second stage (2015), which is in progress, has consisted in the implementation of workshops held in the first semester for teachers and students at the English Teacher Training College. Such workshops were specifically designed to introduce effective measures aimed at helping the discourse community at UNVM to overcome the difficulties that AW presents. The material included in the workshops was planned taking into account

the need for making the conventions of AW explicit to students. The extension course was run in eight sessions whose consecutive workshops revolved around the following topics: Introduction to AW, consideration about audience, purposes in AW, selection of themes in writing, writing styles and conventions, cohesive elements and metadiscourse markers, the academic writing situation, and AW strategies (planning and peer correction). A final session was given in which the importance of AW was reconsidered.

4. Findings²

The presentation is circumscribed to data collected from students' questionnaires only. The answers of the 48 student participants varied according to their linguistic proficiency level in the foreign language. For the sake of clarity in terms of the interpretation of the data collected, we define as *beginners* the students of English Language I, *intermediate students* those attending English Language II and II, and *advanced students*, the ones taking English Language IV. We will proceed to analyze three essential aspects of AW: a) definition of AW provided by students, b) aspects of AW that students find difficult, and c) strategies they employ to write an academic text.

a) Definition of AW provided by students

Most of the *beginners* believe that AW implies the successful use of grammar rules, spelling, punctuation, coherence and cohesion. They also regard the use of formal, varied and specific vocabulary as an aspect of AW. A minority expresses that it is necessary to have vast knowledge of the topic to be developed in order to write academically. In addition, they contend that not only does the content of the composition have to be backed up by reliable sources, but it also has to be interesting. They notice that the organization of the written work is a key element in AW. Few *beginners* (4) maintain that knowing the genre or type of text to be written is one of the attributes that define AW. Only two *beginners* show that they bear in mind the audience or the community to which the text is addressed, whereas other two participants state that the coherence of the composition is another aspect of AW.

More than half of the *intermediate students* claim that chief attributes of AW are the following: formal register, precise organization of information, and a consideration of audience. A minority identifies as attributes of AW proper in-text citation, text coherence,

correct development of the content or topic, and organization of the material according to the message that the writer wants to transmit, inclusion of empirical evidence, adherence to conventions and text format, use of correct grammatical forms and outlining. Only one student in his group refers to other crucial aspects of AW which have not been analyzed: different ways to engage the audience, writing style and text structure, the use of other sources, cohesion, the development of sound arguments, research so as to gather information, objectivity in the presentation of the arguments, and critical thinking. Only two students think that the topic to be developed is a key element that defines AW.

Most of the *advanced students* (eight out of nine) coincide that the use of a formal register is one of the fundamental characteristics of AW. They define formal register as the use of specific vocabulary, passive voice structures, and full forms. They make an emphasis on the avoidance of repetition, the use of in-text citation so as not to plagiarize, and the inclusion of clear evidence aimed at providing sound arguments about the topic in question. Some of the students point out the importance of bearing in mind good text organization, and of being precise and coherent when writers communicate their ideas. Half of the students of this group makes reference to taking into account the audience. Three out of those five participants highlight that AW should address a specific audience, particularly, the scientific community. Only one of the students surveyed expresses that the choice of topic depends on whether the written work addresses laypeople or not. A minority (2) mentions the significance of considering the purpose of AW, among which they include “to communicate a new finding or refute a theory,” “to fulfil an assignment,” “to inform and/or discuss about a selected topic.”

b) Aspects of AW that students find difficult

The data derived from the surveys indicates that almost all the participants of this research study (38 out of 48 students) admit having difficulties in some of the aspects of AW, especially as to how to identify the standpoint from which the selected topic has to be developed and then how to elaborate an academic text about such topic. It must be highlighted that in the subject English Language the students must write formal texts not only in tests and final exams, but also throughout the academic year, which is in tandem with the pedagogical perspective adopted. Only a small percentage of the *beginners* declares to have no difficulties in writing a paragraph in a formal register. All the

intermediate students claim that they face problems about the perspective from which they have to write, namely the understanding of the instructions, narrowing down the topic or its perspective, the lack of specific and relevant information as well as of allusion to the reader. The *advanced students* were unanimous in claiming that they have had difficulties at least once. It would be interesting to find out what those aspects are.

c) Strategies employed by the students to create an academic text

Among the strategies that the students claimed to implement in order to deal with the difficulties that arise when they create an academic text (formal letter, descriptive paragraph, expository and argumentative essays), most of them consult either the professors in charge of English Language or their peers: there are more students (21) who ask their classmates for help than there are learners (17) who turn to teachers. In both cases, they are trying to work collaboratively with someone else so as to dispel their doubts. Similarly, the students also work independently to solve their concerns, which they expressed in the surveys: “I do research on the Internet about the topic to be developed,” “I make outlines,” “I reread the instructions.” Other strategies deployed by only one of the *intermediate students* include positioning themselves as readers, practising, being resourceful when consulting sources (for example, dictionaries), studying, going over what was done in class, using pre-writing strategies, and reading aloud. Another student with the same proficiency level claims “thinking and writing the main ideas, on which to base the development of the written work” as pre-strategies of AW.

We will now briefly refer to additional findings. It is noticeable that when students are involved in writing situations in subjects other than English Language I-IV the majority of learners consider the same aspects they take into account when writing: coherent communication of ideas, appropriate use of specific and relevant vocabulary and correct use of grammar forms. However, some students declare they disregard text organization, as they perceive they are not constrained by writing conventions. It should be highlighted, though, that as the course of studies develops, students gradually become more aware of the importance of AW, which “is useful when one has to write a thesis, or when one works in research,” “in paper presentations,” or “when writing specialized material.”

Finally, the surveys answered by the students who attended the extension course revealed that they have learnt new concepts of AW and that they have broadened their

knowledge about it -citation systems, references, writing strategies as rephrasing and paraphrasing, metadiscourse markers and cohesion devices, focus on audience, purpose and theme. However, they also heighten the need to have access to more opportunities to practise writing.

5. Conclusions

Some of the students evince interest in improving their written discourse practices; others consider that AW is detached from their immediate reality so they do not believe AW is of paramount importance. Either case, the teaching of AW is still a challenge that professors in our roles of training teachers-to-be must face. This research team highlights:

1. The relevance of underlining the value of writing as a means to learn or as a means to show what has been learnt, to produce and transmit knowledge, thus to gradually lead students towards becoming active members of the academic community.
2. The importance of explicit instructions of the three fundamental components of AW are (audience, purpose and subject) given that such elements must be present if we expect our students to participate in the scientific community, and to become cognizant of the importance of following the established writing conventions.
3. The need to offer students supplementary and systematic AW opportunities and to encourage them to actively participate in research groups at UNVM.

A final concern is related to the analysis of students' written compositions in terms of the comments and observations made by the instructors. Those aspects will likely provide researchers with additional data regarding writing strategies, editing and assessment. The research team does not discard this action which could be carried out successively.

6. Pedagogical implications

The conclusions at which we have arrived stress the need for collaborative work among the professors at ETTC with the ultimate goal of establishing a sole criterion for AW, and of making our teachers-to-be aware of the necessity to make the teaching practice explicit. Many a time, teachers assume that their students already have knowledge of a topic when in fact, the students' productions show the opposite. The same seems true as regards the

purpose of AW: most students do not contemplate the idea of writing with academic purposes in their near future, thus the need to reinforce such an aspect from the beginning of the course of studies.

To cope with the difficulties that arise in AW implies agreeing on a set of guidelines to work cooperatively and aimed at overcoming the obstacles that our students are posed with when writing an academic text. The collaborative work that guarantees the active participation of the professors at the ETTC implies institutional commitment to agree on criteria for teaching methods, teaching practices, and assessment. It also entails the promotion of research studies on issues related to the development of the ETTC and the study and future deployment of teaching strategies and/or measures that allow the promotion of our students' writing competence. By this is meant that we expect our students to effectively partake in the scientific community, even if the majority of the learners does not continue studying at postgraduate level. As an institution of higher education, each university should be the place where some of the students begin their career as researchers to-be; consequently, it is there where an answer should be given to the challenge posed by academic literacy.

Notes

1. The translation is ours.
2. The findings are based on the surveys that students of English Language I to IV answered (English Language I: 18 students, English Language II, 13, English Language III, 8, English Language IV, 9).

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What do genres do in the EFL coursebook?

