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Rethinking Learning, Connecting Spaces and Venturing Beyond
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Selected Papers from the 46ᵗʰ and 47ᵗʰ FAAPI Conferences

Edited by

Flavia Bonadeo and Leonor Corradi

Compiled by

Vanesa Polastri

Fuente de las Imágenes de la tapa:

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Introduction

As President of FAAPI, it is both an honour and a privilege to present this dossier of selected papers, which reflects the vibrant and evolving professional development landscape within Argentina's community of English Language Teaching professionals. The contributions compiled here are the result of tireless efforts carried out by our affiliated associations, educators, researchers, and collaborators throughout 2022 and 2023. Together, they embody FAAPI's enduring commitment to promoting excellence, equity, and innovation in English language teaching across the country.

This dossier documents years of continued adaptation and resilience. It includes records of strategic meetings, community outreach, collaborative research initiatives, and high-impact professional development events. Through conferences, workshops, webinars, and academic publications, FAAPI and its affiliates have responded dynamically to the challenges of contemporary language education—embracing digital transformation, deepening discussions on interculturality, and advancing inclusive practices that empower both learners and teachers.

At the heart of this collective effort lies a vision grounded in the democratization of knowledge. Whether through regional engagement, national advocacy, or international representation, FAAPI has reaffirmed its core values: to foster critical reflection, encourage interdisciplinary collaboration, and support the diverse voices that make up our professional community.

This dossier is not only a record of accomplishments—it is an invitation to continue building bridges across contexts and disciplines, to share good practices, and to reimagine the future of English language teaching together. I extend my sincere gratitude to all who have contributed their time, expertise, and passion. Your commitment ensures that FAAPI remains a leading force in advancing socially engaged and pedagogically sound ELT in Argentina.

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Eugenia Carrión Cantón
FAAPI President

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1 Reading in EAP for Physical Education University Students in a Blended Learning Environment

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1. Introduction

This work aims to present a variety of materials that have been designed for *English II*, an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) reading comprehension course for undergraduate students at the Physical Education (PE) College in San Miguel de Tucumán in a blended learning environment. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is an approach to foreign language teaching and learning that "provides English language instruction that aims to serve learners' communication needs in English in a certain domain" (Işık-Taş et al., 2020, p. 1). ESP courses focus on students' needs; thus, the results of the needs analysis play a crucial role when deciding on the materials and the teaching approaches. In turn, EAP involves addressing students' academic study needs. The main purpose of undergraduate English courses at the Physical Education College in San Miguel de Tucumán is to train prospective teachers to develop their reading skills in English so they can meet their professional demands in the future and familiarize themselves with their academic environment. Consequently, the material for this course aims at fulfilling these particular needs.

2. Blended Learning

Recently, the improvement in teacher and student digital competencies resulting from the distance teaching and learning experience during the lockdown has enabled us to design the course by combining remote and face-to-face teaching, a practice known as blended learning. Blended learning "is not a simple juxtaposition of

physical presence and technological mediation, but a well-studied alternation of the two, aiming to make the most of the various components and design effective work contexts for both students and teachers" (Amenduni & Ligorio, 2022, p. 1). Since the pandemic, this approach has since been used more systematically and proved effective in helping students adapt to this new post-pandemic educational scenario. According to Smith and Hill (2018), blended learning has become increasingly popular in recent years, with more and more higher education institutions incorporating it. Its prevalence within higher education has led some experts to consider it the standard mode of instruction, with pedagogical approaches that involve a combination of online and in-person elements considered typical (p. 1).

Background

In order to design activities and materials for PE students at university, we need to consider their context, level of proficiency in the foreign language, needs, and motivation. EAP classes have around 100 participants between 21 and 30 years old who come from diverse sociocultural backgrounds. Most of them have studied English before at primary and secondary school; however, their proficiency level is quite low. At the beginning of the first course, they sit for a placement test and those with a higher level of proficiency may take an exam to pass the course. Students training to become PE teachers take two compulsory English courses, namely *English I* and *II*, in the 3rd year of their studies, each taught in the first and second semester of the year, respectively. It should be mentioned that at this stage of their studies, the students are already familiar with some academic genres, jargon, and conceptual issues related to their field. English lessons are taught twice a week for 120 minutes and the language of instruction is Spanish. In general, exposure to the foreign language is restricted to English classes so the learners' input is limited; in addition, they have little chance to use the language genuinely for communicative purposes. In these circumstances, learners may not appreciate the importance of English in their immediate context. English is not a decisive factor in their courses and social life as the language of instruction and evaluation at all stages of education is Spanish. As Dudley-Evans and St Johns (1998) put it:

In some situations, where English is a foreign not a second language, the ESP classroom may be almost the only source of English. Materials then play a crucial role in exposing learners to the language, which implies that the materials need to present real language, as it is used, and the full range that learners require. (p. 171)

Motivation plays a fundamental part in this context where English is not an immediate need. Vičič (2012) holds that motivation is a critical factor for both pre-experience and job-experienced learners. For the first group, who typically lack professional experience, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teachers must primarily rely on materials and activities prepared for the learners. Thus, the materials used in the language course should ideally be related to the knowledge gained in other courses and the learners' future jobs (p. 110).

The task of material selection is challenging, considering the students' language proficiency level and the short duration of the course. Students need to be familiar with the subject matter and genre of texts. Such texts should establish links between English and other fields of study and, at the same time, learners should find them appealing. "Therefore, good reading materials should contain interesting texts, a variety of activities which enhance the learners' thinking capacities, opportunities for students to use their existing knowledge and skills, and content which both learner and teacher can cope with." (Loutayf & Irrazabal, 2013, p. 3). To stimulate learners' creativity and engagement with the task and material, it is also advisable to include multimedia texts. "Though stimulus materials are generally texts, they can also include a wide range of media like video, graphic or audio materials, items of realia, computer—and/or Internet—mediated resources, lectures, etc." (Lesiak-Bielawska, 2015, p. 6).

Authenticity plays a key role in learners' motivation. As stated by Waigandt and Soto (2017), many authors adhere to the claim that authentic texts are inherently more interesting due to their communicative nature (p. 12). Using authentic materials creates a communicative context that brings the real world inside the EAP classroom. Ensuring variety and richness of authentic texts is key to meet the needs and interests of students, which is particularly important in ESP courses (Nunan, 2004, p. 51).

3. Materials Design Proposal

In this section, a lesson plan is presented alongside key concepts to justify such decisions. The materials and activities selected prove adequate for this group of participants as they are motivating, authentic, and appropriate for their proficiency level in the target language. The activities have been designed using an article about yoga for beginners that provides reliable scientific information for a general audience. The text is constructed through a series of descriptive and expository sequences with a prevalence of content-specific vocabulary. As regards linguistic structures, there is a predominance of the imperative mood, which is the grammatical focus of this lesson. In general terms, the language used in this text does not present significant obstacles to an inexperienced foreign language reader.

The following activities aim at engaging students in approaching a text with the purpose of interpreting and understanding it fully by implementing a wide range of strategies that will prove useful for their present and future studies. As argued by Nuttall (2000),

> Interpretation and response are the core of a text-based lesson. We want students to be capable of interpreting the text fully and accurately and responding to it as the writer intended. However, we also want them to read flexibly: to use the text for their own purposes, not the writer's, if they wish; to read critically; to skip difficulties when accuracy is not essential; and to respond according to their own personality. (p. 150)

In order to tackle this lesson more effectively, the handout is presented in PDF format so that the students can edit the document and click on the text to access Quizlet and Kahoot! They have worked with these digital tools in class in the past so they are familiar with them.

TASK 1: **Preste atención a las tarjetas y una los términos con sus equivalentes en español.**

Quizlet link: https://quizlet.com/_a2hu1z?x=1jqt&i=edhm1

In the first activity, learners use the Quizlet app to match words and pictures (in this case showcasing the different parts of the body). Its purpose is to activate the

students' schemata and prior knowledge before reading the text. One view expressed by Czarnec and Hill (2019) is that

> One aspect of learning that instructors should consider is how students use prior knowledge to comprehend and learn from text. Schema Theory emphasizes the mental connections learners make between pieces of information and can be a very powerful component of the learning process. It has been said that the fundamental principle of schema theory assumes that written text does not carry meaning by itself and that it can only provide direction for learners as to how they should retrieve or construct meaning from their own previously acquired knowledge. (Paragraph 2)

We believe this activity activates students' prior knowledge and motivates them to work with the chosen article from the very beginning. At the same time, this Quizlet has the advantage of serving as a glossary for future tasks, especially since students can easily access yoga-related vocabulary from their devices. At this point, these P.E. students have already taken classes where they were exposed to specific vocabulary related to anatomy, physiology, muscles, etc., mainly in *Anatomía Descriptiva y Funcional* and *Fisiología de la Actividad Física I*.

TASK 2: **Identifique las siguientes categorías paratextuales en el texto y tilde las opciones correctas.**

Article   link:
https://www.healthline.com/health/fitness-exercise/beginner-yoga-poses#childs-pose

In this second activity, we use the paratextual elements provided by the text to facilitate an initial approach to the text. The concept of paratext refers to "the set of all the auxiliary aspects that make up the way in which the text is presented to the eye" (Alvarado in Cubo de Severino, 2007, p. 70). The students are familiar with specific terms like paratextual elements, epigraphs, headings, etc. as they took *English I* in the previous semester. Furthermore, they are used to working with complementary paratext presented in the material prepared by the instructor. An example can be observed in the handout on page 3, where an image presenting several yoga poses can be used to enhance comprehension.

TASK 3: **Observe las pistas paratextuales y responda.**

The purpose of this activity is to train students to approach the text by analyzing and interpreting paratextual elements. Cubo de Severino (2007) believes that the combination of graphic elements supports the cognitive process. Systematic training in the recognition and use of graphic superstructures develops the ability to apply them strategically in the processes of comprehension and production of texts. In this respect, our aim is to promote learners' ability to identify textual cues that facilitate their comprehension, with a view to preparing them for more complex tasks, such as task 6, which will be elaborated upon subsequently.

TASK 4: Lea silenciosamente el texto y responda las siguientes preguntas.

In this task, students are expected to recognize different cognates and use lexical items identified in the first exercise. Transparent words help and guide them to understand the text better, particularly when considering the role of local and internal meaning conveyed through lexical chains and keywords (Thornbury, 2005). This stage is a good opportunity to clarify the meaning of false cognates, if any were to appear.

Then we move on to ask questions so that readers can analyze the structure of the text and confirm or discard the hypotheses that were formed at the beginning of the class. Nuttall (2000) uses the metaphor of a signpost to explain the function of asking questions to readers:

> A signpost stands at a crossroads to show travelers the way. Its function is to direct them along the right road, making the journey quicker and saving them from getting lost. A signpost question *(SPQ)* has a similar function: its purpose is not to test but guide the readers, directing their attention to the more important points in the text, preventing them from going off a false track. (p. 160)

She also argues that signpost questions are particularly useful to give students a specific reason for reading: "they read more purposefully in order to find the answer or complete the task" (Nuttall, 2000, p. 160).

TASK 5: Realice el siguiente Kahoot! y elija la mejor traducción para las siguientes frases extraídas del artículo.

Kahoot! link: https://create.kahoot.it/share/yoga-class-facdef-unt/255ed7c5-0d6c-45e3-a0dc-b61836cdf53e

The implications of this activity are twofold. First, the questions work to check students' comprehension concerning sentences which could be problematic because of their complexity and/or use of colloquial expressions like "banana back". Second, the translations will help them in the following task which centers on interpreting and partially translating specific phrases from the article.

TASK 6: Lea el texto nuevamente y, ayudándose de los gifs y el vocabulario de la actividad 1, resuma los pasos a seguir en cada postura.

An important element of this task lies in the text's strategic use of hyperlinks and short animated sequences of images with no sound, better known as gifs. Gifs are especially helpful for students as they recreate the different steps to follow to complete a yoga pose.

The aim of this exercise is to retrieve the linguistic content of the text to check comprehension and to foster critical thinking and cultural reflection. Each of the poses found in the table and the article is given its original name, and therefore learners are slightly exposed to the millennial practice of yoga, which opens up diverse ways of looking at life through exposure to a different culture. As argued by Loutayf and Irrazabal (2013),

> Multiculturalism can be present in the English reading comprehension class through the content in the texts and the activities prepared to teach linguistic items so as to foster cultural competence, which refers to the capacity to perform and interact successfully with others in a multicultural environment and involves awareness of one's own cultural worldview and respect for the worldview of others, a constructive attitude towards cultural difference and cross-cultural skills. (p. 3)

TASK 7:

A. **Imagine que debe detallar los pasos a seguir para realizar un ejercicio físico o actividad deportiva. Escríbalos en el siguiente cuadro.**

B. **Subraye las palabras y expresiones que utilizó para dar esas instrucciones.**

C. **Subraye las palabras y expresiones para dar instrucciones en el texto. ¿Qué tienen en común los verbos utilizados?**

The purpose of this task is to bring students closer to the grammatical content needed for this lesson. In this case, we prefer to use an inductive approach by making them imagine how to explain a physical activity using the linguistic structure that will be introduced afterwards. In turn, we guide them to establish a relation between the structure used in L1 and its equivalent in the target language. Once they have completed the activity, the instructor explains the grammatical point of the lesson and answers any possible questions.

