



# CONLA

# UNA

UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL  
COSTA RICA  
SEDE REGIONAL BRUNCA

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I Congreso Internacional de Lingüística Aplicada  
Reaching out for Teachers' Excellence  
2013

# **Universidad Nacional, Sede Regional Brunca**

Departamento de Idiomas Extranjeros

## **Memoria del I Congreso Internacional de Lingüística Aplicada CONLA UNA 2013: Reaching out for Teachers' Excellence**

Compilado y editado por  
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## Presentación

Este documento contiene las ponencias que están en la memoria digital del I Congreso Internacional de Lingüística Aplicada (CONLA) 2013 realizado los días 4, 5 y 6 de febrero del 2013 en la Sede Regional Brunca de la Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica. La selección de ponencias se llevó a cabo por medio de los criterios en común de los académicos del área de idiomas que conforman la comisión científica del congreso.

Dichos criterios se basaron en una escala de evaluación creada para tal fin. La comisión organizadora del CONLA 2013 también compiló una memoria digital en USB con las ponencias presentadas en el congreso. El comité científico evaluó un total de 40 ponencias, de las cuales se seleccionaron las 29 que conforman la memoria digital del evento. La selección de las ponencias se dio durante un proceso de enviar el resumen, revisión por parte de un miembro del comité científico afín al área de especialidad de la propuesta, retroalimentación del total de miembros del comité científico para mejorar la propuesta, aprobación de la misma y por último el envío del documento en forma completa para ser incluido en el programa de actividades y la memoria digital del congreso.

La versión final de cada ponencia es única y exclusivamente de cada uno de los autores de las mismas quienes cumplieron con los requisitos establecidos en cuanto a formato, uso correcto del lenguaje y los procedimientos investigativos que se seleccionaron en cada uno de los productos presentados. Cabe además decir que cada autor es también responsable de la propiedad intelectual de su investigación, la cual está regulada por la Ley de Derechos de Autor en Costa Rica.

La edición de este documento fue realizada por dos miembros de la comisión científica del CONLA 2013 quienes trabajaron en la última etapa del proceso de compilación y formato.

Este documento es el resultado de un trabajo en equipo que se conformó para promover los distintos tipos de investigación en lingüística aplicada y dar a conocer los resultados de los mismos no solo a nivel regional sino a nivel nacional e internacional. Además, es el esfuerzo de un grupo de académicos comprometidos con la calidad de la enseñanza del inglés que se imparte en la Sede Regional Brunca de la Universidad Nacional.

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CONLA UNA 2013

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## Comisión Científica de CONLA UNA 2013

### **M.A. Cinthya Olivares Garita**

Cinthya Olivares Garita es bachiller en Enseñanza del Inglés, licenciada en Lingüística Aplicada del Inglés y tiene una maestría en Segundas Lenguas y Culturas de la Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica. Actualmente labora en propiedad en la Universidad Nacional, Sede Regional Brunca, Campus Pérez Zeledón en la carrera Bachillerato en la Enseñanza del Inglés, el Diplomado en Inglés y la Licenciatura en Lingüística Aplicada del Inglés. Ha laborado por trece años con estudiantes de todos los niveles: primaria, secundaria y universitaria. También ha trabajado para otras empresas públicas y privadas como el Ministerio de Educación Pública (MEP), Universidad Latina de Costa Rica, Universidad Internacional San Isidro Labrador y Centro Cultural Costarricense Norteamericano. Ella ha publicado en la revista LETRAS de la Universidad Nacional y ha hecho investigaciones acerca de la enseñanza del inglés. Ha presentado sus trabajos en conferencias, seminarios y congresos nacionales e internacionales. Fue instructora por dos años del proyecto CONARE para profesores del MEP en servicio. Es cofundadora y actualmente una de las cuatro ejecutoras del proyecto CI-UNA (Centro de Idiomas Universidad Nacional) que funge desde el año 2010. Ella es la académica responsable del I Congreso Internacional de Lingüística Aplicada CONLA UNA 2013.

### **M.A. Lena Barrantes Elizondo**

Lena Barrantes Elizondo posee un bachillerato en Enseñanza del Inglés, una licenciatura en Lingüística Aplicada y una Maestría en Segundas Lenguas y Culturas, todos ellos de la Universidad Nacional. Durante sus doce años como profesora ha trabajado con el Ministerio de Educación Pública (MEP) y la Universidad Nacional, Sede Regional Brunca (UNA-SRB). También ha colaborado con el Consejo Nacional de Rectores capacitando profesores de inglés en servicio del MEP. Actualmente es profesora en la UNA-SRB en las carreras Bachillerato en la Enseñanza del Inglés y Diplomado en Inglés. Ha sido coordinadora del proyecto TEAM-UNA desde el año 2011 hasta la actualidad, además de colaborar en la coordinación general del I Congreso de Lingüística Aplicada de la UNA-SRB y del proyecto Cursos Participativos para la comunidad. Ella ha presentado parte de sus contribuciones en el área de la enseñanza de idiomas en conferencias nacionales e internacionales además de publicar en la revista LETRAS de la Universidad nacional.