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1. The genres in the coursebook

The coursebook is probably the most prominent genre language learners are exposed to in many foreign language classes worldwide. However, this genre contains in itself a number of secondary genres or sub-genres (Lähdesmäki, 2007). Whereas most of them are pedagogic (i.e. sections devoted specifically to the practice and illustration of linguistic forms), such as fill-in-the-blanks exercises, those genres which attempt to reproduce the real world external genres, such as brochures, blogs, and emails have become increasingly common. These correspond to various instances of actual social practices and have been said to be ‘slices of life’ which find their way into the EFL coursebook.

According to the Sydney School (Christie & Martin, 1997; Martin, 1992, 1997), each recognizable human activity constitutes a genre; therefore, in any given culture there exist as many genres as the many social activities in which the members of that culture engage (Martin & Rose, 2008). Martin and Rose (2003) define genre as a “staged, goal-oriented social process,” (p. 7) and elaborate that definition through the following explanation, saying that genres are “...**social** because we participate in genres with other

people; **goal-oriented** because we use genres to get things done; **staged** because it usually takes us a few steps to reach our goals” (p. 8). The authors further illustrate the way in which each genre comes to be realized by certain recurrent *linguistic patterns* that yield the meanings at stake in any given situation (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010, p. 30), for example, the typical ‘*Once upon a time....*’ opening line in children’s stories, or the use of simple present tense in jokes. In addition, given that multimodality has become intrinsic to meaning making, most genres can be associated with certain *multimodal configurations* (Martin & Rose 2008, p. 40). For example, in many cultures, a CV is now accompanied by a photograph, and instant messaging tends to include emoticons. In their attempt to bring that world outside into the EFL classroom, EFL coursebooks have come to include genres as diverse as Internet pages, twits, letters, news items, menus, gossip columns, encyclopedia entries, film reviews, character references, CVs, to name a few. Some are mostly verbal (consisting mainly of linguistic forms); some are predominantly visual (consisting mostly of images); and some involve alternative combinations in both modes. As a way of exemplifying the ensemble of verbal-visual elements, Bateman (2008) presents a diagram which places the coursebook along a spectrum of visual informativity (Figure 1).

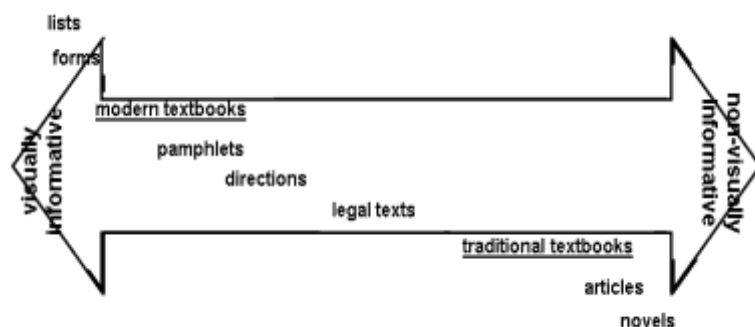


Figure 1. Spectrum of visual informativity (adapted from Bateman 2008, p. 10)

Quite often, the texts that are brought into the coursebook are reproduced in such a way that they *look like* “real-life exemplars of the genres” (Lähdesmäki, 2007, p. 376). For example, a pamphlet would appear surrounded by framing, including images and special typography

resembling a real pamphlet. This means that book developers have to deal with enormous design and artwork demands. Such concern with layout and design reflects the visuality that has become a characteristic of everyday practice of modern life (Hemais, 2009).

2. Genre authenticity

In the context of foreign language teaching, genres are understood as “abstract, socially recognised ways of using language” (Hyland 2007, p. 149). This notion of genre implies that an awareness of “the world outside the ESL classroom” (p. 148) prepares learners to be effective in communicative practices in everyday settings.

The outside world comes into the classroom by means of authentic materials in the coursebook (i.e. naturally occurring language in social situations rather than language produced for instructional purposes). Authentic materials may come from various sources and, at present, enter the coursebook in the form of an increasing number of genres with very elaborate layouts, displaying multiple multimodal resources (Liruso, Bollati, & Requena, 2012). Quite often, however, the material in the authentic sources is subjected to a number of changes and adaptations before entering the coursebook. This type of manipulation is not a new idea in language teaching (see Gilmore, 2007).

Genre authenticity could then be viewed from at least two different perspectives. On the one hand, we can think of the verbal and visual authenticity of the texts used as input data for learners, and consider the degree to which the text brought to the coursebook is a sample of real life. On the other hand, we can think of the authenticity of the task learners are expected to perform with such a text/genre, considering the ecological validity of the task. Given the nature of this study, our attention is focused on the first perspective mentioned and thus we try to answer the question: *Does the text look/read/sound like a prototypical genre people would encounter in real life?*

3. A classification of coursebook genres

In the framework of a study that explores generic and visual aspects in six EFL coursebooks used in Argentina¹ we decided to look into the different genres in terms of

their authenticity. Our corpus spans over different levels of proficiency (beginner, intermediate and advanced) and includes coursebooks which adhere to the communicative paradigm of language teaching. This is relevant because one important tenet of this approach is precisely the use of real-life situations to promote communication.

In order to gather information for our study, all instances of external genres from selected units of each coursebook were analyzed. The identification of authenticity of a given genre involved checking copyright acknowledgement often expressed through wording such as *Taken from...* or *Adapted from....* depending on whether the original text had been subjected to any change prior to its inclusion in the coursebook.

Based on these considerations, following a preliminary analysis of the genres present in foreign language coursebooks, we classified such genres as *authentic*, *adapted* and *simulated*. We defined *authentic* genres as those which enter the coursebook with practically² no manipulation by the author/designer of the book (Extract from screenplay of “Slumdog Millionaire”, *Advanced Language Leader*, p. 111). These are intended to be samples of real life and include texts such as literary excerpts, maps, photographs, dictionary entries, etc. Such description of authentic genres is closely related to the way Nunan (1988) defines authentic materials "as those which have been produced for purposes other than to teach language" (p. 99).

We defined *adapted* genres as those genres that suffer some pedagogically motivated transformation as they enter the coursebook while maintaining many features of the original version. An example of this would be a newspaper article which is adapted through linguistic, cultural and multimodal changes (news report “Smash! Clumsy visitor destroys priceless vases”, *Headway Intermediate*, p. 24).

Finally, *simulated* genres were defined as those specifically produced for teaching purposes, involving the reproduction or recreation of a real-life genre and containing a varying number of its distinctive identifying features, with no ‘genuine’ external source (Posting in traveller’s blog, *Speakout 1*, p. 45).

These three categories were examined in our corpus. A total of N= 18 texts were identified and analyzed, resulting in a skewed distribution of genres according to the operationalization imposed by the categories previously outlined (see Table 1).

Level	Authentic genres	Adapted genres	Simulated genres
Beginner (N=5)	-	-	5
Intermediate (N=6)	1	2	3
Advanced (N=7)	1	2	4

Table 1. Distribution of external genres in corpus according to genre type

As it becomes evident from the corpus analysis, simulated genres outnumbered the other two categories. This was true across proficiency levels -beginner, intermediate and advanced- though the advanced and intermediate levels showed more adapted genres than the beginner books.

4. Degrees of authenticity

Our study included an exploration of the way the social enters the coursebook via genres as well as the way these genres operate at a social functional level. This exploration, informed by principles from Systemic Functional Grammar and the closely related fields of Genre Studies (Martin & Rose, 2003), Multimodality (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Kress, 2005) and Multiliteracies (Unsworth, 2008), revealed that the social component enters the coursebook through an ensemble of various genres, ranging from the allegedly authentic ‘real-life’ genres to the simulated genres, and that all these genres are brought to life through the deployment of various multimodal resources (including visual images, design elements and written language) full of meaning making power.

One implication of this analysis of genre-embeddedness in coursebooks is the acknowledgement that an analysis of genre authenticity should consider not only linguistic, but also visual (multimodal) devices. The addition of multimodality adds another dimension to the description of genres in EFL coursebooks which, together with the verbal dimension, point to a definition of genre authenticity as a gradable notion. Such gradation may be graphically captured by placing ‘authentic’, ‘adapted’ and ‘simulated’ on a spectrum as shown in Figure 2:

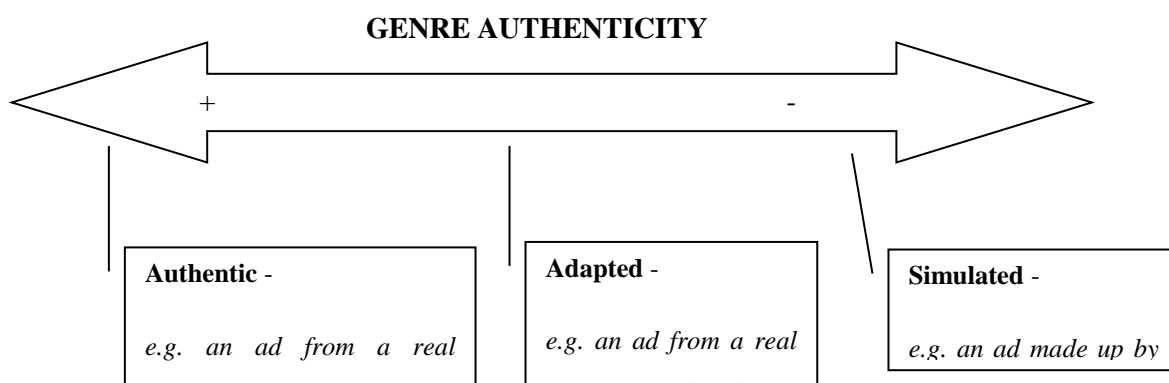


Figure 2. Spectrum of genre authenticity.