TASK 8: En grupos, elijan una de las posturas de yoga vistas en el texto y realícenla paso a paso frente al curso mientras explican sin decir cuál es. Los otros grupos deben adivinar cuál es la postura.

The aim of this activity is to integrate what students have learned about yoga and to use body language to express themselves, which is highly important for their area of expertise and often an aspect they thoroughly enjoy putting into practice. Moreover, the game engages them in the task because of its competitive nature. This integrating activity rounds up the class by putting all the content learned into practice and generates a relaxing atmosphere. In this line, it has been suggested that gameplay enhances classroom learning:

> In many games, players encounter scenarios that involve making in-the-moment decisions that let them quickly see the impact of their choices in a low-risk setting and then try (and try again) if they falter—skills that are valuable as they go through life. (Nguyen, 2021)

TASK 9. Proyecto interdisciplinario

A. **En parejas, diseñen una micro clase (10–15 min.) para implementar en conjunto con el espacio curricular Práctica y residencia I.**

B. **En esta micro clase debe enseñar alguna de las posturas de yoga para principiantes que aprendió durante la clase a un grupo en donde lleve a cabo sus prácticas, ya sea nivel primario o secundario.**

C. Filme la clase para compartirla con el grupo por la plataforma.

Some advantages of interdisciplinary tasks are expanding students' understanding, enhancing communication skills, and making connections between different disciplines. The participants must create a micro-lesson to implement alongside *Práctica y Residencia I*. Thus, they are going to use the knowledge acquired in the lesson and put it into practice by designing a class to be taught to their own students. They are going to teach what they learned and then film a video so they can self-assess their own strengths and weaknesses. Learners often enjoy learning more when topics are authentically related to other subjects. This is supported by Hayes Jacobs who states that interdisciplinary education can generate greater enthusiasm and applicability among students, particularly when educators establish meaningful connections not only between diverse fields of study, but also with historical and contemporary contexts that resonate with students' personal experiences (In Gunn, n.d.).

4. Conclusions

The tasks of this lesson intend to meet the students' academic and professional demands. The activities proposed require the readers to play an active role by interacting with the text, making inferences, answering questions, and working with paratextual elements, among others. The first activities attempt to pursue the activation of schemata and students' prior knowledge. Then, the following assignments are to approach the text strategically with different purposes by asking readers to make questions, complete a table, and identify the grammatical structure predominant in the text. Finally, the last activities require students to integrate the contents studied in the lesson to produce an outcome based on their response to the text as a whole.

The main objective of ESP courses is to be responsive to students' needs. When selecting the content and teaching approach, it is key to conduct a comprehensive analysis of students' needs. Therefore, our lesson targets the development of students' reading skills in English while exploring content areas of interest that enhance and complement their field of knowledge. It is worth mentioning that the selected article might be useful for prospective P.E teachers because even though the content is highly related to their field of expertise, it is not included in the other classes they take. Thus,

the material could introduce them to a basic knowledge of yoga and subsequently facilitate more specific readings and studies related to such a field.

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2 Developing undergraduates' intercultural competence in a context of blended learning

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1. Introduction

In an increasingly globalized and interconnected world where undergraduates participate in intercultural experiences and become immersed in an international market, learning how to communicate across cultures becomes imperative. Intercultural knowledge can be integrated into foreign language learning university courses. It can be taught together with language content, mediated through literary works and technology. Thus, in our local context where blended learning was implemented as a result of transitioning from emergency remote teaching (ERT) to in-person classes, a module was designed to promote intercultural knowledge, foreign language learning and literature appreciation in an integrated fashion through in-person and online activities.

The aim of this study is to explore how blended learning activities prompt students of English as a foreign language (EFL) to develop intercultural competence (IC) and further practice their language and cognitive skills as they engage in the analysis of literary work. This can be done by engaging in tasks that involve reflection and critical analysis of cultural issues and attitudes. This experience may lead to students building,

using and sharing their cultural knowledge while solidifying their foreign language knowledge and developing their critical thinking skills at the same time.

2. Literature review

2.1. Blended learning (BL) in the language class

Research and knowledge regarding BL and language teaching and learning continues to increase as more instructors adopt this model. Marsh (2012) points out the social benefits that language learners may enjoy by engaging in blended learning activities. Among the benefits, autonomous learning, individualized language support, collaborative learning, student-content interaction and engagement, language practice outside the classroom, and further language development are mentioned.

Ghazizadeh and Fatemipour's (2017) study explored whether blended learning could have a positive impact on English language learners' reading proficiency. Results showed that there was a significant difference between the readers who participated in the BL course compared to those who attended traditional classes. Adas and Bakir (2013) assessed BL's effectiveness in boosting English language learners' writing competence. They found it contributed significantly to the development of students' writing skills, especially regarding grammar, spelling, punctuation and paragraph coherence.

The effectiveness of BL in the field of second language learning is further supported by Grgurovic (2011), who assessed its impact during a speaking and listening intensive English programme. The findings established that BL could have a significant effect in promoting the development of both speaking and listening skills. These results are similar to the ones obtained by Shih (2010), who found BL and blogging promoted the development of students' speaking skills, autonomy and collaboration skills.

In relation to the use of BL in the language classroom to teach intercultural knowledge and global literacy, Yang and Kuo (2021) explored if BL activities allowed students to develop global literacy skills by interacting with teachers from different cultural backgrounds. They concluded that college students gain knowledge related to global literacy while developing autonomy and English language proficiency.

2.2. IC and language learning

There is much research related to the role of literature in the development of IC. Scott and Huntington (2002) carried out a qualitative project in which they compared the attitudes and performance of two groups of students towards a given culture. In one of the groups, the students worked with fact sheets about the Ivory Coast, whereas the second group worked with a poem. They determined that those who worked with poetry had more affective awareness towards the culture, and they could draw connections with their own culture, contributing to IC development. In a Texan university, Zapata (2005) studied the impact of analyzing a short story from an intercultural perspective. Results show that this approach enhances the understanding of the target culture and reflection on one's own. Hibbs (2016) explored the perceptions that a group of college students had about Latin culture by reading short stories in Spanish. Finally, Rezaei and Naghinian (2018) compared and contrasted cultural features of the students' and the target culture using short stories. They found evidence of the positive impact these interventions have on the development of IC.

3. Theoretical framework

3.1. Blended learning

Graham (2006) considers that BL is a combination of in-person instruction and computer-mediated instruction. BL has grown in popularity as it offers a combination of the strengths of traditional and online learning (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008, Neumeier, 2005). BL benefits from the strong sense of engagement and community present in traditional settings (Tayebinik & Puteh, 2013), and from the multimodal diverse input and tasks that students can perform at their own pace, which is characteristic of distance learning (Senffner & Kepler, 2015). As students can log into a virtual environment to access multimedia content and activities, BL favors autonomous flexible learning that can take place outside the classroom. Since materials can be revisited, learning progresses as students feel ready to move into a new topic. In the traditional classroom, students can participate in activities such as debates to work on collaborative activities, further practice their language and develop 21st century skills such as critical thinking and digital literacy.

3.2. Intercultural competence

The acquisition of a second language involves not only the development of linguistic but also communicative skills; thus, IC becomes key in understanding the inextricable link between language and culture. Scarcella and Oxford (1992) address culture and language as synonyms, and they establish the importance of including culture within the teaching curricula. They promote the Tapestry Approach, which compares language to a tapestry, since learners weave several threads that represent aspects that make up a language in the same way as weavers do when creating a tapestry. Both are similar in the sense that learners and weavers are the ones that create the end product, with a purpose in mind. That is why learners' needs and purpose are of utmost importance in developing their competence. In this sense, culture is one more thread that makes up the tapestry in an integrated way.

There are several definitions for IC, which led scholars to propose IC frameworks in order to further conceptualize its meaning. Byram (1997, 2008) addresses the *intercultural dimension* in language teaching that aims not only at acquiring the linguistic competence that learners need to communicate appropriately, but also at developing IC as an ability to understand differences and interact with others. Byram developed a model of intercultural communicative competence that encourages students to reflect on the values and beliefs in their own culture as well as in others. Therefore, IC becomes a central objective when teaching and assessing students. Bennet (1986, 1993) proposes a model that has an impact on the overall experience of intercultural encounters. He refers to *ethnocentrism* as the first experiences individuals have when socializing, by which beliefs and values are accepted as they are. On the contrary, *ethnorelativism* acknowledges other beliefs and behaviors, apart from one's own. Bennet explains six stages that go from *denial* of cultural difference, all the way to *integration* within the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. Deardorff (2006) argues that to develop IC, individuals need to undergo a process of internalization and reflection on previous beliefs and ideas before they interact with other cultures. The Process Model focuses on attitudes, knowledge and skills, and it emphasizes curiosity as an important component, as well as openness and respect. A summarized definition states that "intercultural competencies in essence are about

improving human interactions across differences, whether within a society (differences due to age, gender, religion, socio- economic status, political affiliation, ethnicity, and so on) or across borders" (Deardforff, 2020, p. 5).

4. Methodology

This is an exploratory study that analyzes the effectiveness of BL to foster the development of IC. It used different data collection tools: an initial questionnaire, classroom observation and content analysis of students' work.

4.1. Context and Participants

159 college students aged 19–22 voluntarily participated in this research at a state university in Córdoba, Argentina. The participants studied EFL at an intermediate level (B1). Students were enrolled in an EFL course in their second year of a five-year English programme. In this course, students were expected to develop language and critical thinking skills in tandem with intercultural communicative competence through the discussion of content units and literary work.

The teacher in charge of class observations had 10 years of experience in the chair. She has previous experience doing research on IC.

4.2. Data collection tools

4.2.1. Initial questionnaire

The initial questionnaire was designed using the tool Quizizz, as students were familiar with it and found it appealing. It was a close-ended questionnaire that contained six questions. In questions 1, 3 and 5, students had to identify the most salient aspects of key concepts of the short story: culture, intercultural identity and migration. Afterwards, students had to select out of three different fragments, the one that best represented each concept. By means of the questionnaire, it was possible to check understanding of the text and key concepts related to IC and the analysis of the text in the light of IC.

4.2.2. Classroom observation

The main purpose of the classroom observation was to explore if students could understand key concepts related to IC such as culture, cultural identity and migration, and use B1 lexico-grammatical items and structures to participate in class debate, check students' understanding of their story and explore if they could establish meaningful connections between the short story and the content unit that is linked to the story. The aspects to be observed were: a) students' identification of aspects related to key concepts (migration, culture and cultural identity); b) students' comments related to seeing these concepts illustrated in the short story; c) students' comments that reflected they could establish meaningful connections between the short story and the content unit, education.

4.2.3. Content analysis

At the end of the lesson, students had to think about a potential topic for an essay question in which they could link the short story with a content unit and they had to outline an answer and possible arguments. Students handed over their written productions which were later analysed to check whether students made explicit reference to the story, concepts related to IC and the content unit education.

4.3. Implementation: BL for IC

This experience invited students to work first at home in their virtual learning environment and then in the traditional classroom. The activities were designed to foster IC, language learning and the development of cognitive skills.

4.3.1 Activities in the Virtual Learning Environment

The activities in the VLE were designed using the Moodle learning platform and were organized in a lesson format. Each task had a three-fold purpose: a) practice of language skills; b) IC acquisition and c) development of 21st century skills: critical thinking.

The activities (Figure 1) allowed students to incorporate new knowledge and concepts at their own pace by interacting with class content gradually. The lesson format allows for independent exploration, content mastery and information and

technology literacy. Diverse multimedia resources offered students with rich multisensory material that catered for different learning styles.

Figure 1. Activities of the virtual classroom

Learning activity	Language goal	Aspects of IC	Cognitive skills
Quote	Introduction of key vocabulary.

Promote debate and the use of language for authentic use in class. | Start considering the main topics related to IC present in the short story

Introduction to main key concepts: migration, culture and cultural identity | Promote analysis, reflection

In class, collaborative construction of knowledge |
| Storyline (Drag and drop activity run by Genially) | Further practice reading skills. | Understand concepts such as local and target culture, and migration. | Understand the sequencing of events and their interrelationship in the story. |
| Worksheet

(Canva) | Writing short sentences in which they use key lexico-grammatical aspects | Understand how communities and their unique cultures shape the cultural identity of migrants. | Synthesis of information. Classification of information. Comparison and contrast |
| Breakout room (Gamification; multimedia activity) | Further practice reading (visual and verbal semantic cues) and listening skills. | Identify key concepts related to intercultural communication: language, culture, migration, cultural identity. | Identification of key concepts related to intercultural communication. Analysis of audio and reading excerpts from the literary texts. Fostering critical thinking. |
| Language vocabulary activity (H5P) | Working with specific vocabulary. | Culture and language. | Consolidation. |

Topics for further discussion	Planning language use. Promote debate and the use of language for authentic use in class.	Integrating topics related to intercultural communication to analyze a short story.	Reflection on key concepts. Establishing connections between concepts, the short story and the content unit on Education.