### **M.A. Jacqueline Araya Ríos**

La Profesora Araya es graduada del Bachillerato en Literatura y lingüística con concentración en Inglés de la Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica. Cuenta además con una Licenciatura y una Maestría ambas en Traducción Inglés-Español de la misma universidad. Su experiencia laboral se centra en la educación superior, aunque también trabajó en el sistema de enseñanza pública secundaria por dos años (1997-1998). Laboró en la Universidad Latina de Pérez Zeledón por varios años y se ha desempeñado en otras

instituciones privadas de enseñanza de idiomas. Colaboró, además durante el 2009 y 2010 con el Proyecto CONARE-MEP dando capacitación a los profesores en servicio del Ministerio de Educación Pública de Costa Rica. Actualmente y desde hace 14 años es académica en la Universidad Nacional Sede Regional Brunca en el bachillerato en la Enseñanza del Inglés y el Diplomado en Inglés. Entre sus campos de investigación están la enseñanza de lenguas, la traducción, la literatura y la lingüística. Estos estudios los ha compartido en conferencias y congresos nacionales e internacionales. La profesora Araya se desempeñó como jurado en las dos últimas ediciones del Concurso Nacional de Ensayo (versión en inglés) para estudiantes de secundaria patrocinado por la fundación CIENTEC.

#### **M. L. Joe Montenegro Bonilla**

El Profesor Montenegro es Bachiller en Inglés (con énfasis en literatura) por la Universidad de Costa Rica y tiene una Maestría en Literatura Inglesa también de la Universidad de Costa Rica. Ha realizado estudios en filología clásica en la misma universidad y de música, literatura e historia en St. Olaf College en Northfield, Minnesota. Ha fungido además como Coordinador de la carrera de inglés en la Universidad de Costa Rica, Recinto de Golfito (2009) y se ha desempeñado como docente en la Universidad Latina de Pérez Zeledón y en la Universidad Internacional San Isidro Labrador. Actualmente, el Profesor Montenegro enseña literatura inglesa, entre otras disciplinas, tanto para la carrera de Bachillerato en Inglés de la Universidad de Costa Rica en Golfito como para los programas de Bachillerato en la Enseñanza del Inglés, Diplomado en Inglés y Licenciatura en Lingüística Aplicada de la Universidad Nacional en Pérez Zeledón. Además, está a cargo, en esta última institución, del Proyecto de Vinculación Externa Cursos Participativos, Sede Regional Brunca.

#### **M.A. Jorge Altamirano Alvarado**

Jorge Altamirano Alvarado posee una licenciatura en lingüística aplicada en inglés y una maestría en lingüística aplicada en inglés, ambos grados académicos de la Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica. Ha trabajado durante 15 años como profesor en los programas de diplomado en inglés, bachillerato en la enseñanza del inglés y la licenciatura en lingüística aplicada en inglés en la sede regional Brunca de la UNA. También, fue coordinador del área de inglés y ha sido director de tesis del programa de licenciatura en lingüística aplicada en inglés. Sus áreas de especialidad son la gramática, lengua y cultura, lingüística diacrónica y la enseñanza de las habilidades básicas de la lengua como la expresión oral y escrita. Trabajó en el proyecto CONARE-MEP como profesor de varios cursos de destrezas lingüísticas para profesores de inglés en servicio del Ministerio de Educación Pública. Sus investigaciones han sido presentadas en varios congresos internacionales de lengua inglesa y los temas desarrollados son principalmente sobre la enseñanza de la lengua inglesa, lengua y cultura, sociolingüística y lenguas nativas.

**Yalile Jiménez Olivares**

Es Magíster en Segundas Lenguas y Culturas con Énfasis en Inglés como Lengua Extranjera para Alumnado Adulto. Posee una Licenciatura en Lingüística Aplicada con Énfasis en Inglés, un Bachillerato en la Enseñanza del Inglés, ambos de la Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica y un Magíster en Administración Educativa de la Universidad Internacional San Isidro Labrador. Labora actualmente como académica en la Universidad Nacional, Sede Regional Brunca, en los programas de Diplomado en Inglés, Bachillerato en la Enseñanza del Inglés y Licenciatura en Lingüística Aplicada. Colabora en las áreas de extensión e investigación; cofundadora y coordinadora del Centro de Idiomas de la Universidad Nacional, Sede Regional Brunca (CI-UNA). Sus trabajos de investigación han sido presentados en: III Congreso Internacional de Lingüística Aplicada (CILAP), Universidad Nacional, Heredia, Costa Rica; I Seminario Internacional: Perspectivas del Aprendizaje del Idioma Inglés como Lengua Extranjera, Universidad Nacional, Sede Regional Chorotega; Primera Jornada Internacional de Pedagogía, Lengua y Literaturas Inglesas, Universidad de Costa Rica; y Congreso Internacional de Educación Superior 2012, Pennsylvania, Estados Unidos.