The spectrum presented in Figure 2 locates authentic genres on one end and simulated genres on the other. Along the cline, occupying different positions, we can have various degrees of adaptation. Adaptation is understood here as a multi-layered process which involves different degrees of manipulation of the original genre. In an evaluative approach to teaching materials, Tomlinson (1998) states that authentic texts are valuable resources that enable the learner to interpret the world outside the classroom but to make them easier or more accessible they often need to be adapted. Adaptation of texts has traditionally taken the form of linguistic simplification in order to increase accessibility by learners. For example, in his book about vocabulary, Nation (1990) devotes a whole chapter (Ch. 11) to the simplification of reading material which may be performed through *adaptation* (in terms of vocabulary and grammar) and *re-creation* (changing the nature of the whole text by adding sections or even images, for example). In the present analysis of genres as multimodal processes, it is our contention that adaptation can occur at least at two levels: linguistic and/or visual.

In what follows, we present an example of graded authenticity by analyzing a genre commonly found in EFL coursebooks: the classified advertisement. We first analyze an *authentic* ad from a newspaper, and then we provide an *adapted* version of it. Finally, we present a *simulated* ad of our own authorship but whose content and design resemble simulated ads from our corpus not reproduced here for copyright reasons.

4.1. An example of authenticity gradation

a) Authentic

It is not unusual for travelers and students in study-abroad situations to find themselves in need for renting some kind of living space. Such situation may require learners to consult and understand classified ads. Thus, a valid motivation exists for introducing that genre to EFL students. Should the foreign language teacher or materials designer decide to bring exemplars of authentic ads to the classroom, a real ad like the one displayed in Figure 3 would be appropriate.



Figure 3. Authentic classified ad. (Source: *The Daily Collegian*; 3/30/2015, p. 10)

As would be evident to any language user with experience in this type of genre, the ad displayed in Figure 3 contains many of the prototypical features of a classified ad. At the linguistic level, there are many content words (*bedroom, month, heat, water, refuse*) and minimal syntactic work, abbreviated words (*undergrads*); all the information is presented in a very succinct manner. As to the visual level, there are words in bold type and in capital letters. The whole text is arranged in a column, with framing devices in the form of lines separating the different ads.

b) Adapted

Without entering into a discussion of potential motivations for genre adaptation, which usually respond to pedagogical considerations, it will suffice to say that, as evidenced in

our corpus, adapted genres as defined in previous sections are twice as frequent as authentic ones. As our analysis of EFL coursebooks has revealed, such adaptations occur at both the linguistic and visual levels. Thus, an adapted version of the classified ad in Figure 3 could read and look as the one we present in Figure 4 below.

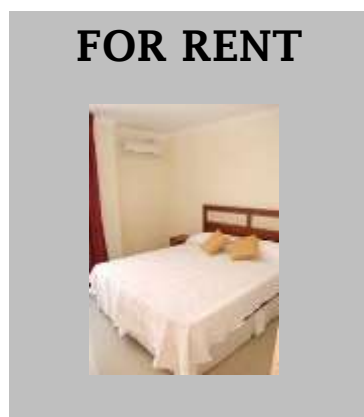


Figure 4. Adapted classified ad.

The modifications in the linguistic dimension seek to make the text more accessible to learners. They consist of the inclusion of two sentences with finite verbs (*available now* > *it's ready to use*), the elimination of abbreviations (*undergrads* > *undergraduate students*), instances of lexical simplification (*done over* > *decorated*, *available* > *ready*, *furnish* > *provide*) and changes in contact information like the telephone number (*237-7763* > *437-7763*). As regards the visual dimension, the ad is accompanied by a color photograph of a bedroom; the text contains a friendlier parsing of sentences into lines with no split words. The framing resource used is different (lines to separate different ads > colored square background). Meanings conveyed concisely in writing in the newspaper are re-created and enhanced in an alternative mode in the simulated ad.

c) Simulated

Most of the genres surveyed in the corpus, however, were neither authentic nor adapted. Simulated genres provide materials designers with the freedom to come up with the texts they wish to include in the coursebook without having to go through the hustle of searching

for authentic genres and obtaining their copyrights, or having to adapt them in order to suit the target learners' level of L2 proficiency or to conform to layout and printing limitations. Figure³ 5 below shows a simulated ad which we created for an imaginary beginner level EFL coursebook and which could be included in a unit about Housing in which learners would learn to describe housing facilities/amenities through the use of *there be*.



Figure 5. Simulated ad.

In this simulated ad, the information presented does not correspond to a real world scenario (there is no such apartment, with such visual features, at such phone number).

The ad's linguistic choices at the level of grammar and vocabulary were not made entirely on the basis of the communicative purpose of the genre (i.e. finding a tenant/finding a place to live) but were rather made pursuing the pedagogic purposes of (a) consolidating recently covered verb forms (e.g. *look for*) and newly introduced vocabulary on jobs and professions (e.g. *teacher, engineer, nurse*) probably taught in a previous unit of the coursebook, and (b) displaying contextualized new lexical items about housing/parts of the house (*bedroom, dining room, bathroom, kitchen*) which students are to learn. From the visual point of view, the ad contains various graphic elements which are deployed to direct the readers' attention to essential information: color (four colorful photographs depicting

the different rooms; colored background); typography (interplay of color and font sizes); layout (check marks).

When such simulated genres form part of the coursebook, it seems relevant to ask: Can this text still be recognized as an ad? Does this text with its visual and linguistic components create a link between the classroom world and the real world? In the case of the ad, it was possible to identify a number of stable features throughout the three versions: succinct structure, column format, content words about the property offered and contact information. As long as these features are part of the text, the text remains an ad and as such it has a specific social purpose, a target audience, and a particular style. Based on the general similarities between ‘authentic’ texts and ‘simulated’ versions, it becomes evident that efforts are made to preserve certain ‘genre identification’ features, so that the original social purpose remains present.

5. What do genres do in the coursebook?

As is shown through the discussion and the exemplification above, genres in the coursebook support teaching by providing a source of data about how people do things in a society; and they also help position learners as language users immersed in a social practice (not only as learners of a code or system). In other words, simulated genres, just as adapted and authentic ones, can be thought of as operating along two parallel and simultaneous dimensions in the coursebook: the classroom for which they were designed and the fictional ‘real world’ of social practice. Authentic, adapted and simulated genres expose the coursebook user to two social functions: language learner and community member. It must be said though, that in interacting with the different versions of the genre, the coursebook user also moves along a cline. In the engagement with the authentic input the role of community member is stressed whereas in the engagement with the simulated input, at other end of the continuum, the role of language learner is stressed.

Our study has also revealed that another thing genres do in modern (as opposed to traditional/older) coursebooks is to show the strong text / context relationship by presenting contextualized instances of language use. Contextual elements of a text, such as purpose or

participant roles are intrinsic to the notion of genre and are inextricably tied to the linguistic choices made in any text (Martin, 1997).

In addition, given the deployment of graphic/visual resources as genre components on the pages of the coursebook, genres can be credited with promoting multimodal awareness and with it a better understanding of the social meanings that are offered through various semiotic elements. By doing all this ‘work’, the genres that are brought into the coursebook can be said to bring learners closer to the social world.