4.3.2. Classroom experience

The class experience (Figure 2) aimed at reinforcing the learning of new vocabulary and concepts, and practicing language skills. The focus was on student-student and student-teacher interaction, and in-depth conceptual scrutiny.

First, students responded to an initial questionnaire in which they identified the most salient aspects of key concepts related to culture, cultural identity and migration. Then, they selected a fragment from the short story in which these concepts were illustrated.

After that, a multimodal presentation was used to foster reflection, critical thinking, second language development and connection among ideas through audio files, images, and literary texts excerpts.

Finally, students established a meaningful connection between the topics dealt with in the literary work and the content unit, education. Students proposed topics for a coming written exam that required mastering a comparison and contrast essay structure. This activity engaged students in a group work activity that involved reasoning, establishing meaningful connections between topics, authentic language use for communication and elaboration of ideas that involved addressing cultural issues from an intercultural perspective.

Figure 2. Activities that took place in the in-person lessons

Learning activity	**Language goal**	**Aspects of IC**	**Critical thinking**
Initial Questionnaire:	Identify main concepts	understand underlying concepts:	Identifying

(Run by Quizizz)	establish connections between content and concepts	migration, culture, cultural identity	
Breakout room (Gamification; multimedia activity)	Oral debate. Using vocabulary in long oral stretches of language.	Identify key concepts related to the concept intercultural communication: language, culture, migration, cultural identity	Identification of key concepts related to intercultural communication. Analysis of audio and reading excerpts from the literary texts. Fostering critical thinking.
Class discussion	Further oral discussion use of oral language.	Integrating topics related to intercultural communication to analyse a short story.	Reflection on key concepts. Establishing connections between concepts, the short story and the content unit on Education.

5. Discussion

Results will be discussed according to the following categories: a) practice of language skills; b) acquisition of IC and c) development of cognitive skills.

5.1. Practice of language skills

During the class observations and the class discussion, students could use the vocabulary learned on their own. These findings are similar to Marsh's (2012) as the language learned outside the classroom could be used during the activities and debates carried out in class. During the integration activities, students could interact with the content, classmates and teachers and work collaboratively using authentic language for communication purposes (Shih, 2010).

In class, students manifested that the reading of the short story had not been simple due to the number of unknown lexical items. The language activities in the virtual classroom helped them improve their reading skills and language processing. This was evident in students' active participation in class discussions. Besides, in the class debate activity, they successfully connected the short story with the content unit:

education. They could think of potential essay questions and they elaborated strong arguments to answer those questions. These results go in line with the ones by Adas and Bakir's (2013), who proposed that BL could boost English language learners' writing competency.

Gamified activities that were built using different types of audiovisual input helped develop students' listening skills. As the listening input mirrored the cultural background of the characters of the book, undergraduates were exposed to different language accents. While interacting with the gamified activity, students successfully solved the listening activity showing their understanding of the listening input. These same students would later elaborate on the ideas they listened to orally. This shows that, like in Grgurovic's (2011) study, BL is effective in promoting the development of speaking and listening skills.

5.2. Acquisition of IC

The results of the initial questionnaire revealed that students could understand key concepts related to IC and, to a lesser degree, they could identify text excerpts in which these aspects were evident. 74% of students could identify the excerpt connected to the concept of culture, 71% of them identified the excerpt linked to the concept of IC and 56 % could single out the excerpt that made reference to migration. Thus, even when it is evident that these concepts need to receive further attention, our results mirror those of Yang and Kou (2021), who found that BL can promote the learning of intercultural knowledge in the second and foreign language class. The work carried out in class allowed students to identify and analyze intercultural categories in the short story, which enabled them to acknowledge and develop their intercultural understanding. Thus, not only linguistic but also intercultural competence was promoted.

5.3. Development of cognitive skills

Activities both in the VLE and in the traditional classroom engaged students in tasks that promoted identification, interpretation, synthesis, categorization and comparing and contrasting information. Those activities in which students had to identify aspects related to the concepts of culture, cultural identity and migration were

the ones students solved with more ease. Categorization and comparison and contrast of information and characters was more challenging, as students did not have enough background knowledge related to the cultures illustrated in the short story. Finally, synthesis and interpretation of ideas were activities students performed with the help of the teacher. High-level order thinking skills needed to be introduced by considerable scaffolding, mainly considering that this was the first time students were analyzing a short story from an intercultural perspective.

6. Conclusion

Considering our findings, it can be concluded that EFL college students can be equipped with intercultural, language and cognitive skills through blended learning. As undergraduates of a language programme, college students need to possess IC to navigate an increasingly multicultural world while learning how to apply knowledge through activities that promote identification, interpretation, analysis, synthesis, categorization and comparison and contrast.

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3 *¿Mejor no hablar de ciertas cosas?* Human rights in the secondary school EFL curriculum

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1. Introduction

The theme of human rights is included in many secondary school subjects, and foreign-language education is a privileged space to make pupils aware of and express themselves about their importance. In Argentina, human rights are firmly anchored in the constitution as the country has agreed to adhere to international treaties such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or the American Convention on Human Rights (Constitución Argentina, 1994). Notably, Argentina earned an international reputation for having trialled the military juntas that ruled between 1976 and 1983 leaving an aftermath of political persecution, torture, killing and corruption. *Nunca más*, never again, was the title given to the report produced by the commission in charge of the study of human rights abuse during the dictatorship, and they were the last words pronounced by prosecutor Julio Strassera to conclude the verdict of the junta trials in 1985. Many Argentinians have made the phrase a mission statement to appeal to memory, truth and justice.

Human rights must have a presence in schools ELT because it is mandated by national and local educational legislation and its implementation is stated in the curriculum. Several articles of the education act (Ley de Educación Nacional, [LEN], 2006) state that education must aim at the preservation of human rights, whereas the nationally agreed foreign language guidelines (Núcleos de Aprendizajes Prioritarios. Lenguas Extranjeras [NAP]) (Consejo Federal de Educación, 2012), stress that foreign language teaching with a plurilingual and intercultural orientation enables active participation in democratic processes and contributes to citizenship building and peace education. In the province of Córdoba, Argentina, where the proposal made in this paper is contextualized, the ELT syllabus for the 6th year of the upper-secondary school

includes the following as one of the interest areas: "Citizenship education: gender issues, majorities, minorities and ghettos, human rights[1]" (Ministerio de Educación de la Provincia de Córdoba, 2018, n/p). Nevertheless, these topics are either insufficiently covered or absent in ELT coursebooks, as shown by a study of three series in the CEFR A2 to upper B1 level range (Council of Europe, 2001), so that teachers need to design their own materials to fill this gap (López-Barrios, 2022).

The proposal that follows is framed within a materials development project (López-Barrios & San Martín, 2018) aiming at the design of context-sensitive materials for different educational contexts of the city of Córdoba. The paper describes a teaching unit around the topic of human rights. First, I state the principles on which the unit is based, then describe the context of use, and next, present the unit.

2. Theoretical framework

Three main tenets support the materials: principles of Materials Development, Instructed Second Language Acquisition (ISLA), and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT).

Tomlinson and Masuhara (2018) defined Materials Development as the processes involved in the design, adaptation, evaluation of language learning and teaching materials, which they characterize as "anything that can be used by language learners to facilitate their learning of the target language" (p. 2). The authors defined a series of criteria for effective learning materials that apply to the design and selection of activities, defined by Richards and Schmidt (2010) as "any classroom procedure that requires students to use and practise their available language resources" (p. 9), and the texts that usually serve as the basis of activities. The criteria were formulated as questions referring to the degree to which the activities and the texts provide "exposure to authentic use, meaningful exposure, interesting texts, achievable challenges, affective engagement, cognitive engagement, discovering English in use, meaningful activities, feedback opportunities, and positive impact" (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018, p. 300). For example, the texts were extracted or adapted from authentic sources to provide meaningful L2 exposure, while suitable preparation makes the task achievable by the intended learners.

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[1] My translation.

The criteria mentioned above are supported by insights into learner internal and external factors that influence ISLA. In this respect, affective and cognitive factors such as motivation, emotional engagement, and cognitive challenge, as well as the availability of comprehensible L2 input, constitute the principles that give direction to the analysis questions. Moreover, the choice of TBLT as the framework for the construction of the teaching unit is justified in that, unlike most of its predecessors such as Communicative Language Teaching, TBLT has firm roots in ISLA. (Mishan & Timmis, 2015).

TBLT is defined as "a teaching approach based on the use of communicative and interactive tasks as the central units for the planning and delivery of instruction" (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 585). A language learning task is an activity with a focus on meaning, a communicative purpose and a clearly defined outcome in which learners deploy the whole of their language knowledge instead of a particular target language feature (Ellis et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the distinction between tasks as work plans and tasks as processes proposed by Breen (1989, in Ellis et al., 2020) is relevant, as in this article, the language learning tasks described are plans, as opposed to activities that have been put to use already and whose outcomes can be assessed.

3. The context of use

The teaching unit was designed for use in the penultimate year of the upper cycle of mainstream secondary schools and aims at the attainment profile described in the NAP (Consejo Federal de Educacion, 2012) for the two-cycle option (*recorrido de dos ciclos*), which refers to a teaching and learning module spanning six years, beginning at around age 12 in lower-secondary school. Learners in the context described above are typically 16 years of age and have previously learned English for a minimum of four years at a rate of three-weekly forty-minute lessons. Despite the low formal contact with the target language, learners' cognitive maturity and effective activation of schematic and language knowledge can enable them to engage in planned L2 language production tasks if provided with massive support and an achievable challenge. Furthermore, the collaboration between the Social Studies and English

teachers would be ideal so that the disciplinary contents can be integrated into the EFL class.

4. The teaching unit

The general objectives of this unit are for learners to further develop their reading, listening and speaking skills while consolidating their knowledge of lexis and agentless passive constructions in text types such as dictionary entries, definitions, and news articles, both authentic and slightly adapted, around the topic of human rights. The unit consists of a task cycle, as shown in the figure below:

Figure 1. The task cycle
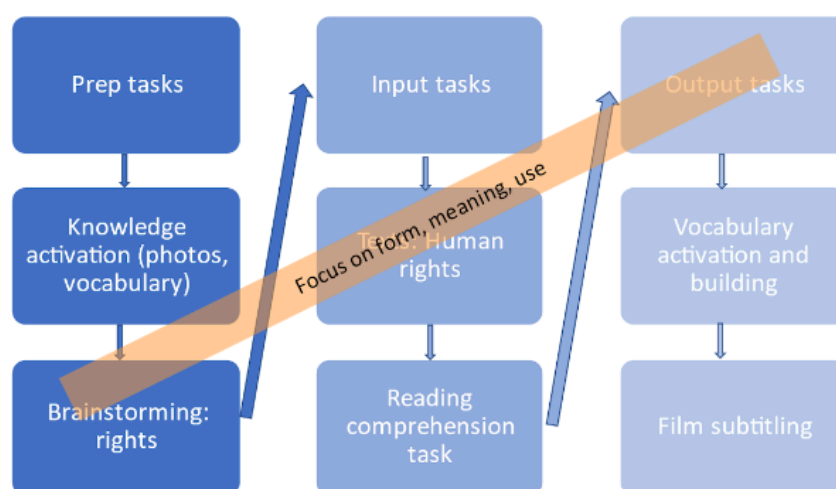
The task cycle starts with activities that prepare the learners for the subsequent input, language focus and output tasks. Care has been taken to select, adapt and design activities that pose achievable challenges, an aim that was achieved by sequencing the activities and providing suitable scaffolding. As shown in the figure, the focus on the language dimensions of form, meaning and use are present throughout the teaching unit, whereby meaning is especially relevant considering the vocabulary activation and building that arises at different points. In this unit, the meaning and use dimensions build the core of the language focus tasks, as the form of passive voice constructions is quite transparent and does not interfere with meaning. Rather, the use dimension is particularly relevant, since the recognition of thematic roles in passive

constructions impinges on meaning, as mentioning or omitting the agent could reflect an ideological stance. Recognizing this helps in the development of criticality. The following sections describe the teaching unit in detail.

4.1. Preparation tasks

These pre-reading and listening activities aim at motivating learners, arousing their curiosity, anticipating the content of the upcoming activities, as well as activating and building new schemata and language knowledge. Three activities enable learners to tackle the subsequent receptive and productive tasks.