**M.A. Sandra Palacios Palacios**

Sandra Palacios Palacios es master en lingüística pura y en lingüística aplicada. Sus estudios de grado fueron realizados en la Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica (UNA) y de post-grado en Ball State University, (BSU) Indiana, U.S.A. Actualmente, trabaja como Coordinadora del Área de Idiomas Extranjeros en la UNA, Sede Regional Brunca. Cuenta con experiencia en los ámbitos de docencia, extensión e investigación. Fue fundadora, responsable y en el presente ejecutora del Proyecto de Vinculación de Externa: Cursos de Inglés Conversacional de la UNA (CIUNA). De igual forma, se ha vinculado con otros proyectos tal como el Team-Una Amistad. Cuenta con ocho años de experiencia en docencia universitaria y secundaria. Ha realizado ponencias con su respectiva publicación a nivel nacional e internacional. Ha participado en congresos de lingüística aplicada de reconocimiento mundial tal como TESOL. Al presente ejerce labores docentes y administrativas, cuenta con categoría de profesor 1 y es orgullosamente profesora propietaria de la UNA Sede Regional Brunca.

## Introducción

### *¿Qué es la Lingüística Aplicada?*

La lingüística es la disciplina científica que investiga el origen, la evolución y la estructura del lenguaje, a fin de deducir las leyes que rigen las lenguas. La lingüística aplicada es un área interdisciplinaria de la lingüística cuyo objetivo es la aplicación de las teorías, métodos y conocimientos en situaciones diversas en las que está implicado el lenguaje. Los campos de acción de esta disciplina se enfocan en la enseñanza de lengua materna, la enseñanza de segunda lengua, la enseñanza de lenguas asistida por computador y la comunicación en distintos ámbitos sociales. Este campo de estudio se desarrolló a lo largo del siglo XX en el contexto de países de habla inglesa como Estados Unidos, Gran Bretaña y Australia.

Esta disciplina se ha enfocado en problemas del lenguaje que tienen que ver con la educación, la psicología, la antropología, la pedagogía y la sociología. La enseñanza y aprendizaje de segundas lenguas es quizás el área en que la lingüística aplicada ha experimentado una mayor evolución. Esta evolución ha ido de la mano con los avances que se han producido principalmente en la lingüística y la psicología desde la década de los cuarentas, dando nacimiento a propuestas de métodos y enfoques nuevos.

La lingüística aplicada es un campo multidisciplinario enriquecido por diversas áreas del saber. Por lo tanto, el I Congreso Internacional de Lingüística Aplicada 2013 se enmarca en las áreas temáticas:

#### Lingüística

- Fonética
- Fonología
- Morfología
- Sintaxis
- Semántica
- Pragmática
- Análisis del discurso

#### Lingüística Aplicada

- La enseñanza y aprendizaje de un idioma extranjero
- El desarrollo de la habilidad en el aprendizaje de un idioma meta
- Problemas del lenguaje
- Investigación del proceso por el cual las personas adquieren un lenguaje para enseñarlo mejor
- El efecto de los factores afectivos, sociales y lingüísticos en el éxito del aprendizaje de un segundo idioma
- El lenguaje, la comunicación y la interacción entre las personas cuando adquieren un segundo idioma
- Evaluación continua
- Estrategias para la enseñanza y aprendizaje

- Estilos de aprendizaje
- Aplicación de las inteligencias múltiples a la enseñanza y aprendizaje de un idioma extranjero

#### Tecnologías de la Información y Comunicación (TICs)

- El rol de TICs dentro del aula de inglés
- Actitudes, mitos y miedos del uso de TICs por parte de los profesores de inglés
- Usos potenciales de TICs
- Programas de capacitación
- Compartiendo herramientas en el aula de inglés como lengua extranjera
- Traducción e interpretación
- La traducción técnica, científica, jurídica, audiovisual, y literaria
- Interpretación simultánea y consecutiva
- TICs aplicadas a la traducción
- Localización de software
- La tradumática
- Didáctica de la traducción y de la interpretación
- Evaluación de la calidad del producto traducido
- Historia de la traducción y de la interpretación
- Ética del traductor
- Preparación y profesionalización del traductor
- Aspectos culturales, ideológicos y sociológicos de la traducción y de la interpretación
- Terminología y glosarios

#### Cultura

- Enseñanza de la cultura meta
- Relación entre lengua y cultura
- Paralingüística
- Comunicación intercultural
- Inglés para propósitos específicos (IPE)
- Inglés técnico
- Metodología basada en actividades específicas
- Capacitación docente
- Didáctica del inglés para propósitos específico
- Evaluación curricular

#### Literatura en Lengua Inglesa

- Crítica literaria desde diversas perspectivas
- Literatura comparada
- Literatura y el cine y estudios cinematográficos
- Teoría literaria y filosofía
- Enseñanza de la literatura en lengua inglesa
- Escritura creativa en inglés