Notes

1. This is part of a larger corpus which includes Spanish as a Foreign Language coursebooks as well. The data for the present study was extracted from the following EFL coursebooks: Speakout Elementary (2011) by Eales, F & Oakes, S.; Outcomes Elementary (2012) by Dellar, H. & Walkley, A.; Headway Intermediate (2009) by Soares, L. & Soares, J.; Outcomes Advanced (2012) by Dellar, H. & Walkley, A.; Touchstone 4 (2006) by McCarthy, M., McCarten, J., & Sandiford, H.; Advanced Language Leader (2010) by Cotton, D., Falvey, D.; Kent, S.; Lebeau, I. & Rees, G.
2. It should be made clear, however, that a certain level of manipulation will always exist, as the genre is recontextualized, which in itself entails some transformation (Linell, 1998 in Lähdesmäki, 2007).
3. Image credits: Kitchen:
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b2/Fully_Furnished_Atenas_Apartments_for_rent.jpg; Bathroom:
https://farm1.staticflickr.com/198/515756277_e5885ec452_o.jpg; Dining room:
https://c2.staticflickr.com/6/5047/5284392785_240ba02c5f_b.jpg ; Bedroom:
<http://mountpleasantgranary.net/blog/images/Crieff-bedroom.jpg>

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High school learners' beliefs and their influence on the development of lexical competence

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1. Introduction

Research in vocabulary acquisition has recently focused considerable attention on the development of lexical competence since lexis plays a key role in the development of foreign and/or second languages (Sánchez & Manchón, 2007). Several factors have been found to influence the development of lexical competence such as teachers' actions, teaching materials, learners' beliefs and strategies, among others. For the last thirty years there has been a greater emphasis on learners and learning rather than on teachers and teaching (O'Malley & Chamot, 1994). The focus has shifted mainly to learners' preferences and styles. Spratt (2001) states that analyzing learner preferences and beliefs can provide valuable and interesting information for teachers as well as curriculum and syllabus designers to make language learning a process more in line with "good language learning." Richardson (1996) describes beliefs as "psychologically held understandings, premises, or propositions about the world that are felt to be true" (p. 103). The aim of this paper is to explore high school learners' beliefs regarding vocabulary learning. It further aims to establish links between the learners' beliefs and the results of two vocabulary tests. We hope this information is useful to the current state of research on vocabulary acquisition, vocabulary instruction and teachers' practices.

2. Theoretical background

In the last 25 years, the field of second language acquisition has seen the reemergence of interest in one area of language study, vocabulary (Meara, as cited in Schmitt, 1997). Vocabulary has become an important aspect in second language learning, in fact, many believe, just as important as the main skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Nation (as cited in Nation and Waring, 1997) explains, “vocabulary knowledge enables language use, language use enables the increase of vocabulary knowledge, knowledge of the world enables the increase of vocabulary knowledge and language use and so on” (p. 6). Learning vocabulary is an ongoing process that takes time and practice; it is a complex, continuous and dynamic process due to the fact that a person’s lexicon is constantly changing. Unlike mother tongue acquisition, learning a foreign language implies that the learner has fewer possibilities of being in contact with the language he/she is studying and fewer opportunities of using the language in actual communicative situations. Thus, the ESL teacher has the challenge of helping students develop their lexical competence even though nowadays syllabuses and textbooks tend to be focused on skills, functions and grammar, especially in high school instruction. Furthermore, many teachers are exploring new ways of approaching the teaching of vocabulary taking into account various aspects; one of these is based on what learners feel about vocabulary instruction.

The importance of learners’ beliefs has been widely accepted, as many studies have proved the relation between what students believe as regards lexical acquisition and their relative success in learning a second language. According to Ramos Méndez (2007), beliefs are relatively stable ideas that an individual has about a certain topic. They arise and are shaped from personal experience, and they are inserted in a social context and grouped in networks or systems. The individual is convinced that they are true and thus they serve as a filter through which the person perceives and interprets the world around him/her. Furthermore, an individual’s actions are led by his or her beliefs. Pajares refers to beliefs as “messy constructs” that include

attitudes, values, judgments, axioms, opinions, ideology, perceptions, conceptions, conceptual systems, preconceptions, dispositions, implicit theories, explicit theories, personal theories, internal mental processes, action strategies, rules of practice, practical principles, perspectives,

repertoires of understanding, and social strategy (Pajares, as cited in Ramos Méndez, 2007, p. 16).

Williams and Burden (1997) make reference to certain features connected to beliefs that are worth mentioning. Beliefs are limited by the individual's cultural background; they are resistant to change; they are related to the knowledge the person believes to have and they act as a filter for thoughts and information processing.

As stated earlier, students' beliefs are of great importance in the field of second language acquisition. Some studies concentrate on teachers' or student teachers' beliefs and how these influence their teaching practices (Gao & Ma, 2011; Hassankiadeh, Jahanda, & Khodabandehlou, 2012; Macalister, 2012). However, there are very few studies that analyze learners' perceptions or beliefs as regards the acquisition of vocabulary in a foreign language and their impact on the development of this competence. For this reason, we believe our study will be of help.

3. Methodology

This paper derives from the research project *Adquisición del léxico de una lengua-cultura extranjera: creencias de los aprendientes y uso de estrategias*, carried out at the School of Languages at the National University of Córdoba. This project is based on theoretical background and empirical research related to second language lexical acquisition, its use and evaluation and learners' beliefs and strategies. Its aims are to:

- 1) inquire into the factors that affect vocabulary learning and teaching in English and German as a foreign language in formal and non-formal institutions, with elementary level students (A1-A2);
- 2) find out to what extent factors such as materials, L2 exposure outside the classroom, and learning strategies have an impact on vocabulary acquisition;
- 3) analyze the characteristics of the activities that promote the development of vocabulary learning strategies in the textbooks analyzed in the previous part of the project carried out in 2012-2013, and

- 4) contribute to a better understanding of the process of vocabulary acquisition and promote a positive impact on language teaching.

This paper discusses the results related to the first and fourth aims.

For this study, the participants involved were high school students in three schools (two state-run schools and a private one) in the city of Córdoba. Three aspects are central in the analysis presented here: the learners' performance in two tests, the connection between their performance and their beliefs about vocabulary learning, and the similarities and differences between learners' performances and beliefs in the private and the state secondary schools involved. Data were collected by means of a survey and two vocabulary tests administered at the three schools.

In total, around one hundred students, aged between 11 and 12 years old, answered the questionnaire and took the tests. It is worth mentioning that these students belong to the first year of high school, their level of English is elementary, and they have English classes two hours per week.

The questionnaire consisted in 16 questions related to learners' beliefs and strategies regarding vocabulary acquisition. The students also had to provide some personal information and details about their previous experience with the second language. On average, students spent 10 to 20 minutes to answer the questionnaire. For this paper 11 questions were analyzed. They aimed at three main aspects: beliefs about their personal opinion about learning vocabulary, beliefs about the treatment of vocabulary in the classroom, and beliefs about the role of vocabulary in communication. As this project seeks to find out the relation between students' performance and their beliefs about vocabulary acquisition, not only the answers to questionnaires are relevant but also the test results are. Two tests were designed on the basis of the most frequent activity types and the vocabulary items present in the materials used in each institution. The tasks in the tests aimed at both recognition and retrieval of vocabulary. Each section consisted in 15 items and it took the students around 20 minutes to complete the whole test.

In the following section the most relevant aspects regarding the questionnaire will be discussed, and afterwards, these findings will be correlated with the results of the tests.

3.1 Analysis

3.1.1. Beliefs about vocabulary and communication (See appendix A)

In the group of the questions concerning the beliefs about vocabulary and communication, three main questions were asked: how important do you think it is to have a good command of vocabulary to communicate in the foreign language?, what do you think is more important to communicate in the foreign language?, and finally, do you think mistakes related to vocabulary can hamper effective communication? Considering the first question, the answers *not so important* and *unimportant* got very few answers, 6% and 1% respectively; 51% of the students believe it is very important whereas 39% think it is important. When asked about the most important aspect of language to be studied in order to communicate in the foreign language, the option *grammar* got 1% of the answers while the option *vocabulary* was chosen by 34% of the learners. The most chosen answer was both (vocabulary and grammar), as 65% of the students chose it. As regards the third question, 61% of the learners believe that mistakes related to vocabulary can hinder communication while 32% answered they were not sure.

3.1.2. Beliefs related to the acquisition of vocabulary in SL (See appendix B)

The second group of questions was intended to analyse students' beliefs related to the acquisition of vocabulary. To start with, students were asked whether they believe that success in vocabulary learning depends on the student's ability/talent, to which 72% of the students answered they do, while 18% said they do not. Another question was how sure students feel about their vocabulary knowledge to use new words when they speak or write. In this case, the answers were quite varied: 38% of the learners feel *not so sure* about their knowledge of vocabulary, whereas 34% feel *sure* about this fact; 12% feel *really sure* and 16% feel *not sure at all*. Students were also asked if they thought that learning new words was difficult: 32% said it is easy for them to acquire new vocabulary, 30% answered it is not so difficult and 20% said it is difficult. The extremes, *very easy* and *very difficult* got 6% and 12% of the answers respectively. When students were asked whether they have to make an effort in order to learn new vocabulary, 15% said they make a lot of effort, 45% answered they have to make quite a lot of effort to learn new words while 30% answered they make little effort to learn new words; 8% said they make little effort and only 2% of

the students stated they do not have to make any effort at all. When asked how many of the words seen during the year they recognize and understand, around 82% of the students answered they understand most or many of the words and just 18% answered they understand few or very few words.