Figure 2. Preparation task 1[2]

Learners are shown the image and asked to translate the sentence into L1, so that the key words "every" and "rights" can be taught if unknown. Then, learners could be prompted to say what they think about the slogan, whereby the teacher helps learners model the sentence in L2, if necessary. This discussion paves the way for the following activities (Figure 3) aiming at vocabulary building.

Figure 3. Preparation task 2

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[2] Source:
https://www.woodhullfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Every-Human-Has-Rights.png

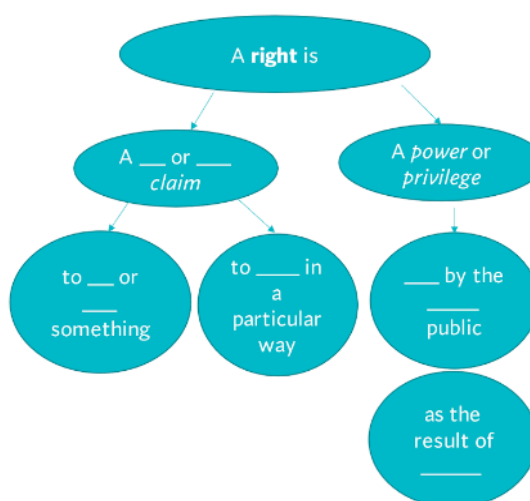Read the definitions and complete the word web. You can use a dictionary to see the highlighted words.

Right a moral or legal claim to have or get something or to behave in a particular way
• *They had fought hard for equal rights.*
• right to something *Everyone has a right to a fair trial.*
• right to do something *You have no right to stop me from going in there.*
• *I reserve the right to leave at any time I choose.*
• *What gives you the right to do that?*
• *She had every right to be angry.*
• within your rights to do something *You're quite within your rights to ask for your money back.*
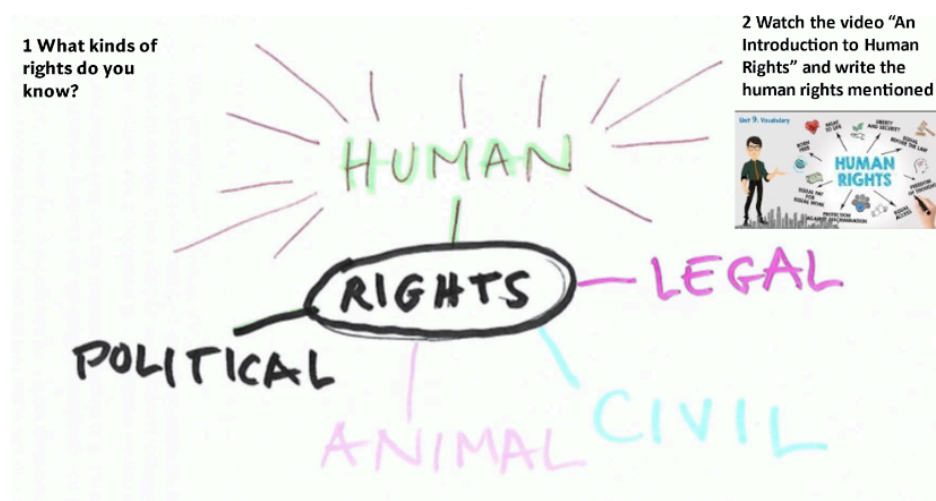(https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/right_3)

Right 1. A power or privilege held by the general public as the result of a constitution, statute, regulation, judicial precedent, or other type of law.

(https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/right)

(Word web:)
A **right** is
— A ___ or ___ *claim*
— A *power* or *privilege*
— to ___ or ___ something
— to ____ in a particular way
— ____ by the ____ public
— as the result of ____

The purpose of this activity is to make learners familiar with two meanings of the noun "right" by reading the definitions provided in a monolingual dictionary and a legal glossary, both from the internet, and transferring the keywords that express the meanings to a word web. In so doing, learners become familiar with the highlighted words, which are necessary to define the keyword, and use a monolingual English dictionary to clarify meanings. Apart from enlarging their vocabulary, learners further develop the micro skill of extracting detailed information and their dictionary using strategies and get further exposure to monolingual dictionary entries thus providing them with opportunities for incidental learning.

Figure 4. Preparation task 3

1 What kinds of rights do you know?

2 Watch the video "An Introduction to Human Rights" and write the human rights mentioned

HUMAN RIGHTS — LEGAL
POLITICAL
ANIMAL CIVIL

Once learners have become acquainted with the meaning of "rights", and as preparation for the upcoming viewing task, learners are asked to brainstorm the different kinds of rights they know. The resulting word web must be kept for later use, so that it could be written on a poster if the board needs to be free for another purpose. The figure shows a possible partial outcome of the task, which consists in brainstorming types of rights provided by learners in L2 or L1, in which case the teacher provides the L2 equivalent. As the viewing task mentions human rights, teachers should aim at eliciting some of them. Depending on the degree of involvement and reactions from the learners, teachers may give simple definitions to elicit the words from the learners and, if learners say them in L1, they provide the equivalent.

4.2. Input tasks

Once the word web has been completed with as many contributions as could be elicited, learners are shown the YouTube video "An Introduction to Human Rights" (see the URL below Figure 6). This is a 5.44-minute-long video in simple English in which the term is defined and the UN Declaration of Human Rights is described, including the world situation that originated it and some types of human rights. Students watch the video once to get a general idea of the contents. Depending on the teaching context, the video can be played as it is, or with English subtitles, or at a slightly slower speed, as all these options are available. If possible, the video is shown on a screen to the whole group, otherwise, a link to the video can be shared and learners view it individually on their mobile phones and listen using earplugs. After watching, learners are asked to say in L2 or L1 what they recall, without getting into details. Afterwards, two viewing tasks follow for learners to extract different kinds of information.

Figure 5. First viewing task

Before you watch the video, read the following questions

- What are human rights?
- What was the world situation before the universal declaration of a human rights was passed?
- What were the rights violations that originated the universal declaration of a human rights?
- When and where was the declaration passed?
- Which countries signed the universal declaration of a human rights?
- Why was the universal declaration of a human rights passed?

Now watch the video (0.0 to 3.36) and say, which questions are answered in the video, which ones are not? Justify you answers

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The viewing task aims at learners getting a general picture of the content and consists in deciding which of the questions shown in Figure 5 are answered in the first part of the video (up to 3.36). Learners are asked to read the questions first so as to make sure they can be understood, view the video and afterwards they are given a moment to discuss their findings with a partner. Subsequently, learners share their decisions with the rest of the class and justify their answers, as far as possible in L2, but using the L1 whenever necessary.

Now, students are ready for another viewing task, this time centred around the second part of the video (as from 4.37), where basic human rights are described. For this, the word web previously completed must be available, as learners will now watch the video and compare the human rights mentioned (shown in figure 6) with those in their word web and note down those that appear in the video but are not included in theirs, either because learners did not remember or know them.

Figure 6. Screenshot from the video[3]

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[3] Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M_HsXzPpYCg&t=339s
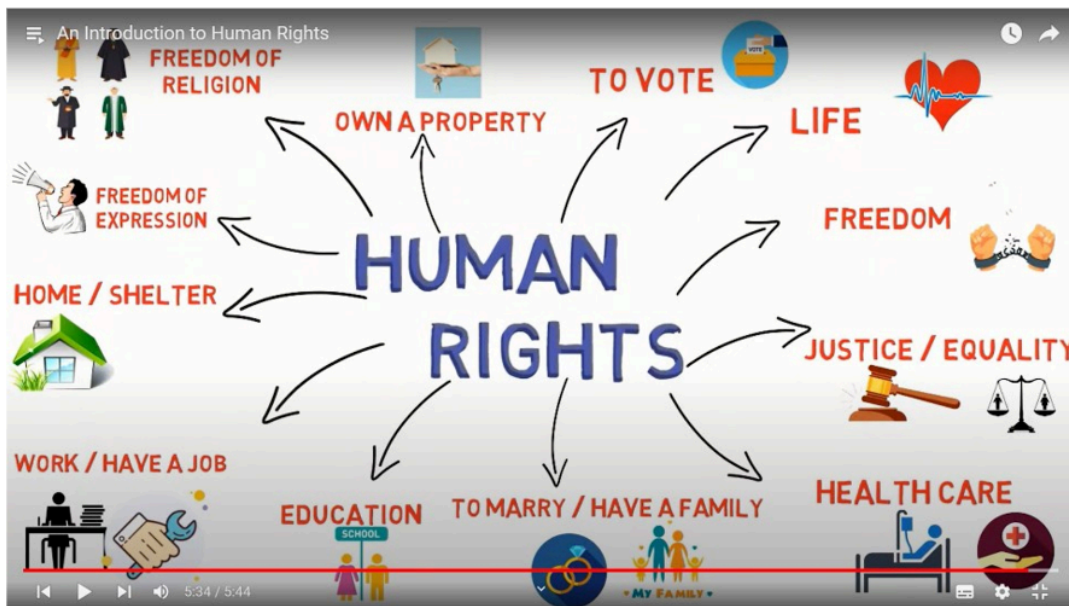
In the following activity, the right to social protest will be addressed to prepare learners for the subsequent reading tasks. Protest was mentioned in the video in relation to how people around the world expressed their discontent with injustice. To elicit this concept, learners could be shown the screenshot at 3.11 and be asked to describe the image. Alternatively, if a social protest takes place on the day of the lesson or has recently taken place, learners could be asked what the protesters claimed and how they protested. Learners will react in L2 as far as possible, with the help of the teacher and more capable peers.

Once the concept has been activated, learners read some extracts from different websites explaining what social protest is, its relevance, legal status, and different forms in which it can take place. The task consists in reading the three texts and stating the meaning of the term using the keywords provided at the end. Potentially unfamiliar keywords have been explained using synonyms at the right edge of the text. The task could be done in pairs to enable interaction in the formulation of the concept. These can be uploaded to a Padlet or Jamboard for correction and sharing with the class.

Figure 7. Input task 2.

Input task

Read the texts and find out: What is social protest?

Social protest is a form of political expression that seeks to bring about social or political change by influencing the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of the public or the policies of an organization or institution.
https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199756841/obo-9780199756841-0005.xml

cause

Social protest is a core element for the existence and consolidation of democratic societies and is protected by a constellation of rights and freedoms, which the inter-American system guarantees both in the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man and in the American Convention on Human Rights.
https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/expression/publications/Protesta/ProtestHumanRights.pdf

Important

About the right of peaceful assembly
Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly. The right of peaceful assembly includes the right to hold meetings, sit-ins, strikes, rallies, events or protests, both offline and online. It serves as a vehicle for the exercise of many other rights guaranteed under international law, with which it is linked intrinsically and that form the basis for participating in peaceful protests. In particular this concerns the rights to freedom of expression and to take part in the conduct of public affairs. https://www.ohchr.org/en/peaceful-assembly

reunion

Social protest is the expression / exercise of the right to …

The next task (Figure 8) consists in brainstorming what learners know about Argentinian social activist Milagro Sala. Hers is a case of human rights violation recognized by international organizations such as Amnesty International and is a much-debated topic in the media. Students are invited to say what they know about Milagro Sala and the contributions are written as keywords in the word web. Because of the political connotation of the case, the activity should be understood as an opportunity to express ideas in a respectful way, which is one of the cross-curricular aims of upper-secondary school education.

Figure 8. Input task 3.[4]

_____

[4] Picture source:
https://www.cronista.com/economia-politica/Milagro-Sala-por-que-la-condenaron-en-cuantas-causas-y-por-cuanto-dinero-20190115-0014.html

Input task: activation and building of schematic and language knowledge

Who is this? What do you know about her?

Once schematic and language knowledge has been activated, learners are enabled to do the following reading activity (Figure 9) consisting in identifying the main idea of each of the paragraphs that make up the text. Depending on the characteristics of the class, the activity can be done individually or in pairs, using a dictionary or not. In the end, learners formulate the answer in a statement such as "Paragraph number one goes with sentence 'a' because (it informs about the case)".

Figure 9. Input task 4.

Input task: Reading for general information

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in its article 20 states that "Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association" and, according to Article 9, "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile." [a]

This is the case of Milagro Sala, the leader of the Túpac Amaru social organization, who participated in a peaceful protest against Jujuy government's policy of management of funds for social organizations. [ ]

In January 2016 Mrs Sala was arrested on charges of fraud and criminal conspiracy and has been on preventive detention since then. In 2019 she was sentenced to 13 years in prison. However, the sentence was appealed by the defence and is awaiting the verdict of the Supreme Court. [ ]

According to Argentinean laws, preventive detention can be applied if the accused is considered to interfere in the investigation or flee. But this measure cannot be executed for more than two years. [ ]

Unlimited preventive detention is a violation of her right to justice. [ ]

Read the text and identify the following information:

a)   Introduction: The human rights abuse reported in the text
b)   Why it is a case of human rights abuse
c)   The description of the arrest and the sentence
d)   The person whose rights were violated and the events
e)   The injustice

Write the letter in the box [ ] at the end of each paragraph. The first one is done. Justify your decisions.