**Investigaciones cualitativas, cuantitativas y  
bibliográficas**

**(Ponencias ordenadas alfabéticamente por el  
apellido del primer autor)**

## A Reading Skills Method to Improve the Students' Academic Achievement

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**Resumen:** Este es un estudio experimental llevado a cabo con dos grupos de undécimo año de secundaria el cual consiste en analizar el rendimiento académico empleando una metodología a base de técnicas y habilidades de lectura. Las estrategias empleadas son rastreo de información específica, lectura rápida para identificar la idea principal de un párrafo o texto, uso del contexto para comprender el significado de nuevas palabras, empleo de predicciones o conjeturas para detectar el posible contenido de un texto e identificar el referente de algunas palabras dentro de un texto para entender más exhaustivamente el contenido del mismo. Las cinco técnicas de lectura anteriormente mencionadas han demostrado que los discentes tienen la capacidad de progresar e incrementar tanto su comprensión de lectura como su rendimiento académico. La memorización de vocabulario, hasta cierto punto, permite el asimilar conocimiento. No obstante, no es la forma más eficiente para aumentar la comprensión de lectura. Además, no tiene sentido aprender nuevos términos en forma aislada porque un vocablo podría tener variedad semántica, y la misma puede ser utilizada en un contexto particular. Según Richards (1987), sin contexto, el vocabulario que los discentes han aprendido previamente podría ser olvidado fácilmente por la razón de que la memoria es temporal. La forma tradicional de enseñar técnicas de lectura podría afectar no sólo la comprensión sino que el rendimiento académico de los estudiantes universitarios de primer ingreso ya que los mismos podrían no hacer un análisis de texto apropiado. Esto quiere decir que los estudiantes probablemente no saben distinguir una idea principal de un tópico porque éstos tienden a memorizar cada palabra nueva, y si desconocen el significado de nuevos términos dentro de un texto, entonces podrían tener serias dificultades comprendiendo el mismo como un todo.

**Palabras clave:** Habilidades de lectura, rendimiento académico, técnicas, comprensión, contexto

**Abstract:** This experimental study consists of an analysis carried out with two groups of senior high school students with whom a series of reading skills was developed. The techniques involved were scanning to locate details, skimming to get main ideas, guessing meaning from context to infer what a word means without using a dictionary, predicting a topic to know what a text might be about,

and identifying word reference to understand in more detail the relation of such words to important elements or subjects used by an author. These five skills demonstrated the learners are capable of making progress and increasing their reading comprehension and academic achievement. Vocabulary memorization, to a certain extent, permits knowledge assimilation; nevertheless, it is not the most efficient way to enhance reading comprehension. Furthermore, it makes no sense to learn vocabulary in isolation provided that a term may have a variety of meanings, and it can be used in a particular context. According to Richards (1987), if there is no context, the vocabulary that students have previously learned can be easily forgotten since memory is usually temporary. The way reading skills are traditionally taught might affect both comprehension and academic achievement of new college enrollees due to the fact that they might fail to analyze texts. This means that students probably do not distinguish a main idea from a topic, for they tend to memorize every word, and if they do not know the meaning of new words in a text, they could have difficulty understanding the text as a whole.

**Key words:** Reading skills, academic achievement, techniques, comprehension, context

## I Introduction

For many years, the teaching of English as a foreign language in secondary schools has been limited to the development of the reading skill. Even though the current syllabus of the Ministry of Public Education claims for an interactive and oral proficiency of the target language, that task is not carried out as such since the EFL country-mandated test emphasizes the measurement of knowledge that only has to do with the application of the reading skill. For such a reason, most teachers of English, who work for public institutions, dedicate the majority of class time to preparing their students to achieve their EOG (End-of-grade-test), without minding if at the end of a five-year-instruction period the students really learned to use the target language communicatively. Moreover, many instructors probably consider that teaching reading in the foreign language consists of providing learners with plenty of lists of vocabulary in isolation (without a context) and rote reading comprehension exercises that actually frustrate and lead them to end up failing the English course. This might mean that many EFL instructors are not developing effective reading strategies for the purpose of guaranteeing an academically optimum achievement. These assumptions are the result of observations done as supervisors to some cooperating teachers who lent their groups to some of our student-teachers to their teaching practicum.

Unfortunately, in Costa Rica many high school students do not have the opportunity to learn to read efficiently, for they have not been taught effective reading techniques or perhaps because most high school teachers do not actually know how to develop effective reading skills appropriately. The majority of secondary school instructors provide their pupils with an article to be read. That is to say, such educators probably do not carry out a pre-reading activity, which helps the students guess the topic they are going to read about. Such an issue usually occurs due to the limited amount of



time that teachers have since they are pressured to cover the standard course of study (syllabus). Consequently, many instructors force their pupils to read without teaching them proper strategies because their objective is to have students learn “enough” vocabulary to be able to pass the EOG (End-of-grade) test.