3.1.3. Beliefs related to the vocabulary activities done in class (See appendix C)

The first question in this group had to do with the importance students believe is given to vocabulary acquisition in their English class. There were five options in the answer: *a lot of importance, quite much, not much, little* and *no importance at all*. 50% of the students answered they believe quite much importance is given to this aspect while 25% of the students thought that a lot of importance is given to the field of vocabulary. Students also had to rank the importance of doing vocabulary exercises in class; almost 61% of the students consider it is important to do vocabulary exercises in class: 26% find it very important while just 1% believes it is not important at all. Students were also asked about their feeling as regards their understanding of vocabulary when listening or reading a text; 42% of the students believe they understand most of the words or many words while almost 46% think they understand just some of the words. The students who answered that they understand few words were 12% of the total.

3.2. Results

All the answers previously mentioned have been compared to the results students got in the two tests they had to do. Taking into account the answers provided in the questionnaire, in only one of the schools, one of the state-run schools, which is known for its exposure to and study of languages, the results of the tests clearly match what students believe in relation to the importance of vocabulary. These students assigned a lot of importance to vocabulary for effective communication as well as the need to do vocabulary exercises regularly in class. This was reflected in the results the students of this school got in the tests. In this group, the average mark was 65%, the lowest mark was 50.5 % and the highest was 96.5 % (see Appendix D). Although the students of the three schools place importance on vocabulary, as shown in the results of the survey, this is not always reflected in the results of the tests. In the other state-run school, the test results were lower: the average was 44%, the highest

and lowest marks were 71% and 17% respectively (see Appendix E). In the private school, on the other hand, the average mark was 45%, the highest mark was 83% and the lowest mark was 21.5% (see appendix F). The influence of factors such as time of exposure to the language, materials used, number of students per class and assessment, among others, also play an important part in the results obtained by the students. Research related to these factors would be helpful.

4. Conclusion

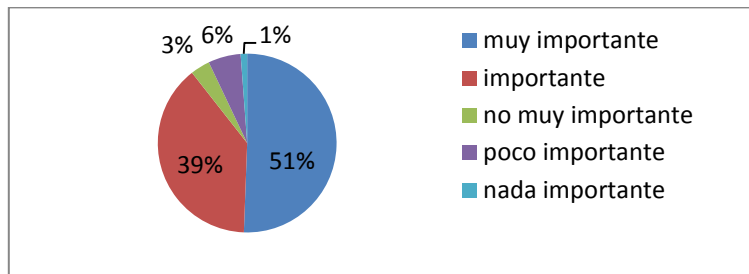
To conclude, it can be said that the results of this study allow us to make a generalization about high school students in the city Córdoba: they perceive vocabulary to be important for adequate communication in English and they highlight the relevance of doing activities related to vocabulary in class. Moreover, generally speaking, they feel they have to make an effort to learn vocabulary and although they do not feel sure as regards their lexical competence, they believe it is easy to learn new words. They also consider their comprehension in the second language as well as their use of the vocabulary learnt in class during the year to be good. These results are of interest to language teachers, who need to know what their learners' beliefs and expectations are about vocabulary at high school level. Nevertheless, as stated before and in order to account for the differences found in the test results, more research is needed to establish the incidence of variables other than the students' beliefs, as well as an analysis of the strategies learners put into practice when learning vocabulary.

5. References

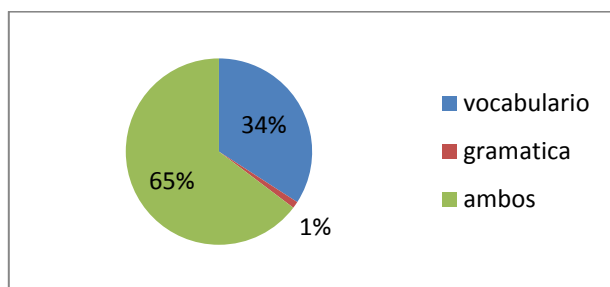
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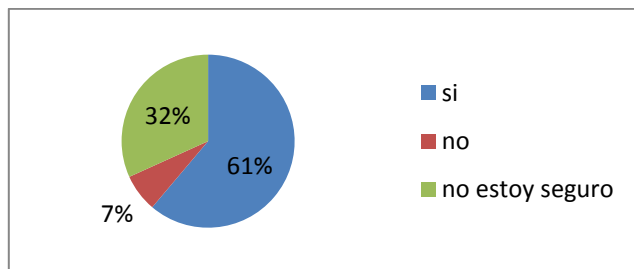
Appendix A: Questions related to beliefs about vocabulary and communication



¿Cuán importante cree que es tener un buen dominio del vocabulario para poder comunicarse eficientemente en inglés?

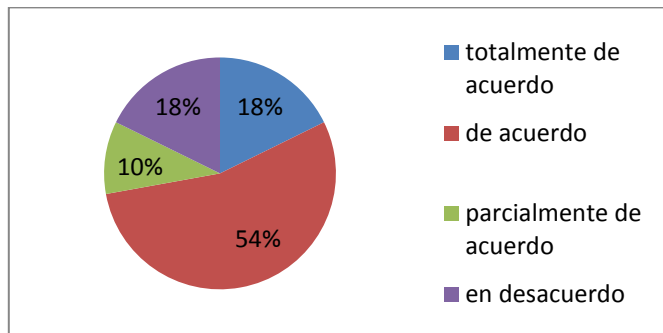


Para comunicarse en el idioma que aprendés, ¿qué considerás que es más importante?

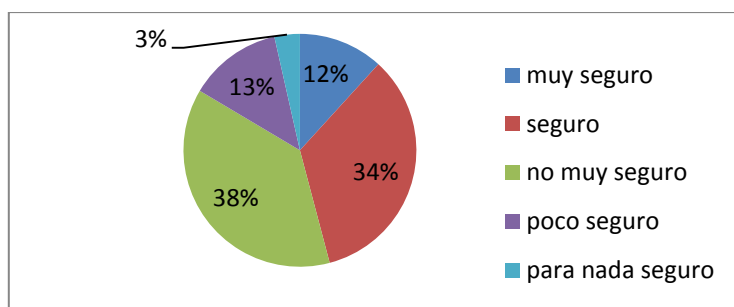


¿Cree que los errores de vocabulario pueden impedir una comunicación efectiva?

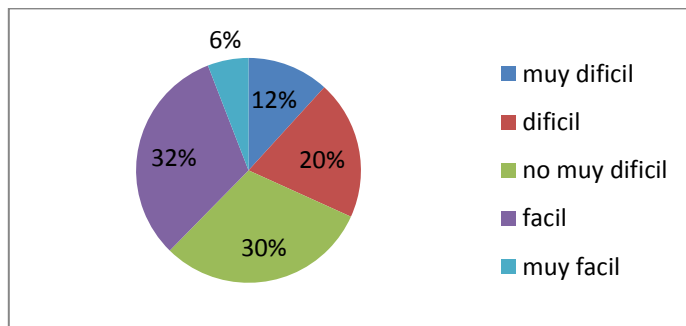
Appendix B: Questions about beliefs related to the acquisition of vocabulary in SL



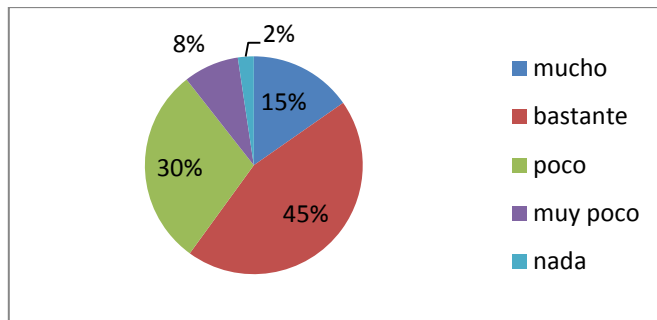
¿Piensas que el éxito en el aprendizaje del vocabulario depende del talento del alumno?