Thus far, learners have been exposed to a variety of audio-visual and printed texts from which they have extracted information and expanded their factual and lexical knowledge. Consequently, through the activities, learners not only further

developed their receptive skills but also read the texts and viewed the video to learn new contents.

4.3. Language-focused task

The text of the last activity contains several examples of agentless passive constructions that are typical of news articles. A brief explanation is provided using simple metalanguage for learners to be aware of the effect of the construction on the reader, and different examples from the text are provided with questions to direct learners' attention to the information contained and omitted in the sentence. Below, the phrase shows the answer to the first question (what is the fact?) highlighted in yellow and an answer to the second question (who performed the action that led to the outcome?) is provided by mentioning agents that are not stated in the text. Next, learners are prompted to identify the fact in some sentences from the text and are asked if the agent can be identified. By solving the activity, learners should develop an understanding of the effect of agentless constructions. This awareness is further strengthened by the question in the thought bubble. The resulting insight is that in news articles the omission of the agent could help conceal the persons, things or circumstances involved, thus protecting them, especially when the agent holds a position of power (Ting, 2011).

Figure 10. Language-focused task

Language-focused task

In the text, an argument is presented (that Milagro Sala is a victim of human rights abuse because of her yearlong preventive detention). The text is informative, but it is also argumentative because it expresses an opinion (unlimited preventive detention is a violation of her right to justice).

In this type of text, the *facts* are more relevant than the *agents*, the persons, things, or circumstances that cause the injustice. For example,

Milagro Sala is accused of not respecting a recently-implemented regularization plan for cooperatives. What is the fact? Who accused her?

Milagro Sala is accused of not respecting a recently-implemented regularization plan for cooperatives the fact. Who accused her is not mentioned (The governor of Jujuy)

She is being criminalized for peacefully exercising her rights to freedom of expression and protest What is the fact? Who criminalizes her?

She is being criminalized for peacefully exercising her rights to freedom of expression and protest the fact. Who criminalizes is not mentioned (the accuser and the judges)

In these sentences, identify the fact. Can you find the agent?

1. Preventive detention can be applied if the accused is considered to interfere in the investigation or flee
2. This measure cannot be executed for more than two years
3. In January 2016 Mrs Sala was arrested on charges of fraud and criminal conspiracy
4. In 2019 she was sentenced to 13 years in prison
5. The sentence was appealed by the defence
6. [Milagro Sala] has been on preventive detention since then

Think: what is the effect of not mentioning the agent?

The awareness of the effect of concealing the agent in the examples from the text helps learners understand how public opinion can be manipulated so that a fact can be strengthened, and the agent be defaced to protect them. As this language feature also applies to Spanish, learners can realize the importance of knowing the agent that prompts an action when they hold a position of power, especially in news reports. Thus, the activity contributes to learners' critical thinking skills and has an impact on citizenship development.

4.4. Output tasks

The task cycle ends with a writing activity whose goal is for learners to design a blog to raise awareness of cases of human rights abuse. The text of input task 4 can be used as a model for the text and the preceding input from the word webs, viewing and reading tasks should provide the language and some of the factual knowledge necessary to carry out the task with an acceptable degree of confidence. The model text has a length of 163 words; accordingly, the expected product should have no less than 150 and a maximum of 200 words. Task preparation begins with the group deciding on the case to present, involving research drawing on various sources so that a plurality of viewpoints can be assured. Learners will need to mobilize their critical abilities to distinguish fact from opinion, be aware of possible manipulation through the use of strategies to conceal agency, and to check and contrast information to make sure that it is genuine. Additionally, learners may need to translate information found in their L1 to the target language, so that apps like Google Translate could be used to support their writing. Of course, judicious use is expected to avoid plain L2 translation of a whole text composed in L1 (see López-Barrios & Altamirano, 2019). Scaffolding is provided by indicating the content learners are expected to develop, the suggested text structure, and the key language supplied by the task.

Figure 11. Output task.

Output task

> Let's organize a Human Rights Week at school to make the community aware of their importance. In groups of three, make a website with blogs informing about cases of human rights abuse. Use the text about Milagro Sala as a model.
>
> - Choose a person or a situation to report. Look for reliable information from different sources.
> - This is what you can include in the text:
>   - Introduction: The human rights abuse reported
>   - The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in its article … states that "…" / Article … of the UDH states that "…" / As stated in article … of the UDHR, "…"
>   - The person whose rights were violated and the events
>   - This is the case of …, the leader of … / a student / an employee of … , who …
>   - Describe what happened
>   - The description of the arrest and the sentence
>   - In (date) (person) was arrested on charges of / kidnapped by … / …
>   - Why it is a case of human rights abuse
>   - According to … laws, …. is illegal / unconstitutional / inhuman / unfair /…
>   - The injustice
>   - Make an appeal to end the abuse: Stop … / … must be stopped

The expected outcome is a non-professionally designed webpage with the title "Human rights abuse cases" where the contributions produced by the trios are shared. A group's first draft can be provided with feedback from another trio, concentrating primarily on content and organization, by comparing the text with the task instructions and providing comments in L1 or L2, depending on the learners' possibilities. If possible, the peer group will also provide language feedback as text comments or by activating the track changes options. Afterwards, teachers will provide further feedback, especially regarding accuracy. Based on the feedback from the peers and the teacher, the group writes the final version and submits it to the teacher for a final check before the texts are uploaded on the website. If possible, the website should be freely available for visitors to like and comment on.

My choice of Milagro Sala as a case of human rights violation may be controversial in certain sectors of Argentinian society, as public opinion is sharply divided between detractors and defenders of her role as leader of a social organization. Sadly, cases of human rights violations are still registered in many countries worldwide, so that choosing one that is farther removed from the local political scene could be a more suitable choice. Figure 12 shows a list of other cases that could be chosen either for the activities in input tasks 2, 3, and 4 and/or the output task. Nevertheless, in contexts like religious schools or conservative-oriented institutions, all these options could be considered controversial and be ignored. Still, as stated before, respectful exchange of views is a value in its own right and a step towards peace education, so

that opportunities must be created across the curriculum for contrasting views based on reliable empirical data instead of mere prejudice.

Figure 12. Cases of human rights violation.

Some cases of human rights violations

In Argentina
- Santiago Maldonado
- Facundo Astudillo Castro
- Blas Correa
- Mauro Coronel
- Decreto 70/2017

In the world
- Rosa Parks
- Nelson Mandela
- Criminalization of sexual orientation and gender identity
- Apartheid in South Africa (1948-1992)

5. Conclusions

In this paper, I presented a model teaching unit around the topic of human rights and justified the need for this example of situated materials development in the fact that commercial coursebooks fail to address this topic despite its relevance and obligatory status in formal education in Argentina.

The activities of the task cycle meet the characteristics of effective learning materials defined by Tomlinson & Masuhara (2018), as they provide learners with authentic exposure and use of the target language and achievable challenges. The preparation tasks activate and build schematic and language knowledge and thus enable learners to perform the upcoming input and output tasks and obtain feedback. Besides, activities engage learners cognitively and affectively. Cognitively, by prompting them to recall information, discover the effect of agentless constructions, and create a blog, and affectively, by appealing to the feeling of justice that is so important to adolescents. Dealing with interesting, real life and contemporary issues is likely to impact positively not only on students' L2 learning but also on their development as citizens.

Moreover, the tasks that build the teaching unit meet the criteria of TBLT (Ellis et al., 2020), in that they are predominantly meaning-focused, information-led, rely on a variety of language, and have a communicative outcome.

Lastly, a limitation of the materials is that the tasks are described from my perspective as a designer, so that they are presented as work plans rather than considering samples of outcomes collected from learners in their performance, or accounts about their difficulties, i.e., the task as a process.

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4 At the Crossroads of Literature and History in Language Education

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1. Introduction

The field of foreign language education has embraced for some time now the fact that teaching a language implies not only focusing on linguistic skills but also fostering intercultural awareness. In many EFL courses and teaching training curricula language is referred to as *English language and culture*, in an attempt to highlight the importance that teaching culture has in the education of teachers as future intercultural mediators. What to include as cultural components remains a difficult decision to make for teachers and teacher trainers in their language courses. Many of them choose to include some contents of English literature and history and, more often than not, find themselves trapped at the crossroads of which texts or material would be meaningful, updated and more importantly, engaging. Historical fiction has gained ground in the field of literary studies as a site where New Historicism and Historiographic Metafiction not only allow for an entertaining and engaging way into history, but also open up new arenas in which to question and resignify historical truth, meaning and subjectivity.

It is the aim of this paper to provide an exploration of how the inclusion of historical fiction can enrich an EFL or teacher training lesson and illustrate this in three specific cases of literature in English from different contexts: *Henry VIII or all is True*, by William Shakespeare, *Atonement*, by Ian McEwan and *The Underground Railroad*, by Colson Whitehead, while reflecting on the theoretical concerns behind the choices.

2. Theoretical Framework

Historical Fiction is a genre that borrows from and shares characteristics with other genres. Often, it has been associated with other literary forms, such as the memoir, the biography, the autobiography or the epistolary novel. The difficulty in the categorization of this literary genre may lie in the fact that historical fiction straddles the border between fiction and history, the world of the imaginary and the realm of reality. It is also a genre that tends to suffer severe criticism from historiographers who only look at the accuracy in the portrayal of historical events and personages, overlooking the fictional craft that the author decided to employ.

Influenced by poststructuralist notions of history and applying their frameworks to the study of the genre, New Historicists reject the idea that a historian can see facts objectively, but see texts as historically specific, as material products. These critics do not see any distinction between literature and historical background. In fact, postmodernism problematises the very notion of historical knowledge. Thus, Linda Hutcheon adds that "What the postmodern writing of both history and literature has taught us is that both history and fiction are discourses, that both constitute systems of signification by which we make sense of the past" (Hutcheon, 2003, p. 89). New Historicism also claims that meaning can never be fixed or stable and that there is not one truth but a construct conditioned by our own place and time.

So, what is, then, historical fiction? Scholar Bruce Holsinger finds a definitive definition in "a genre of imaginative writing set in the past, whose authors make a deliberate effort to convey chronologically remote settings, cultures and personages with accuracy, plausibility and depth" (2011). Therefore, although readers and critics tend to consider any fictional novel that has historical events as a backdrop as historical fiction, the elements of accuracy, plausibility and depth become central in the delimitation of the genre. Also, the idea of having history as a shaping force in the narrative is key to approaching the text through the lens of this genre.

The acknowledgment and awareness of the nature and purpose of historical fiction writing has led the way to the emergence of a new genre within historical fiction: that of Historiographic Metafiction. Even though the coinage is claimed by Linda Hutcheon and she does not consider it a subgenre or branch of the historical novel, the term does echo Metamodernism, that is, the discourse arising after the 2000's when some critics consider postmodernism to have ended.

Historiographic Metafiction incorporates elements of literary metafiction and historical fiction and as such, calls attention to and questions both the process of writing history and the border between fiction and historical reality. It raises issues surrounding the nature of subjectivity, representation, the intertextual nature of the past and the ideological implications of writing about history. It does not deny that the "real" past existed, but it conditions our knowledge of the past. In a nutshell, historiographic metafiction shows fiction to be historically conditioned and history to be discursively structured.

3. Pedagogical Implications

Departing from the assumption that learning a foreign language is not just about learning a linguistic code, but immersing into a culture and people, the inclusion of historical fiction from very many different origins and historical times in the curriculum becomes highly effective. Students in teacher training courses become double agents in their role as students but also as future EFL teachers who should be exposed to and also become models in the English language and culture learning sphere.

The *Diseño Curricular de Lenguas Extranjeras* of the city of Buenos Aires as from the year 2001 refers to the need to ensure students are not just learning a language; rather, that they are learning ways of seeing others and themselves. Learning a foreign language builds on some essential processes in students; that is, estrangement derived from difference and the fall of the illusion that there exists only one point of view. "Contrast and distance with the self unveil, in the foreign language, the other and his otherness, the other and his different ways of giving meaning" (*Diseño Curricular de Lenguas Extranjeras*, p. 21. My translation). Just as the Proyecto para la Mejora Institucional de Profesores para el Nivel Secundario (INFD) suggests, an intercultural curriculum "favours the construction of a social and cultural identity and an openness to otherness" (2011, p. 174). This translates into a language course that broadens its focus on the four language practices (reading, writing, listening and speaking) to help learners acquire cultural skills. "In this way, the language learner becomes not just a competent speaker and hearer of another linguistic code but a mediator between cultures—a cultural diplomat" (Corbett, 2022, p. 10). The NAP;

Núcleos de Aprendizaje Prioritarios de Lenguas Extranjeras from Consejo Federal de Educación, 2012, makes direct reference to this when stating that there is a need for a plurilingual and intercultural approach to foreign language teaching as it "makes the relationships between language and culture visible" (2011, p. 2. My translation) which allows a greater sensitivity towards the other.