Albeit it is important to provide learners with vocabulary, the fact that they do not know many new words that appear in the tests does not imply that they will fail. Konaré (1994) states that “classroom reading activities are designed to teach students the reading comprehension process, not just to test their ability to come up with the right product” (p. 6).

Reading in the target language is a process that Costa Rican high school students must go through. However, the development of such a process must be effective enough so that those learners really understand what and what they are reading for. The success of this process depends upon how much comprehension of the topic they show. What is reading comprehension then? Grellet (1991) defines reading comprehension as “the understanding and extraction of required information from a written text” (p. 3). In addition, Barnett (1988) quoting Hosenfeld refers to reading comprehension as follows:

The level of [reading] comprehension of the text is determined by how well the reader variables (interest, level in the text, purpose for reading the text, knowledge of the topic, foreign language abilities, awareness of the reading process, and level of willingness to take risks) interact with the variables (text, structure, syntax, and vocabulary). (p. 2)

For most teachers of English, the reading skill is probably passive since they have students read an article and solve a set of written exercises without being introduced to a new topic through an activity that demands both student-student and teacher-student interaction. Indeed, this study is followed by a hybrid reading method which is rather active and involves the following reading techniques: scanning to locate details, skimming to get main ideas, guessing meaning from context to infer without using a dictionary, predicting a topic to know what a text might be about, and identifying word reference to understand in more detail the relation of such words to important elements or subjects used by an author. These five skills demonstrated the learners are capable of making progress and increasing their reading comprehension and academic achievement.

To read well, it is necessary that learners exercise intelligence through the development of attractive and challenging learning situations which relate the written text to the expectations and living conditions of the students. Such expectations may vary from wanting to read the lyrics of a popular song to newspaper ads, magazines (non-fiction) or even literature (fiction). For this reason, it is commendable that teachers offer a variety of texts and remember that many students in a same class might read at very different levels of difficulty, similar to the manner they usually do in the mother language.

To sum up, reading activities for both improving academic achievement and increasing comprehension should be interesting, amusing, and useful so that they lead learners to a pleasant or beneficial outcome.

The objectives and research questions that this study centers on are listed below.

In general, this investigation aims to accomplish the following objectives:

General Goal:

-To develop effective reading skills to enhance the students' comprehension and the academic achievement for the purpose of creating a reading comprehension methodological approach.

Specific Objectives:

-To determine if the development of the reading comprehension methodological approach augments the students' comprehension and academic achievement.

-To implement two didactic units from the textbook "Interactions I: A Reading Skills Book" with two eleventh-grade groups from a public high school.

## II Framework of Reference

The myth that the reading process is a passive skill has existed since a long time ago due to the erroneous beliefs that were held when the teaching of languages began to develop. In fact, when the student placed his eyes in front of the reading, there was no interaction between learner and text. As a result, the information provided by the reading was an isolated and unique truth that was to be accepted with no questioning, downgrading the learner's prior knowledge and background. As it is clearly inferred, one of the strongest myths was to believe that there was nothing in the student's mind, and therefore, no interaction took place. Then, whatever was written down was considered to be the only knowledge the pupil had to acquire and accept.

Nonetheless, studies in applied linguistics began to refute such beliefs by remarking that all human beings possess a latent psychological structure that is activated whenever new information is found. That discovery led to the conclusion that the individual carries a broad knowledge of the world in the brain that comes into play every time a new situation is encountered. What each piece of writing represents is the knowledge or experience that the author expresses in order to share it with the reader. It would be odd to think that every person in the world experiences feelings that belong only to him or her. It is at this point that the interaction between reader and text becomes a game where two different worlds trace their similarities and differences; a game that should result in a marvelous trip through wisdom and sharing. Smith (1988) holds that "understanding or comprehension is the basis of reading and of learning to read. What is the point of any activity if there is no understanding" (p. 6). Consequently, the world around us full of intentions, knowledge, and expectations that are somehow related to new situations. In the case of the reading process, a combination of what is already known plus the new information is of great importance to achieve global understanding of what is read. Every piece of reading is meaningful by itself, as its main purpose is to inform and to share with the reader. Notwithstanding, the relationship between reader and text becomes worthwhile if the reader is able to make associations with his knowledge and the outside world.

Thus, reading depends upon everything that is around. The questions that are asked by the reader also depend on the type of reader. What all readers have in common

is their search for answers, and a great deal of their answers can be predicted on the basis of possible alternatives. They can range from a single word to abstract symbols and point of view of the author. As a result, reading is not identifying letters in order to recognize words and sentences. The process of reading comprehension goes beyond identifying single words and letters. Indeed, any reader attempting to understand word by word without regarding the text as a whole would be willing to experience a failure of comprehension.

The knowledge that people possess in order to understand written language resides in long-term memory. Thus, when past experiences are recalled, new understanding of the language and the world is brought about.