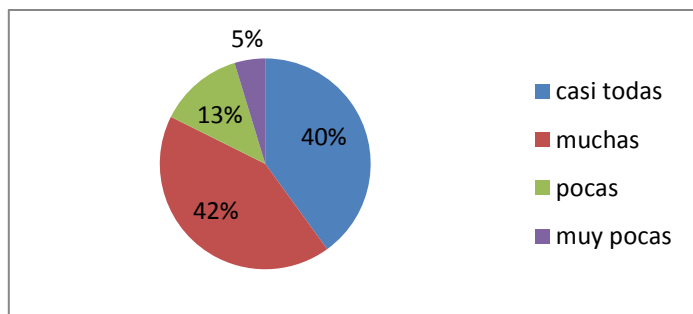
¿Cuán seguro se siente de sus conocimientos de vocabulario para usar las palabras cuando habla o escribe oraciones o textos?



¿Cuán difícil cree que es aprender palabras nuevas en inglés?

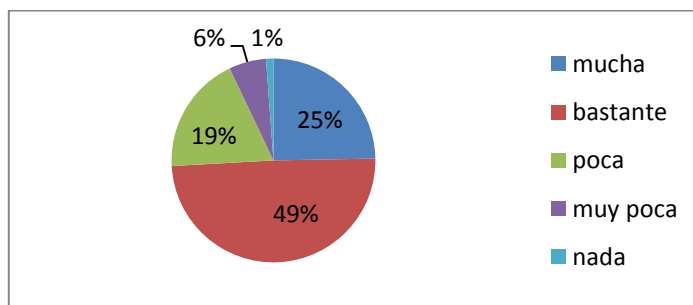


¿Cuánto esfuerzo debe realizar para aprender vocabulario?

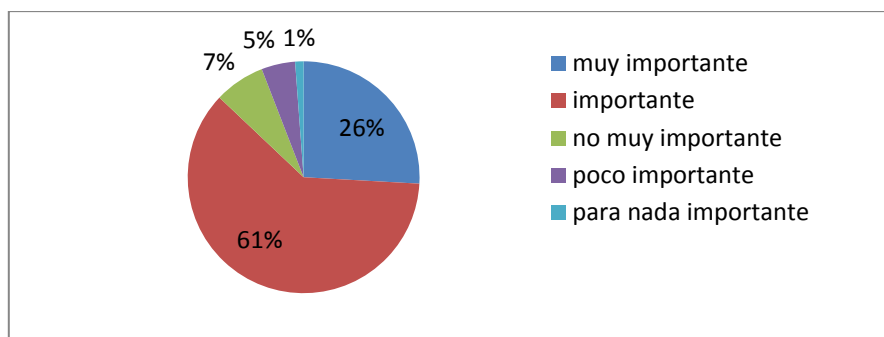


¿Cuántas de las palabras que nos enseñaron en lo que va del año considero que reconozco y entiendo y que puedo usar al hablar o escribir?

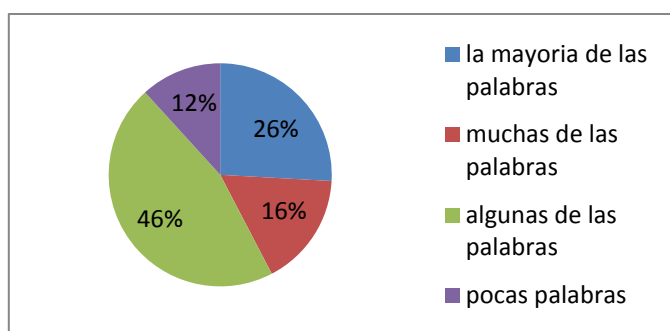
Appendix C: Questions about beliefs related to the vocabulary activities done in class



¿Cuánta importancia te parece que se le da al vocabulario en tu clase de inglés?



¿Cuán importante es realizar ejercicios de vocabulario para aprender inglés?



¿Al leer o escuchar textos y hacer actividades en clase siente que entiende?

Appendix D: Test results in State-run school 1

Highest mark	96.5%
Lowest mark	50,5%
Mean	64,5%

Appendix E: Test results in State-run school 2

Highest mark	71%
Lowest mark	17%
Mean	44%

Appendix F: Test results in the Private school

Highest mark	83%
Lowest mark	21,5%
Mean	45%

Do EFL coursebooks apply the latest L2 lexical research findings? A case study

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1. Introduction

Research in vocabulary acquisition has experienced exponential growth in the last decades. The findings from these investigations, as Cook (1998) states, could help enhance textbooks for the teaching of foreign languages. However, this is not always the case since research evidence usually takes a long time before it is translated into coursebook design. On the other hand, the coursebook is an almost universal element in L2 classes. Although most teachers adapt or modify it to some extent (Lopez Barrios & Villanueva de Debat, 2014), it frequently dictates the curriculum. Therefore, it is important to analyse coursebooks critically.

According to Nation (2013, p. 98), “one approach to evaluating vocabulary-teaching activities is to analyse them to see how well they set up conditions that research has shown are important for learning”. In order to discuss whether new findings are reflected in four contemporary elementary EFL textbooks, we analyze a sample of the vocabulary learning activities contained in them to determine the degree to which the activities foster motivation, noticing, retrieval, creative use and retention. Data is analysed primarily quantitatively to assess the degree of presence of these features, and also qualitatively to consider other variables that may influence the success and adequacy of the activities for their intended goals, learners and learning and teaching contexts.

2. Vocabulary learning activities in EFL coursebooks

For the average learner, the vocabulary learning activities done in class constitute the main

source of their lexical development, hence our interest in studying the features that characterize their nature. In an analysis of the vocabulary growth of EFL learners, Webb & Chang (2012) list a number of key factors contributing to the development of lexical competence: “the amount of input, opportunities to use the L2, amount of time spent learning, amount of time explicitly focused on vocabulary learning, the extent of overlap between L1 and L2 words, the number of L2 cognates/loan words, the experience of teachers and their approach to teaching, and the effectiveness of activities used during learning.” (p. 114) Likewise, in a study of the vocabulary contained in foreign language textbooks, Häcker (2008) mentions the following variables as key issues in vocabulary learning: “the efforts and abilities of the learner, the competence of the teacher, teaching materials, the teaching method and the time available for language learning” (p. 215). Clearly, both studies emphasize the role of learning materials and activities and their contribution to vocabulary learning.

Incidental learning of vocabulary, especially through reading, has been profusely analyzed as one factor contributing positively to learners’ lexical knowledge. As the learners’ interest in enriching their lexical competence is judged to be a determining factor, Laufer and Hulstijn (2001) developed the Involvement Load Hypothesis (ILH) in order to explain the degree of potential word learning offered by different types of activities. Based on cognitive psychology, notably on Craik and Lockhart’s (1972, in Laufer & Hulstijn, op. cit.) concept of depth of processing, the ILH proposes three components that make up the construct of involvement: need, search and evaluation. Of these, need is “the motivational, noncognitive dimension of involvement” whereas “search and evaluation are the two cognitive dimensions of involvement” (Laufer & Hulstijn, op. cit., p. 543). The effectiveness of learning activities has been the object of a number of studies aiming at testing the ILH, some of which are reviewed by Nation (2013, pp. 98-100). The potential of the ILH to analyze vocabulary learning activities has been criticized by Nation & Webb (2011, in Nation, 2013, p. 100) on the grounds that the three dimensions that form the basis of the ILH do not allow the consideration of other relevant factors that affect the effectiveness of learning activities. The authors have thus proposed a different framework called Technique Feature Analysis (TFA) that entails the following factors: *motivation*, *noticing*, *retrieval*, *creative use* and *retention*.

The *motivation* generated by an activity relates to the clarity of its learning goals as

well as to the engagement it produces and to the degree to which learners select the words they want or need to learn. The next four features refer to cognitive processes associated to vocabulary learning: *noticing* relates to the degree of attention and awareness of the word properties aroused by the activity; *retrieval* refers to the activation of the word from the mental lexicon, for example through recognition; *creative use* involves the recall and active use of the word in speaking or writing; lastly, *retention* is related to the form-meaning mapping learners create in their mental lexicon (Nation, 2013, pp. 102-114).

Admittedly, learning activities are very complex devices whose effectiveness is difficult to be assessed without considering a number of factors of personal and contextual nature, so that they should be amenable to research under actual conditions of use by learners in real learning environments. Still, the TFA framework constitutes a tool that can be applied to assess the vocabulary learning component of a coursebook in order for the textbook user to have an approximate idea of the suitability of said component. With this aim in mind, we set out to test the potential of the TFA to the analysis of vocabulary learning activities in four elementary level coursebooks.