Michael Byram (2020) speaks of the five Cs of foreign language education: communication, cultures, connections, comparisons and communities. Culture, in this sense, is not viewed as unchanging but as a shifting space of multiple and heterogeneous borders where multiple voices, histories and languages intermingle. To construct meaning, people draw on culturally available and culturally legitimized tools and resources, including narratives, historical and fictional, and it is in this instance that working with historical fiction in English can help students get a better understanding of the cultures of the English-speaking peoples and the historical myths and facts that have shaped them.

Students need to cross ideological and political borders to further the limits of their own understanding and thus, engage knowledge as border crossers. "In this case, students cross over into realms of meaning, maps of knowledge, social relations, and values that are increasingly being negotiated and rewritten as the codes and regulations that organise them become destabilised and reshaped" (Giroux, 2005, p. 22). Therefore, through the reading of historical fiction students can gain an insight into the meaning and fragility of historical truth and how politically and contextually biased those narratives of the past could be.

Adopting *Border Pedagogy*, in Henry Giroux's words, means helping students develop the critical capacity to challenge and transform the existing social and political forms, instead of adapting to them. It also entails providing them with the skills to locate themselves in history and find their own voices. In addition, students are encouraged to question the omissions and tensions present in master narratives and hegemonic discourses that constitute not only the collective memory but also the official curriculum (Giroux, 2005). Within this framework, historical fiction invites us not only to abandon the comfort zone of received knowledge but also to challenge it.

Haste and Bermudez (2016) add the educational theory of *New Civics* to this discussion. As such,

New Civics focuses on preparing students for active civic engagement, which is conceptualized as the capacity to understand, feel and take responsibility for a public purpose with the goal of effecting positive change. Historical narratives provide accounts of how individual and collective actors engage in a variety of processes that generate more or less social transformation over time. (p. 442)

In this framework, historical narratives become key elements in the construction of citizenship. They describe and explain processes of transformation, tell stories about individual and collective agency, characterize individuals and groups, and most importantly, help establish connections between the past, the present and the future. Thus, through the use of historical narratives and civic education, students can become critically aware of how repositioning can empower (or disempower) groups and recognize how this has been done historically in times of sociopolitical change.

4. The Choice of texts

Although many literary texts fall within the category of Historical Fiction or Historiographic Metafiction, the following three represent an interesting interdisciplinary approach to the English language and cultures and can provide an enriching scenario for learners of English or future teachers. Furthermore, they represent different stages in which the genre developed while at the same time allowing for depth of analysis.

To begin with, the choice of *Henry VIII, or All is True* is not a typical one when teaching Shakespeare. The play *King Henry VIII* was almost the last one the Bard wrote (in 1613). Its strategic position in his canon and its place in the history of Jacobean drama "inform against regarding it as simply another history play and its concerns as mainly political" (Felperin, 2015, p. 267). In fact, by that time, the history play was already outdated and Shakespeare had not written a play on English history in thirteen years. Moreover, some critics say Shakespeare took unusual liberties with his source, Raphael Holinshed, in this work. "Previous deviations from the Tudor chroniclers are explicable in terms of the exigencies which arise when chronicle is converted to drama -compression of time-scheme, omission of minor personages—venial lapses of historicity in any case" (Felperin, 2015, p. 267). But, in

Henry VIII Shakespeare departs more radically than in any other drama. So much so, that he seems to need an explanation for this, adding as a subtitle in the original play "All Is True".

In this borderland between fact and fiction, Shakespeare's history plays have always flowed effortlessly, challenging distinctions and drawing from the imaginative artist to the poet or historian. Thus, he intermingles dramatization, history and also commentary. "As the Russian director Grigori Kosintsev exclaimed, 'Who said Shakespeare was reflecting history?' He was interfering with the present. Shakespeare, in fact, may well be the greatest political thinker of his age" (Hattaway, 2002, p. 16), addressing topics such as empire, statehood and nationality.

The historical myth presented in this play mirrors its pattern of action. The play starts with the falls of the Duke of Buckingham and Lord Abergavenny, follows with references to oppressive taxation, a trial against Catherine of Aragon, the rise of the political sycophant Stephen Gardiner and the fall of Cardinal Wolsey. The country portrayed in these first three acts is one of political and moral corruption. However, the last two acts provide quite a different experience. Act IV opens with Anne Boleyn being crowned Queen in a time which offers "general joy" (IV, i, 7), as opposed to the past which "offered sorrow" (IV, i, 6), and follows with the christening of the infant Elizabeth, which creates a "Holy-day" (V, iii, 76) for Englishmen. Thus, the first three acts look back to the political struggles of the past and the last two provide an idealized Golden Age for England.

The "chosen truth" Shakespeare depicts, which also includes no mention of Mary Tudor, makes no hint of the bloody fates of Anne, Cromwell or Thomas More and no recognition of the four subsequent women Henry would marry. Furthermore, the play presents a paradox; it undermines the existence of "truth" or "fact", yet ends with an assertion about the future which the audiences are expected to trust, since it is a prophecy with a fulfillment they have already seen.

A second, very interesting postmodern text to use in class is *Atonement* (2001), by Ian Mc Ewan. In this bildungsroman the very nature of truth and storytelling are centre-stage and the novel, as a self-reflexive narrative, plays with the idea of its own construction. As a fine example of Historiographic Metafiction, we see a thirteen-year-old girl who gets caught in her own storytelling and creation of "faction"

with catastrophic consequences (very much resembling Catherine Moorland in *Northanger Abbey*) in 1930s rural England.

Through a very detailed description of the Interwar Years, the Evacuation at Dunkirk and the war effort in London during World War II, the reader gets fully immersed in not only the portrayal of a finely crafted historical background, but also in questions surrounding the writing of history and fiction as the protagonist herself discovers its implications. Moreover, history is not just an element of the setting but becomes central in the development of characterisation and plot, as a decisive force that moves action and determines the destiny of characters. Literature, as well, is not just a theme, but the writing of fiction becomes crucial in the protagonist's quest for growth, regret and atonement.

In portraying Briony as the writer or creator of the inside love story, in the epilogue McEwan achieves a break in the narrative leaving the central question lingering. "How can a novelist achieve atonement when, with her absolute power of deciding outcomes, she is also God?" (p. 371) reflects Briony on the power of the novelist and the historian.

Finally, *The Underground Railroad* (2016), by Colson Whitehead, represents one of the latest approaches to Historical Fiction; that of intermingling historical records with magical realism. In this reimagining of America in the 1850s, Whitehead narrates the fictional story of Cora, a slave in Georgia, who escapes in the famous Underground Railroad, only that in this novel the train is a real underground train taking fugitive slaves to the north. It has also sometimes been called "Alternate History" because it speculates with a different outcome to real past events and as such, it can even be considered science fiction or fantasy, hence the richness of the text, which moves effortlessly among classifications.

The novel not only presents a 19th-century scenario but also echoes the contemporary. With the phrase "If you want to see what this nation is all about, I always say, you have to ride the rails. Look outside as you speed through, and you'll find the true face of America" (p. 252), the novel becomes a rich and close encounter with American slavery and trail to freedom. However, after the journey, the main character reflects that what the conductor had told her was a "joke … from the start. There was only darkness outside the windows on her journeys, and only ever would be

darkness." (p. 287). With this poignant revelation, the novel digs deep into the recognition of a contemporary America which is tainted with neo-slavery and which still bears the weight of its past.

As for narratological decisions, Whitehead makes use of a variety of techniques and approaches. He becomes a "ventriloquist" (Addey, 2021) in that he takes material verbatim from historical sources. For example, he uses real classified advertisements about runaway slaves and creates a sort of patchwork. He is also a "mosaic-maker" (Addey, 2021) because he takes fragments of an incomplete history and his own fictional elements to complete the story. This may be regarded as "creative license" but it is basically at the core of historical fiction writers in their creation of a believable bigger picture. Finally, Whitehead also uses magical realism in a playful manner, in which fidelity is sacrificed for dramatic or poetic effect. In this case, his reimagining of the Underground Railroad as a real train serves the purpose of packing the narrative with action and fantasy elements. After all, he has confessed his novel seeks to convey "the truth of things, not the facts."

5. Conclusion

This paper has discussed the richness Historical Fiction can provide in an English and culture class. Stemming from a conception of language and culture as indivisible, the use of cultural texts, can undoubtedly allow for endless opportunities to learn about the English-speaking peoples, idiosyncrasies, history and foster higher order thinking. Moreover, following the discussion of historical accuracy, the writing of history and fiction and the volatile nature of truth and meaning, such analysis would undoubtedly help students to challenge assumptions and approach English language and cultures from a more enlightened and critical perspective.

The reading of the play *King Henry VIII* and discussion of the concerns about historical truth and subjectivity will undoubtedly contribute to developing a critical and reflexive standpoint on the social, political, economic and cultural reality of the English-speaking peoples as portrayed by one of the most important writers in the English language. William Shakespeare has shaped much of what we know of the past Kings and Queens in England. His portraits have become so powerful that it is sometimes difficult to discern fact from fiction. And even though he is very accurate in

the treatment of historical fact in most of his history plays, his creativity and brilliant skills in playwriting sometimes defy the real aim of his plays. Thus, a very interesting idea would be to read and analyse *King Henry VIII* alongside, or after, the study of the real King Henry VIII, his reign and Tudor England in general from a historical perspective, to enliven the discussion of the religious and political events that shaped England. In this way, the challenges of reading Shakespeare are thus framed in another objective: seeing him as a political agent in the formation of the Tudor Myth, and as a consequence, all dynastic lines afterwards.

In the case of *Atonement* and *The Underground Railroad*, their inclusion in the curricula brings the students closer to two of the most important events in the formation of contemporary American and British societies: World War II and the subsequent new configuration of the British Empire and slavery and the American Civil war, with racism at the core of nowadays world media coverage in the US. An exploration of these topics through the lens of such lively, gripping and engaging novels can be much more rewarding and engaging for such dry thematic concerns. Moving away from the common encyclopedic approach in the cultural and historical units in teacher training curricula can foster a variety of exchanges, debates and engagement. In the case of World War II and the new world order, *Atonement* could even serve as a gateway for the analysis of other armed conflicts (in the past and in the present), due to its detailed account of life—and death—on the battlefield. In the case of *The Underground Railroad*, delving into the media coverage of Black Lives Matter and discussions of Neoslavery after reading the novel, can open up new spaces of (re)configuration of American contemporary society and allow for the much-needed space that should be given to racism and discrimination in the classroom.

Last but not least, seeing the writers behind the construction of their texts, crisscrossed by so many political and social concerns, will help students and future teachers question the nature and validity of the historical information received and, hopefully, move onto a more critical standpoint in citizenship and their future role as educators and cultural mediators. Including the screen or stage adaptations of these three works would even bring students one step further into the exploration of choice in historical truth and the agency of directors as storytellers, in the same way historians and writers are seen.

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5 Virtual Cultural Exchange: an enriching experience for language learning

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1. Introduction

This paper is the product of collaborative work, on many levels. The paper itself is a collaboration between a teacher trainer and her students. At the same time, the paper describes an online intercultural exchange project carried out in the subject Intercultural Studies IV, between students at ISFD César Avanza (Argentina), who are studying to become teachers of English, and students from UT Dallas (USA), who are training to become teachers of Science and Maths. To make all of this happen, there was a strong collaboration between teacher trainers in Argentina and the USA as well. We emphasize collaboration as a key term because we believe intercultural awareness can be fostered by well-planned interaction between people from different cultural backgrounds, and that this project provided an excellent opportunity to develop it.

Collaboration was also key to making this an interdisciplinary project. One of the objectives of the project was for students in Argentina to learn firsthand how Foreign Languages are taught in the USA, and for students in the USA to gain insight into how Maths and Science are taught in Argentina. Another goal for students in Argentina was to find out if certain topics that they studied during the Profesorado,

such as Medieval literary works (Beowulf, The Canterbury Tales, etc.) were studied in high school in the USA. Learning from one another and about each other's disciplines helped future teachers further their education in many ways.

This project can also be considered interdisciplinary as it involves not only working within the field of language learning but also developing skills connected to the field of technology and interculturality.

We hope that through this publication we can share our enthusiasm for this kind of telecollaborative experiences, give tools for other teachers to replicate the experience both at the secondary and/or college level and trigger discussions on the role and impact this type of projects can have in the language classroom, specifically in the context of Profesorados de Inglés in Argentina.

2. The KOSKO Future Teachers Project

Online exchange has been around for quite some time; the first publications on the topic date back to the 1990s (O'Dowd, 2007). In Argentina, Red TELAR (the local branch of iEarn) was created in 1989 and has continued its work uninterrupted to this day. Telecollaborative projects then are not new, but even today they are not a common experience for language learning students in our country. Just a quick glance at the 2022 FAAPI conference programme can show that only two presentations had online exchanges and/or projects as the topic, one of them being a commercial presentation for paid cultural exchanges and the second a paper on collaborative online project work by Prof. Carnicero.