Nonetheless, it would be easy to infer that what is in our head constitutes only memories. It is true that there are many memories, but those recalls have a specific meaning. They are related to what individuals know and experience. That is known as cognitive structure. Events are remembered when they have a particular significance or a powerful effect. Then, when memories are recalled, they come to make linkages with the real world. Certainly, the human brain is not like a glass that is filled with liquid. Instead, it is a system of knowledge organized into a world view based on interactions and patterns.

Many researchers have pointed out different processes that the brain follows in the reading process. They have compared their findings with others and have realized the complexity that reading implies. Long and Richards (1987, p. 39) quoting Goodman describe the following five processes:

1. *Recognition-initiation*: This happens once there is contact between eyes and text.
2. *Prediction*: This is the need to find some established order or significance.
3. *Confirmation*: Verification between what was expected and the actual information.
4. *Correction*: When the predictions are not true, the brain disconfirms them and concentrates on the new information.
5. *Termination*: This one is executed when the reading task is completed. Nevertheless, this last stage can occur at any point in the reading due to different reasons such as non-productiveness of the task or information already known.

As it was explained before through the five mental processes, the reading skill requires concentration, creation of relationships, and conclusions derived from the whole experience. Such a task cannot be considered an easy one at any level. Experience and research have been in charge to confirm that this process is always accompanied by cycles that are part of the individual's nature, and in consequence, it cannot be regarded as an easy process since the brain is not a simple organ, either. These processes are considered part of the reading skill although they are basically mental. All these mechanisms are ways in which the reader accomplishes the task; nevertheless, it does not mean that all readers follow the process in the same way. The change takes place when

the reader discovers that a specific step does not meet the need that is to be fulfilled at a particular point along the process. This awareness leads the reader to make use of other strategies to look for the necessary comprehension.

Consequently, the reader is not able to predict the processes to be used since it depends on several factors such as time, level of complexity, and degree of comprehension among others. This point is somewhat related to individual differences since people are different and therefore learn in different ways. As an illustration, it is worth mentioning some individual learner differences that may help or hinder the learning process. Within this group, *age* is considered to be of importance since the available evidence suggests that age alters the rate of acquisition. Rate and success of second language acquisition appear to be strongly influenced by the age of the learner. Where rate is concerned, there is evidence to suggest that older learners are better.

In a study of Dutch learners, Ellis (1994, p. 105) quoting Snow and Hoefnagel-Hohle found that “although the adults (fifteen years and older) outperformed the children (six to ten years), the teenagers (twelve to fifteen years) learnt more rapidly than both. It would appear that although age improves language learning capacity, performance develops in the teens.”

A very important theory in this issue is the critical period hypothesis. It states that there is a time when language acquisition takes place naturally and effortlessly. Ellis (1994, p. 107) quoting Penfield and Roberts refers to this stage as follows:

The optimum age for language acquisition falls within the first ten years of life. During this period the brain retains plasticity, but with the onset of the puberty this plasticity begins to disappear. They suggested that this was the result of lateralization of the language function in the left hemisphere of the brain. That is, the neurological capacity for understanding and producing language, which initially involves both hemispheres of the brain, is slowly concentrated in the left hemisphere for most people. This neurological change results in difficulty that older learner’s experience.

On the other hand, *intelligence* is a very important factor to take into account when analyzing second language learning. This term is used to refer to a hypothesized general factor which underlies the ability to master and use a whole range of academic skills. It is underlying ability to learn rather than the actual knowledge that is supposedly measured by intelligence tests.

Ellis (1994, p. 110) citing Older and Perkins has argued that “there [is] a global language proficiency factor which accounts for the wide variety of language proficiency measures.” In relationship with this issue, aptitude is also of great significance.

Ellis (1994, p. 112) naming Carroll states that “aptitude corresponds to the kinds of skills Cummins identified as cognitive/academic language ability, than the kinds of skills involved in basic interpersonal communication.”

Another factor that has been considered is *cognitive style*. This term refers to the manner in which people perceive, conceptualize, organize, and recall information. Each individual is thought to have a more or less consistent mode of cognitive functioning. Various dimensions of cognitive style have been identified. These are usually presented

as dichotomies. The dichotomy which has received the greatest attention where second language acquisition is concerned is that of field dependence-independence. The terms do not really represent alternatives, but poles on a continuum, with individuals varying in the extent to which they learn towards dependence or independence. Research shows that the effects of cognitive style are related to age. Thus, field independence is facilitative in the case of late adolescents but not before.

To continue, *attitude and motivation* play a major role that cannot be left out. Ellis (1994, p. 116-117) quoting Schumann lists attitude “as a social factor with variables such as size of learning group, and motivation as an effective factor.” Ellis (1994, p. 117) citing Brown distinguishes motivation and attitude. He identifies the following three types of motivation:

1. *Global motivation*: It consists of a general orientation to the goal of learning a second language.
2. *Situational motivation*: It varies according to the situation in which learning takes place.
3. *Task motivation*: This is the type of motivation for performing particular learning tasks.