3. Technique features contained in a selection of elementary level coursebooks

For this analysis we have selected four elementary level coursebooks, two for adults: *English Result Elementary* (ER) and *English File Elementary* (EF), and two for adolescent learners at secondary school: *Flashlight 1* (FL) and *Phases 1* (PH). In addition to being widely used in our context, these coursebooks are used in the courses where we have studied other aspects of vocabulary learning. In each coursebook we selected ten vocabulary learning activities from different lessons and we made sure we had an even choice of activities related to the stages of lexical development: reproduction, recognition, retrieval and use, according to the classification scheme we devised in López Barrios, Alcázar and Barboza (2013) and Helale, Villanueva de Debat and San Martín (2013). For the present inquiry, each one of us analyzed two coursebooks and cross-checked a substantial portion of the ratings awarded (0 or 1) so as to assure the validity and reliability of the study.

The following table shows the frequencies of the different features in the sample analyzed:

CRITERIA	ER	EF	PH	FL	TOTALS	Feature frequency
Motivation						
Is there a clear vocabulary learning goal?	10	6	9	10	35	74
Does the activity motivate learning?	7	8	8	8	31	
Do learners select the words?	3	3	0	2	8	
Noticing						
Does the activity focus attention on target words?	9	7	9	9	34	59
Does the activity raise awareness of new vocabulary learning?	5	5	9	6	25	
Does the activity involve negotiation?	0	0	0	0	0	
Retrieval						
Does the activity involve retrieval of word?	10	9	10	9	38	114
Is it productive retrieval?	10	8	10	9	37	
Is it recall?	3	5	4	4	16	
Are there multiple retrievals of each word?	6	4	6	3	19	
Is there spacing between retrievals?	0	2	2	0	4	
Creative use						
Does the activity involve creative use?	2	1	2	2	7	14
Is it productive?	2	0	0	0	2	
Is there a marked change that involves the use of other words?	1	3	0	1	5	
Retention						
Does the activity ensure successful linking of form and meaning?	8	3	4	2	17	18
Does the activity involve instantiation?	0	0	1	0	1	
Does the activity involve imaging?	0	0	0	0	0	
Does the activity avoid L1 interference?	0	0	0	0	0	
TOTALS	76	64	74	65	279	

Table 1. Frequencies of appearance of the features.

The vocabulary activities in the four EFL textbooks analysed display more features related to *retrieval* (114 instances), *motivation* (74) and *noticing* (59) than to *retention* (18) or *creative use* (14).

As regards *motivation*, many of the activities analysed have a clear vocabulary learning goal and tend to predispose learners to engage in the activity. Nevertheless, learners are seldom prompted to choose the words that they want to use in the activity and none prompt them to select words they want to learn. It is the incidence of this factor that negatively affects the performance of the feature *motivation* in the sample analyzed, as it accounts for 26.52% of a total of 279 features found.

The second feature in TFA, *noticing*, refers to the potential of the activity to draw the students' attention to the lexical items that are intended to be learned. This is positively present in the sample analyzed, as activities clearly focus on the target words. The degree to which activities raise awareness of new vocabulary learning is variable: in one coursebook

this is true of 90% of the activities, whereas in the others only 50 to 60% of them do. Still, it is worth noting that, although learners are not intentionally learning new words through the activities, these create opportunities for incidental vocabulary learning that indirectly benefit learners' lexical development. This is the case, for example, when learners create output using the target vocabulary or when they identify the words in a listening or reading activity. The last factor in this feature, negotiation of meaning, could not be found in the sample. This may be explained by the fact that elementary learners lack the resources necessary to clarify the meaning of a lexical item as they do not yet handle enough communication strategies and their language proficiency is still very limited. Overall, the *noticing* feature is represented with a frequency of 21.14% in the sample, negatively affected by the absence of the last factor mentioned.

The most frequent factor in the sample is *retrieval*. The activities analyzed involve some kind of retrieval, either as recognition or as recall of the words, and in all cases learners are prompted to retrieve the word in the L2; none of the cases analyzed require learners to provide a translation of the word into their L1. Recognition of the lexical item is more often required than recall or actual production in speech or writing of the word in question. All the textbooks contain, to different degrees, activities where learners retrieve the same word more than once, thus strengthening memorization, although the retrievals in the sample analyzed are not frequently spaced. As the most frequent feature, *retrieval* is present with nearly 41% of instances.

The two last features, *creative use* and *retention*, are quite infrequent in the sample. In fact, comparatively few activities demand *creative use* of the target words, and still fewer prompt learners to use the words in contexts different from those in which they appear in the coursebook lesson. Rare is also the opportunity for learners to derive a different word or word class, for example, to create "singer" from "sing". In fact, only 5% of the activities in the sample relate to *creative use*. Last, activities that reinforce *retention* are scarce, and only those that ensure a link between form and meaning are present, while none of the activities analysed involve imaging or instantiation or help avoid interference with the L1. *Retention* accounts for a meagre 6.45% of the features found in the sample.

As explained above, the grid proposed by Nation contains 18 characteristics that vocabulary activities ideally should have. So that if one point per feature present is awarded, an ideal activity would have 18 points. The activities we have analysed in the four

books, according to our estimates, range from 6.5 to 7.6 points in average. All in all, the activities tend to display the same features and are, in fact, quite similar. Consequently, there are important characteristics that would enhance vocabulary learning that are missing: those concerning the *creative use* and *retention* of the new vocabulary items.

4. Conclusions

One word of warning must be said at this point: the development of lexical competence is complex and cyclical. For this reason, the activities contained in elementary level coursebooks tend to be simple and designed towards the achievement of the most basic features of word learning.

Because the ideal total of features in the forty activities from the four coursebooks yield 720 (100%), whereas 279 were actually found in the sample, accounting for 38.75% of net features encountered, at first sight, the average looks low. If we compared the degree of sophistication of vocabulary learning activities in higher level coursebooks, we believe that they would satisfy most of the criteria contained in the TFA framework whereas those in our analysis may fall short of complying with many of the criteria. Still, the quantitative analysis shows that three out of five features, accounting for 88.52% of the total, are actually present in the sample and that, qualitatively, they contain characteristics that lead us to presume that opportunities for *retrieval*, *noticing* and *motivation* to learn vocabulary are potentially offered to the learners. The extent to which teachers actually propose these activities and the involvement that educators create, apart from that built in the activity, as well as the attitudes of learners towards vocabulary learning are crucial aspects that call for further exploration, as these also account for the effectiveness of the development of lexical competence.

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Vocabulary learning at secondary schools: Strategies and learner's actual performance

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1. Introduction

Learning a foreign language entails acquiring the different language subsystems such as grammar, phonology and lexis as well as developing the four macro skills (reading, listening, writing and speaking). Regarding lexical competence, several researchers have recognized the importance of lexis in order to foster both receptive and productive skill development, and consequently, effective communication (Nykos & Fan, 2007; Sánchez & Manchón, 2007). Research in the latest decades has focused considerable attention on both the external and the internal factors that affect vocabulary acquisition, teaching and learning. External factors include the instructional practices teachers deploy as well as the teaching materials, among others, whereas internal factors comprise, for example, the learners' beliefs and the vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) they employ.

The present study aims to examine the VLSs that elementary level learners from private and state-run secondary schools make use of, both within and outside classroom settings and to establish links between their strategy use and their level of performance on two vocabulary tests.

2. Literature review

Research on vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) has addressed numerous issues and concerns. Some researchers have sought to explore the multiplicity of variables that may intervene in VLS use. Nyikos and Fan (2007) found four factors: proficiency level, individual variation, strategy use development and the learning environment to influence

the choice and effectiveness of VLSs in several environments. As regards proficiency level, both Nyikos and Fan and Celik and Toptas (2010) reviewed studies that support the fact that more successful learners evince more frequent and more elaborate strategy use. These findings are in line with those by Kojic-Sabo and Lightbown (1999, as cited in Nyikos & Fan, 2007) who found more proficient learners to practice vocabulary outside the classroom, and those by Ahmed (1989, as cited in Celik & Toptas, 2010) who reported on good learners' wider use and repertoire of VLSs. Individual variation has also been found to account for differences in VLS use among different learners. Mizumuto and Takeuchi (2009) revealed that the learners' initial VLS repertoire may have influenced their choice and use of VLSs, thus suggesting that less frequent strategy users and moderate strategy users took greater advantage of VLS instruction whereas active strategy users did not show any gains in terms of VLS use. Strategy use development has also been reported to influence VLS use as numerous studies have identified patterns of VLS change over time as learners become more proficient or mature (Ahmed, 1989, as cited in Celik & Toptas, 2010; Harley & Hart, 2000; Schmitt, 1997, as cited in Nyikos & Fan, 2007).