In our case, out of 18 4th year students at the Profesorado, only 4 had participated in similar projects before as shown in Fig. 1

Figure 1. Student participation in virtual collaborative activities with foreign students.

¿Has realizado antes proyectos o actividades colaborativas en forma virtual con chicxs de otros países?

18 respuestas
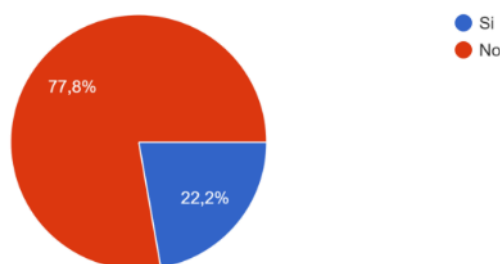
The project was arranged through the iEarn network, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting international online collaboration with members from over 140 countries. Our collaboration with UT Dallas was set up within the *KOSKO Future Teachers Project* coordinated by Kristin Brown, who introduced the teachers from Argentina and the US to each other.

The dates, duration and activities were decided by Prof. York and Prof. Gregory (USA) and Prof. Arrarás (Argentina) via videoconference, e-mail and WhatsApp.

3. UT Dallas–ISFD Avanza Project structure

Over a 5-week period, the students from both countries worked collaboratively in a series of activities. They were divided into teams of 6–8 students from both countries, which provided all an opportunity to interact with each other.

The project structure was the following:

Pre-collaboration week	Introductions	Asynchronous (A)	All participants from both countries
	Welcome meeting	Synchronous (S)	
Topic: Education systems in Argentina and the USA			
Week 1	Google folder / Jamboard	A	In teams
Week 2	Google folder tasks & videoconferences	S+A	In teams
Topic: Subject-specific pedagogies **(How are Science, Maths and Foreign Languages taught in each country?)**			
Week 3	Google folder / Jamboard	A	In teams

Week 4	Google folder tasks & videoconferences	S+A	In teams

As well as participating in the project, students from Argentina were asked to keep a log, where they had to describe not only their feelings and emotions but also findings or facts that caught their attention.

The project was carried out outside the classroom, as homework. In class, during those weeks students from Argentina learned about Intercultural theory. After finishing the collaboration, they had to submit a multimedia report which worked as a reflection piece, putting together their experience and the theory learned in class.

4. Theoretical background

This project had several objectives; some of them were shared by teachers in both countries, and some were not. Developing the students' intercultural competence was one of those shared objectives; however, the approach to interculturality itself was different for the American teachers and the Argentinian teacher.

According to Catherine Walsh there are three perspectives of Interculturality (2010):

a. Relational: this makes reference in a very basic and general way to the contact and exchange between people belonging to different cultural groups. This perspective does not question or point out any kind of asymmetries between the groups involved; it is merely descriptive; the phrase "it's not better or worse, just different" reflects this perspective.

a. Functional: this perspective acknowledges cultural differences and cultural diversity but with the final goal of inclusion of minority cultural groups into the established social structure. In this way, interculturality would be "functional" to the existing system and does not question the reasons or causes of social and/or cultural inequality. Acknowledging cultural diversity becomes then, according to Walsh (2010) "a strategy for domination, which does not look for the creation of more egalitarian societies, but instead aims for ethnic control and the preservation of social stability in order to help the model of capitalist accumulation" (p. 78).

b. Critical: instead of focusing on the diversity and the differences between cultural groups and their relations among themselves, this perspective focuses on the structures in which these relations are established, many a time within a colonial matrix, and how these structures are responsible for creating unequal relationships between cultural groups. In this context, critical interculturality becomes a tool and a strategy to create awareness about all this, helping people transform structures, institutions, and social relationships, with the aim of constructing a fairer, more equal society in which no cultural group is inferior to another.

As the project unrolled, it seemed that for the American teachers, a functional perspective of interculturality prevailed. Communicating and interacting with people from other cultures was just seen as a way to learn about "how things are done" in other places, and to acquire new skills to navigate cross-cultural communication, without any kind of activities—to our knowledge—indicating reflection on the asymmetries between both groups of students. On the other hand, the Argentinian teacher's approach included activities that prompted reflection on the dynamics and the complexity of intercultural communication; the final report she required students to complete indicates a critical perspective of interculturality.

Even though the concept of interculturality differed, the choice of activities during weeks 1-4 show that both teachers wanted their students to develop their intercultural competence as defined by Byram:

The intercultural dimension in language teaching aims to develop learners as intercultural speakers or mediators who are able to engage with complexity and multiple identities and to avoid the stereotyping which accompanies perceiving someone through a single identity ... Intercultural communication is communication on the basis of respect for individuals and equality of human rights as the democratic basis for social interaction. (2005 p. 2)

Byram's approach, however, does not mention how to tackle the asymmetries that are present in any cultural exchange between people from the "Global North" and the "Global South". In order to fill that gap and to help students put into words the feelings and impressions they experienced while participating in this project, the

Argentinian teacher provided her students with an article by Graciela Baum "Decolonialidad e Inglés, Parte I", which states:

> What is the role assigned to those who—in the imagination of those who "teach languages—participate of such [x]-culturality? Well, that of intercultural mediation agents. This within a construct which is functional to western hegemony centered around Europe and The USA called "intercultural citizenship" which promises to make us equal and erase differences ... so as not to say the unsaid: that the relationships "between" are relationships based on inequity, power differences; relationships where the colonial difference and the imperial difference are foundational to the relationship, and it is in that terrain where the "exchanges" and "negotiations" of meaning occur. " (2020, our translation)

Baum's work provided students with theoretical tools to analyze the different situations in which they found themselves during the project; the final reports and reflection pieces show how students appropriated the concepts and while it could be said that critical interculturality and intercultural communicative competence are theories that contradict each other, we believe they actually complete each other.

5. ISFD Avanza meets UT Dallas: findings and reflections

5.1. The "native speaker" myth

During the pre-collaboration week, the students created an "I am" poem to introduce themselves to their partners. In addition, they created a short 2-3 minutes introductory video using a platform called Flip. After that, students could watch the videos from the other team members and respond to each with a comment.

Students found this served as a perfect icebreaker, allowing them to meet all the project participants, as later on when they were divided into groups, they would not have the opportunity to socialize with every student involved in the exchange. This activity also helped students to gain some insights into each other's cultural background, knowledge, values, beliefs, attitudes, etc.

The "I am" poem was also an effective strategy that helped students reframe their notion of "native speaker", as many of the Argentinian students mistakenly

thought that all of the students living in the United States would have English as their mother tongue. However, when they watched the videos, they noticed that many of their classmates from the US had different accents, which could mean many things: that they came from different parts of the US, that they had lived in the US all of their lives but their families had come from other countries and had a mother tongue other than English, or that they were international students at UT Dallas. This activity allowed the Argentinian students to see and appreciate the diversity present even in an English-speaking context.

5.2. Confidence and language skills

As part of the pre-collaboration week, students were also asked to respond to a series of questions to introduce themselves and had an opportunity to learn some facts about each other and their goals. This activity was done on a Jambord where students had a simple guide, in case they were not aware of how it worked. The pre-collaboration activity was thrilling since it was the students' first contact, and it was where the initial connections were made within each team.

Later that week, students had to engage in their first online meeting with the teachers/ supervising instructors. In this meeting, the students were provided with guidelines regarding the mechanics of the exchange. After that, students were assigned to break-out rooms where again they introduced themselves live and engaged in conversation.

For some of the students, the first group video conference was their first experience ever talking with people from an English-speaking country, so some of them felt nervous and anxious. Some students at ISFD Avanza were doubtful about whether they would be capable of communicating effectively and accurately. Some even felt like they were going to be assessed and corrected by their American counterparts. Once the students began to interact, they gained confidence and they felt more comfortable while speaking with the Dallas students.

5.3. Critical cultural awareness

In Weeks 1 and 3, students were asked to explore different country-specific topics through videos, articles and websites provided by the teachers. This was

challenging for the Argentinian teacher since there are few online resources about the Argentinian educational system in English and they are mostly limited to statistical information. The topic for Week 1 was the teacher training curriculum along with the education system in both countries. Week 3 involved learning about how Science, Maths and Foreign Languages were taught in each country.

In Weeks 2 and 4, students participated in synchronous meetings during which they reflected on the topics they had researched on Weeks 1 and 3. The meeting had to be recorded and uploaded to a drive folder. In case any of the students were not able to participate, they could respond to a series of prompts in a Jamboard. These activities helped students gain an understanding of the unique characteristics of each country. For example, the Dallas students were surprised by the high percentage of Argentinian teenagers who drop out of secondary school, as in the US they believed this does not happen as much, and they started wondering what the reasons for this could be. In other words, by engaging in intercultural communication students were not only able to reflect on each other's country's cultural, social and historical aspects, but also on their own country.

During Weeks 1 and 3 students had to find similarities and differences between both countries. Finally, they had to create a virtual "note" sharing their reflections and write three additional questions or thoughts they might have had after reading and watching the material. By performing these tasks, students started to develop their critical cultural awareness; the ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries (Byram, 2002).

An example of this was the depiction of American schools in the videos shared by the American teachers on Week 3. Students from Argentina were uncertain as to whether education in the US was accurately represented; after talking about that with their US peers, they confirmed that they were not a reflection of the reality experienced in all schools in the United States. When discussing this with their teacher as well, the Argentinian teacher confirmed that the American teacher had chosen those videos for pedagogical purposes; she wanted to share model cases for their students to learn from.

Another task students were asked to perform on Weeks 3 and 4 was to talk about specific topics and subjects; as UT Dallas students are studying to become Science and Maths teachers, they wanted to know about how those subjects were learned in Argentina. In return, they shared which languages they learned as "Foreign Languages" and what those classes were like. They also shared what they had learned about the Middle Ages in school, as those topics are part of the curriculum in Intercultural Studies IV for the Argentinian students.

During Week 4, students discussed synchronously what they had learned about in Week 3. Argentinian students had had more opportunities to see US schools in movies, series or social media, which, they said, created a stereotypical notion about what American schools are like; for UT Dallas students, on the other hand, the videos shared in the project were the first chance they had to see an Argentinian school and/or class.

This activity helped dispel stereotypes and students from both countries realized that their education systems have many similarities; they also reached the conclusion that in both countries the way of teaching, the methods and the different dynamics applied in the classroom, and the approach used to teach depend more than anything on the teacher's pedagogical choices.

5.4. Processing the experience: The final report

Once the collaboration itself ended, students from ISFD Avanza were required to create a multimedia report about their experience taking into account the bibliography their teacher had provided in class during those 5 weeks. The report had four sections:

1. Culture and identity
2. Interculturality and its purposes
3. Interculturality and education
4. Conclusions

For each section, students had to select elements from the videos, jamboards, chats, etc. and connect them with the theory. They also had the chance to include samples from the log they had been writing during the project. The findings that have been included in this section have come mostly from these multimedia reports.

6. Implications for ELT scenarios

We would like to focus on the impact that participation in this kind of experience can have on teacher trainees at Profesorados de Inglés.

Two aspects that most students mentioned in their logs and final reports were gaining confidence in their English language skills and the "demystification" of native speakers. We believe both to be vital for future language teachers; this "inferiority complex" (Medgyes, 1999) for being non-native speaking teachers can be clearly identified and tackled through the implementation of appropriate projects.

In order for these experiences to have a positive effect, special attention needs to be put into the structuring of the project: the asymmetries that will arise whenever a project between students from so-called "inner circle" English-speaking countries and "expanding circle" countries such as Argentina (Kachru, 1985) need to be considered carefully. There are many ways to "balance" the playing field; here we will mention the two which we consider the most effective:

1. Tandem telecollaboration: each group of students is learning the other's language. In that way, they are both "experts" in one language. This approach has the disadvantage of reinforcing the notion of the "native speaker" as the owner of the language; on the other hand, students are very motivated to put their language skills to the test, and also see how other people who are learning a language they have already mastered can communicate even though their skills are still developing.

2. Providing tasks that both groups of students can perform equally well: this is the case for many of the iEarn network projects and this project in particular: all students could fulfil the tasks and the focus was on topics to which both groups of students could contribute. In this case, regardless of the mother tongue of the students, the L2 is used as a shared tool for communication. In this case, in order to promote a decolonial approach, we emphasize that English is just one out of many languages that can be used as a cultural bridge, but not the only one (Baum, 2023).

Two more aspects that need to be considered when setting up intercultural online collaborations are:

1. The theoretical background: Students need to have resources to process the experience: providing at least a basic understanding of the authors we have included here helps; there are also guides and portfolios available online. We strongly suggest teachers tailor these to their own needs and contexts.