Ellis (1994, p. 117) referring to Gardner and Lambert states that they draw a basic distinction between an “integrative and an instrumental motivation to second language learning.” The former occurs when the learner wishes to identify with the culture of the second language group. Instrumental motivation takes place when the learner’s goals for learning the language are merely functional.

Lastly, it is relevant to overview the role of *personality*. By and large, in psychology, personality has been explored in terms of a number of personal traits, which are said to be constituents of the personality of an individual. Cattell, quoted by Ellis (1994, p. 119-120), actually attempts “to measure personality using a series of dichotomies, seen as poles, such as cool, warm, shy, venturesome, not assertive, dominant.” Eysenck, cited by Ellis (1994, p. 120), identifies “two general traits, again represented by dichotomies (extrovert-introvert) and (neurotic-stable). However, with some exceptions, second language researchers have preferred to develop their own range of personality traits, calling them anything from social styles to egocentric factors.”

In summary, there are some mental, social, and psychological factors that must be taken into account when people start learning a second language.

All these factors overlap and have a close relationship with the different language skills. Nonetheless, as it was pointed out before, the reading skill is one ability that involves all the already explained factors although there seem to be wrong ideas and assumptions that are still present and need to be clarified in order to help students along the teaching-learning process and also guide many teachers who perhaps ignore all these aspects and lack the necessary training to enrich their actual performance in the classroom, especially when dealing with reading comprehension, which is the focus of this study.

### III Methodology

This is a type of experimental study based on quantitative research which used the direct interaction with the participants, the administration of a pretest at the beginning of the research as well as two posttests as verifying instruments. The results will help authorities in charge of the educational system, in-service teachers, and researchers to make decisions when selecting or devising a personal research approach. Gay (1992, p. 298)) defines an experimental study as "...the only method of research that can truly test hypotheses concerning cause-and-effect relationships." She also states that such a method "represents the most valid approach to the solution of educational programs, both practical and theoretical, and to the advancement of education as a science" (Gay, 1992, p. 298).

The population sample was composed of two eleventh-grade groups of approximately thirty students each from Liceo Fernando Volio Jiménez, located in Palmares Pérez Zeledón. In addition, the selection of the institution was done randomly, considering only academic high schools from Pérez Zeledón County.

### IV Conclusion

The teaching of reading comprehension in public high schools should be given the necessary attention since it is the skill that is tested the most during the school year and the EGO (End-of-grade) test. Nonetheless, through this research, we were able to demonstrate that the selection or design of an effective reading method does help to increase both comprehension and academic achievement. During the performance of this study, the students of the experimental group felt much more encouraged and willing to learn than the students of the control group. In addition, vocabulary was enhanced and learned more meaningfully by using a context provided by different kinds of texts. The successful results in terms of academic achievement and reading comprehension were not obtained overnight. This method proved to be rather effective, yet it is time consuming. In other words, the more it is applied, the better results are guaranteed in any particular teaching context.

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Manuel Navarro Godínez has been an EFL teacher for over fifteen years. He is a graduate of Universidad Nacional with a Licentiate's degree in Applied Linguistics and another one in School Administration. He has taught EFL in elementary, middle, and high school. He has also worked as a career teacher at Universidad Nacional for eight years. Manuel has three years of international expertise, having taught ESL at KES (Knightdale Elementary) in North Carolina, USA. He has also worked as both high school principal and assistant principal for two years. He is the chair of the EFL team and currently teaches English to second –year career students at Universidad Nacional, Campus Coto as well as some service courses to students of other majors. Manuel is also studying for his Master's degree in Second Languages and Cultures at Universidad Nacional.

## Developing Oral Proficiency with Break-through College Learners

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**Resumen:** Esta propuesta es el resultado de un estudio etnográfico realizado con un grupo de enseñanza del inglés de la Universidad Nacional, Campus Coto que cursa actualmente el segundo año. Durante dos semestres, se monitoreó el nivel competencia oral de los estudiantes por medio de observaciones participativas y entrevistas para detectar los factores lingüísticos y metodológicos que pudieron afectar el incremento de la fluidez de los discentes, considerando que éstos tenían comprensión de material auditivo y de lectura pero no eran capaces de expresarse con fluidez en inglés. El enseñar a hablar a discentes novatos es una labor difícil debido a la influencia de factores no lingüísticos y pedagógicos que influyen en el manejo del lenguaje meta. Arroyo aduce que “Algunos estudiantes aseguran que la timidez y la falta de práctica son factores que afectan el aprendizaje del idioma en forma fluida” (Al Día). Lamentablemente, el problema cuando los discentes principiantes no mejoran su competencia comunicativa para así poder mostrar mucha más fluidez en la segunda lengua. Por tanto, es necesario llevar a cabo la implementación de una metodología comunicativa que contemple un repertorio de estrategias pedagógicas de enseñanza-aprendizaje las cuales puedan lograr un incremento de la competencia comunicativa y lingüística de los estudiantes que les permita un mayor crecimiento en el lenguaje meta. Al final del segundo semestre, los estudiantes progresaron y alcanzaron el nivel requerido. Este enfoque pedagógico propuesto no es una fórmula mágica. Empero, el mismo ha demostrado ser un recurso lento pero efectivo que logra incrementar el desarrollo de la habilidad oral de los estudiantes.