Other studies have attempted to elicit learner voice, or in other words, the participants' own perceptions of their use of VLSs. Çelik and Toptaş (2010) employed questionnaires to collect information about Turkish EFL learners' perceptions of both their actual VLS use and usefulness. Along similar lines, Mizumuto and Takeuchi (2009) resorted to not only questionnaires, but also self-reports (study logs in this case) and interview sessions to collect information about Japanese EFL university students' own perceptions of the VLSs they make use of, all of which brought to the surface the participants' "inconsistencies, anomalies, false starts, contradictory actions, and task-incompatible VLS use" (Nykos & Fan, 2007, p. 254) through a more qualitative methodology. A question remains, however, whether what participants in both studies say they do corresponds exactly with what they actually do. Therefore, it is of interest to examine the VLSs that learners perceive they employ and correlate their use with their level of performance on vocabulary tests to see whether they actually put them to use.

3. Theoretical background

Language learning strategies (LLS) are defined as “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). There is a wide-ranging inventory of LLS taxonomies in the literature; nevertheless, the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) developed by Oxford (1990) has had the most significant influence on second language acquisition. Oxford suggests two categories of LLS: direct or indirect strategies. Direct strategies entail memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies, and indirect strategies include metacognitive, affective and social strategies. The importance of instructing learners on strategies has been promoted by Chamot and O’Malley (1994) who claim that strategies represent the dynamic processes underlying learning. Thus, raising learners’ awareness of different learning strategies can help them become active and autonomous learners. Along the same lines, Bruner (1996) indicates that learning entails not only the acquisition of content but also the development of strategies, learning how to learn, so that learners can transfer strategies to new learning situations.

The review of the literature suggests that research on LLS has attempted to focus on diverse dimensions of second language acquisition. Asgari and Mustapha (2011) state 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 several classifications of VLS (Schmitt, 1997; Gu, 2003; Nation, 2013). 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. Likewise, the taxonomy divides VLS into five subsets. *Determination strategies* refer to individual learning strategies; *social strategies* comprise 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.

4. Methodology

Two instruments, a survey and two vocabulary tests were used to collect data. They were designed and piloted by a research team who are currently working on vocabulary acquisition. The survey consisted of sixteen questions, which aimed to gather information about the learners' VLSs, beliefs about vocabulary learning as well as self-assessment of their vocabulary learning. The tests were given on two different occasions during the first and second semester of 2014. The participants of the study were secondary school learners from three different institutions: a private secondary school, a state-run secondary school and a pre-university school. Data analysis comprised examining the VLSs the learners say they employ by drawing on Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy of VLSs and correlating the learners' performance on the tests with their VLSs use.

5. Findings

The responses provided by learners were analyzed in the light of pedagogical approaches and research findings in VLSs. The questions aimed at gaining insights into secondary school learners' VLS use within and outside the classroom setting. The results will be presented in two parts. First, we will refer to the VLSs learners make use of and then we will compare those findings with the average mark obtained in the two tests.

5.1. VLSs learners from secondary schools employ

The findings show that the participants from the three secondary schools make use of memory, cognitive, social and metacognitive strategies but to varying degrees. No instances of determination strategies were found in the data set because they were not included in the survey administered.

As regards memory strategies, the participants reported that they employed all of the strategies included in the survey, namely: *using new words in sentences*, *studying words with a pictorial representation of its meaning*, *using cognates in study* and *grouping words together to study them*. However, *using cognates in study* was by far the most frequent strategy mentioned by the learners since they reported that they associated new words with other words with a similar pronunciation or spelling. A larger number of learners from the pre-university school reported that they made use of this strategy when compared with the number of learners from the other two schools. Secondly, the learners identified *using new*

words in sentences as another memory strategy they frequently used. In this case, the learners from the pre-university school ranked much higher than the learners from the state-run and the private schools. *Studying words with a pictorial representation of its meaning* was only mentioned by few learners from the private and the pre-university schools but none of the students from the state-run school said they used this strategy. Finally, *grouping words together to study them* was scarce among the three groups. All in all, although some differences can be observed among the three groups with more learners from the pre-university school employing memory strategies, the frequencies for each strategy found were not high and amounted to less than 30% in all cases.

Cognitive strategies are those by which learners engage in mental processing such as repetition or labelling objects. Schmitt's taxonomy (1997) includes 9 different cognitive strategies, to which we added *dictionary using* following Gu (2003). Nevertheless, the survey administered at the three schools only elicited the learners' perceptions of their use of 6 cognitive strategies: *dictionary using*, *verbal repetition*, *written repetition*, *using the vocabulary section of the coursebook*, *writing the meaning of the words in a notebook/folder* and *underlining new words in the book and writing the meaning next to them*. Most learners ranked both *verbal repetition* and *writing the meaning of the words in a notebook/folder* higher than other strategies. This was a common finding across schools. Next, the participants mentioned *written repetition* as another commonly used strategy to consolidate words they had already learnt. Again, there were no significant differences among the learners from the three schools. As regards *using the vocabulary section of the coursebook*, it is interesting to note that it was reported to be a common strategy among learners from the private and the pre-university school. However, learners from the state-run school were found to use it only seldom. This difference may be motivated by the fact that the learners from the state-run school who participated in this study do not use a coursebook in the English lessons at present, so they may not have available written material to practice on their own. Finally, the three groups reported their infrequent use of both *dictionary using* and *underlining new words in the book and writing the meaning next to them*. The frequency of *verbal repetition* and *writing the meaning of the words in a notebook/folder* was higher than 50% for all learners but the frequency of the other cognitive strategies was lower than 30%.

Concerning metacognitive strategies, the findings show that *using the English-language media* (songs, movies, the Internet, computer games, TV programs, etc.) is the most highly used strategy by the learners. More specifically, the learners stated that they perform activities on different websites to practice vocabulary. As regards exposure to authentic language and vocabulary use, *listening to songs in English* is the most frequent activity followed by *watching TV programs and movies* and *surfing the Net in English*. It is worth noting that these strategies are ranked high by learners from the private and the pre-university school. Learners from the state-run school rarely use the metacognitive strategies described above.

As regards social strategies, it is interesting to observe that the participants hardly try to *practice the L2 when they meet English speakers* or *chat in English*. With respect to the evaluation of their progress in vocabulary learning, the three groups of learners stated that they were able to recognize, understand and use *almost all* and *lots* of the words taught during the school year when speaking or writing. Finally, as regards the time learners devote to studying words outside the classroom setting, learners show differences in the number of hours. While learners from the private and the pre-university school agree on devoting at least *one hour a week*, learners from the state-run school claim that they *do not study outside the classroom setting*.

5.2. VLSs and the learners' performance on two tests

The results of the tests are varied when comparing both the learners' performance within the same school and across the three schools. In the case of the learners from the pre-university school, their performance ranged from good to very good even though there were some cases in which a lower performance (acceptable) could be observed (50% - 60%). As regards the learners from the state-run and the private school, the results in the tests were mainly assessed as poor with most scores being lower than 50%. These results seem to support the fact reported above that a larger number of learners from the pre-university school showed a higher VLS use, which may have resulted in a better performance on the tests. Nevertheless, less than 30% of the learners from the three schools reported their use of most of the strategies researched, except for *verbal repetition* and *writing the meaning of the words in a notebook/folder*. Bearing in mind that the participants of this study were elementary level students, it can be said that these findings are consistent with those reported

by some researchers who found more proficient learners to have a wider VLS use (Ahmed, 1989, as cited in Celik & Toptas, 2010; Kojic-Sabo & Lightbown, 1999, as cited in Nyikos & Fan, 2007). Individual variation has also been found when comparing the learners from the same school, which lends support to the findings of other research studies such as Mizumoto and Takeuchi's (2009).

6. Conclusions and implications

The purpose of this study has been to analyze the VLSs that elementary level learners from private and state-run secondary schools make use of both within and outside classroom settings and establish connections between their strategy use and their level of performance on two vocabulary tests. Memory, cognitive and metacognitive strategies are the most widely used strategies by the participants. Among these types of strategies *using cognates in study, the English-language media, verbal repetition* and *writing the meaning of the words in a notebook/folder* are the most appraised by the participants. Strategies that require social interaction in the target language are not popular among the participants. Nevertheless, the learners' VLS use in the context of this study can be described as low. When correlating the learners' performance on the two tests with their VLS use, it may be concluded that the pre-university learners' may have performed better since they seemed to show a slightly higher and more varied use of VLSs.

Bearing in mind the results of this study, some implications can be drawn. A more extensive use of VLSs may account for a better performance on vocabulary tests. Nevertheless, elementary levels learners show a low VLSs use; therefore, explicit instruction on VLSs may be useful in order to enhance vocabulary learning.

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