2. The technology involved: after the pandemic, we find ourselves having mastered many applications and tools that five years ago both students and teachers might not even have heard of. We encourage teachers to make the most of this; research which tools students are the most familiar with; and keep in mind time differences when considering synchronous and asynchronous activities, and the demand on internet connections.

7. Conclusions

In the past, intercultural language exchanges were only available to those students who could afford to travel abroad. Nowadays, telecollaboration provides a unique opportunity to "level the playing field" and give all students a chance to participate in them. This creates at the same time a new scenario in which students from developing countries, most of them ex-colonies, interact with students from countries who were (one might say still are) colonial powers.

For students training to become teachers of English, projects that take this into account help them overcome the "inferiority complex" born out of these asymmetries and provide them a chance to enhance their professional self-image, seeing themselves as competent language teachers.

This project in particular, which included an interdisciplinary component, helped all students see the pedagogical common ground. To talk about their perspective as learners of each other's subjects, engage in dialogue and ask questions to each other had such an impact that many of the students described it as "once in a lifetime opportunity".

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6 Academic writing: a multidisciplinary teaching proposal

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1. Introduction

At the National University of La Pampa, the Agronomy College has offered a Master's programme on agriculture and livestock production in Semi-arid Regions for more than fifteen years. The programme, addressed to professionals in the Agronomy field, aims at developing abilities in order to tackle the specific problems of semi-arid regions from a critical vision that enables them to carry out scientific research. Besides, the programme intends to foster appropriate strategies to achieve sustainable agriculture and livestock production systems. To achieve these purposes, the Master's provides students with a variety of courses to identify and solve emerging problems in semi-arid regions.

In the year 2016, the Master's course of studies was under evaluation. As a result, there were some changes, which included the implementation of new courses, the adaptation of others and the exclusion of the English language requirement during the admission process.

Some of the most significant changes focused on the need to improve the quality of the manuscripts submitted by graduate students for evaluation. To this end, the course Academic Writing, which was already part of the Master's programme, was adjusted to include contents such as plagiarism identification and avoidance, chart and graph design, and abstract writing in English.

To implement these changes, the teaching staff of the Academic Writing course was expanded, to include professionals from different disciplines. The staff now includes two veterinarians, two Spanish language teachers, an English teacher and a Mathematics teacher. Each professional involved in this course contributes to it by providing their own field-specific knowledge. All of them are also staff members of the Agronomy College, which means that they are familiar with many of the Master's

students and their research interests, and can therefore provide personalised teaching, resources and feedback.

One of the aims of the Academic Writing Course is to develop writing skills in English and Spanish that enable students to improve the writing of their thesis. A second aim includes providing students with a variety of tools to present information in an academic format suitable for the Agronomy area. The purpose of this paper is to describe how the course Academic Writing is delivered following a multidisciplinary approach.

2. Theoretical Framework:

The word teamwork is usually used when an activity needs to be solved by a group of people working together as a team. In multidisciplinary education, teamwork is of paramount importance since courses of study are built by combining the knowledge of people who have studied different disciplines.

Beane (1995) considers that students' learning experience resembles jigsaw puzzles. Learners take the input of different fields of study to build their own knowledge. In the attempt to do so, many times knowledge becomes dissociated and students get confused with unconnected facts that lack relevance to them.

It is often common for institutions to foster collaborative planning so that students can make connections among different courses and integrate learning with previous experiences in a coherent way. In doing so, institutions ask their professionals to work transdiciplinarily, interdisciplinarily and multidisciplinarily.

3. Initial definitions

Education professionals use a variety of terms to describe how curriculum planning connects academic disciplines. In education, research and innovation, the term interdisciplinarity is generically used to represent a continuum of concepts (Tonnetti, 2023) which include terms like *Transdiciplinarity*, *Interdisciplinarity* and *Multidisciplinarity,* among others. While these concepts are sometimes difficult to distinguish, they imply different approaches to teaching and learning. In this paper, the concept of *Multidisciplinarity* will be explained, as it represents how the Academic Writing team works.

Multidisciplinarity relates to the contribution of several disciplines in the study of a specific topic, but each discipline maintains its own boundaries, and their own distinct disciplinary perspectives (International Baccalaureate, 2017). According to Krishnan (2021), this concept means viewing the same object from the viewpoint of different disciplines. Van de Besselaar et al. (2001) have defined this term by stating that:

> The subject under study is approached from different angles, using different disciplinary perspectives. However, neither the theoretical perspectives nor the findings of the various disciplines are integrated in the end. (p. 701)

In this article, however, Multidisciplinarity has been conceptualized following Shroeder's definition (2002):

> Multidisciplinarity concerns itself with studying a research topic in not just one discipline but in several simultaneously. From this perspective, any topic will ultimately be enriched by incorporating the perspectives of several disciplines. Multidisciplinarity brings a plus to the discipline in question, but this "plus" is always in the exclusive service of the home discipline. In other words, the multidisciplinary approach overflows disciplinary boundaries while its goal remains limited to the framework of disciplinary research. Interdisciplinarity has a different goal than multidisciplinarity. It concerns the transfer of methods from one discipline to another. (p. 10)

An example of a multidisciplinary approach to teaching Academic Writing is in the context of the Master's programme in Semi-Arid regions at the National University of La Pampa. In this course, a group of professionals gathered to enhance thesis writing contributing from their own disciplines.

4. Our Proposal

4.1 Learner profile and aims

The Academic Writing course is implemented every two years within the framework of the aforementioned Master's programme. Even though this course accepts students who are not enrolled in the Master's programme, most candidates are taking other seminars and are already working on the production of their thesis.

This is so since one of the requirements in the admission process for the Master's programme establishes that before starting the programme, candidates have to submit their thesis project and appoint the director and co-directors who are going to guide them. What is more, most of the students are advanced learners of the Master's programme and their aim is to polish their writing by taking lessons which would help them improve their thesis. Since the writing of a thesis is a complex process which involves the knowledge and management of a variety of resources such as graphs, statistics, English and Spanish language, sources of reliable information, among others, this course has developed a multidisciplinary approach to teaching how to write a thesis.

4.2 Profiles of the different staff members

To follow a multidisciplinary approach to teaching, a team representative of different disciplines is required. The reason underpinning this approach is that no professional could substitute another, since field-specific knowledge is required to teach this course in the way proposed. In this section, the professionals who work in the Academic Writing course are introduced.

The Academic Writing course coordinator is a veterinarian and also the coordinator of the Master's programme. She is in charge of explaining the different parts of the thesis and the institutional expectations in connection with the quality of the final product. As a coordinator, her responsibilities include revising each of the theses written by the Master's students and looking for potential evaluators. This impacts her role in the Academic Writing course, giving her privileged information on the strengths and weaknesses of each student's production.

Another veterinarian is a member of this team. This person has specialized knowledge in statistics, so his main contribution to the Academic Writing course is to provide students with an explanation of the methodology section and equip them with tools to produce graphs.

A third member of the staff is a Maths Professor with a PhD in Statistics. This professional contributes to the course by explaining how to produce clear graphs from a mathematics point of view.

Two Spanish professors are also part of the Academic Writing course. These professionals, who hold postgraduate degrees related to academic writing and journal management, contribute to the multidisciplinary approach of the course by analysing and explaining language patterns in academic writing, identifying and making students aware of the risks of plagiarism, auto-plagiarism and inverted plagiarism, and familiarizing them with citation techniques.

A sixth member in this course is an English assistant teacher, with vast experience in ESP in various fields, including Agronomy. This professional adds to the Academic Writing course by explaining the use of passive voice in research writing, making suggestions on Academic Writing in English, and developing students' skills and strategies to analyse and write an abstract, a part of the thesis that Master's students are required to write in English.

In order to implement a multidisciplinary proposal, this team works together with the aim of providing students with tools to improve their writing productions in the context of the Master's programme.

4.3 The Academic Writing Course in Action

The course Academic Writing has been implemented in three different cohorts with professionals representing the fields of study explained in the previous section. The length of the course is 40 hours of synchronous teaching. The amount of time the students need to solve activities given as homework and the final project exceeds the amount of time allotted to classes. In each cohort, there have been adjustments to the teaching proposal, most of them related to the implementation of a workshop format and the one-to-one work between the professionals and the students.

At the beginning of the course, students reflect on the idea of writing a thesis, the importance of their contribution to the research field and the ethical aspects of the writing process. Secondly, the students learn about the different sections of a thesis. Then, students work with their own thesis, analyzing whether they follow the guidelines presented. Thirdly, students learn about aspects related to format, such as paragraph length and balance between paragraphs and sections. The students then analyze their own productions and make the necessary adjustments.

In the second lesson, one of the Spanish language teachers presents key aspects of academic writing. As the thesis is produced in Spanish, the professor focuses on sentence structure, sentence length, paragraph order, paragraph structure and dangling constructions in Spanish. In this class, students are encouraged to solve activities brought by the professor, which include the selection of accurately produced sentences, the reasons underpinning such answers, the analysis of students' own texts and the improvement of sentence structure.

In the third lesson, one of the veterinarians focuses on the methodology section of the thesis. Students learn about different possible research methodologies, the combination of different methods and the tools used to present graphs and charts. The professor displays activities based on the production of informative charts and graphs. The professor also explains that this section of the thesis is the most often self-plagiarised. This occurs because researchers and Master's students alike usually publish partial results of a larger research project, and for each new partial publication, they merely copy and paste the same methodology section. The professor provides students with some examples for them to analyze and highlights the importance of avoiding plagiarism.

In the fourth lesson, the Maths professor shows programmes to create charts and graphs. The professional focuses on the report of statistical results and works on different axes that constitute a chart and how information may be misunderstood if the charts do not display information properly. In this lesson, students bring parts of the results they already have for their thesis and they make use of the tools provided by the professor.

In the fifth lesson, the Spanish language teacher specialised in journal management provides students with tools to avoid the various forms of plagiarism. To do so, the professor explains concepts such as plagiarism, inverted plagiarism, copy-and-paste plagiarism, and paraphrasing, among others. The professor provides students with technological tools to check whether their writing is likely to be considered plagiarism or the percentages of words copied from other sources without reference. In this way, students can easily check whether their production fits the requirements of an original manuscript or if they have to adjust their writing.

In the sixth lesson, the Academic Writing coordinator and a Spanish teacher explain different forms of citation in academic writing. They focus on paraphrasing, direct and indirect citations, acknowledgement of sources, and suitable lengths of quotations in each section of the thesis. Besides, they also refer to citations in research articles and provide students with examples of different formats according to the requirements of specific journals. Students are provided with a set of activities in which they have to practise citation procedures in their thesis and they analyze whether citation format differs in the research papers they make use of.

In the seventh lesson, the Academic Writing coordinator shows different digital tools to organize citations. The professional explains how to use Mendeley to keep track of papers and citations and how to combine this programme with Word, which is one of the most frequent word processors used in the country. In this class, students are encouraged to bring the selection of papers they have used as reference to write the theoretical framework and the literature review of their theses and they practise how to use these tools with their own papers.

In the eighth and ninth lessons, the English professor explains how to write an abstract. Besides, the professor provides students with a corpus of words frequently used in the Agronomy field to help them find the most suitable words when writing. What is more, based on the documents produced by Borja (2015), the English language professional explains the most frequent mistakes writers make when producing their own texts and she provides students with some sentence re-writing activities to solve this problem. Finally, students are provided with a set of abstracts which do not follow a cohesive structure and contain grammar mistakes. Students organize the abstracts cohesively and with proper grammar structures.

In the tenth and final lesson, the focus is on the aspects to consider before submitting the final version of the thesis, how to build the table of contents, the appendix and the bibliography. This lesson is in charge of the coordinator of the Academic Writing course, who also presents the final task assignment for the course: based on the analysis of five papers related to their theses, students are required to write a literature review, which can later be used as part of their thesis.

5. Conclusions

It is evident from the development of the lessons that multidisciplinary work has proved beneficial in the course Academic Writing delivered at the Agronomy College in the National University of La Pampa.

Students improve their writing production after taking these lessons, since they are provided with a variety of tools to enhance their writing process. While taking classes, they are constantly thinking of accurate ways to use the language to communicate ideas effectively, which helps them in the production of their own texts. Moreover, the use of technological tools such as Mendeley or the word processor enhances the writing process and prevents mistakes. Students comment on the benefits of working with the tools provided and the obstacles they encounter if they do not make use of them.

Professionals of the different fields of study also acknowledge the contribution of each discipline to enhance written productions. Besides, this team values the chance of studying the thesis genre together, contributing from different disciplines in an attempt to improve the way in which these are produced in the context of a specific programme. The team also reflects on the importance of collaborative work, since it builds links within the academic community and contributes to sharing ideas towards a common goal.

Nevertheless, it would be important to conduct further research within the scope of the Academic Writing course to compare student writings before and after the implementation of this course in order to measure the improvement in their written productions.

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