**Palabras claves:** Competencia comunicativa, conocimiento deductivo e inductivo, estrategias metodológicas, enfoque metodológico, fluidez.

**Abstract:** This proposal is the result of an ethnographic study done with a first-year English group from Universidad Nacional, Campus Coto that is now in second year. During two semesters, students' oral proficiency level was tracked down through participant observations and interviews to detect the linguistic and methodological factors that affected the increase of the students' fluency, considering the fact that they were able to show comprehension of listening and reading material yet were unable to express themselves fluently in the target



language. Teaching novice learners to speak is hard to do due to the influence of various non-linguistic and pedagogical factors that affect the students' mastery of the target language. Arroyo stated that some students express that shyness as well as lack of practice are factors that affect target language learning fluency' (Al Dia). Unfortunately, the problem arises when these breakthrough learners do not seem to make progress in terms of developing communicative competence to be able to express much more fluently in the target language. As a result, the implementation of a communicative methodology, containing a repertoire of learning and teaching strategies is proposed for the purpose of augmenting the learners' communicative competence as well as the linguistic knowledge of their L2 in order to make them grow. At the end of the second semester, the students made progress and were where they needed to be. The proposed pedagogical approach is not a magic formula. However, it has proven to be an effective slow going resource that increases the students' development of the oral skill.

**Key words:** Communicative competence, procedural and declarative knowledge, pedagogical strategies, teaching approach, fluency.

## I Introduction

Second language learning is an ongoing process since knowledge of a target language is always emerging. Nevertheless, target language learners have the capacity to reach a level of proficiency as well as show linguistic competence when they communicate in L2.

Traditionally, the teaching of English in Costa Rica in public middle and high schools has probably been limited to the mastery of the reading skills due to the country-mandated test (National test). For this reason, perhaps many students do not develop skills to learn to speak the target language. Indeed, when new learners enroll in the English major at Universidad Nacional, either the bachelor's program in English teaching or the Associate's degree in English, they might be able to communicate in the target language at a very novice low level or not to utter a single phrase at all.

The teaching of a foreign language is a complex long-term process that requires teachers to use a variety of pedagogical strategies to teach the target language to their pupils. As a result, most students are able to learn to listen, read, and write in the target language with a great deal of accuracy. However, when it comes to the speaking skill, it is hard for the teacher to make students communicate among themselves. This is contradictory since learners' main goal and interest is oral communication in L2. With regard to this point, Arroyo quoting Gibson states that "A Costa Rican's main weakness continues to be oral expression, which is mandatory to apply for job" (Al Dia).

Teaching novice learners to speak is hard to do due to the influence of various non-linguistic and pedagogical factors that affect the students' mastery of the target language. Arroyo states that "Some students express that shyness as well as lack of practice are factors that affect target language learning fluency" (Al Dia). In addition, Arroyo quoting Gibson manifests that lack of language fluency 'is probably due to the education system which has promoted reading comprehension" (Al Dia).

Unfortunately, the problem arises when these breakthrough learners do not seem to make progress in terms of developing communicative competence to be able to express much more fluently in the target language.

In general, this investigation aims to accomplish the following objectives:

General:

- To analyze the non-linguistic and pedagogical factors that affect the communicative competence of break-through English students at UNA, Sede Regional Brunca.

Specific:

- To identify the most influential non-linguistic and pedagogical factors that deprive the students from interacting in L2.
- To determine the communicative proficiency level of new students, taking the course Integrated English I, at the beginning of the school year by administering a speaking test.
- To identify the teaching methodology used in the classroom.

## II Framework of Reference

### 2.1 Oral Expression

Teaching speaking or oral expression to novice learners is one of the most difficult tasks to carry out for the language teacher. This is probably because speaking is a productive skill that is time consuming, procedural and slow going. This means that a learner does not learn to communicate in the target language overnight. Students learn to speak by interacting with others. If they are not provided with enough opportunities to do so, they will not make it through the mastery of this important ability. Speaking as well as listening, reading and writing must be integrated through a holistic approach that guarantees learners the global mastery of the target language, mainly for communicative purposes.

A highly challenging aspect that a teacher must face before planning a lesson is the gathering of the materials to be used. When it comes to oral expression, the teacher needs to design activities that comply with the three stages of speaking (pre-communicative, communicative and post-communicative activities) that promote student-student interaction more than student-teacher interaction. Moreover, it is necessary to develop a communicative approach such as the *Task-Based* or the *Communicative Language Teaching* that are oriented towards oral elicitation through the use of communicatively effective strategies such as role-plays, skits, simulations, interviews, story-telling, and so on.

Following this line of thought, CEF (Common European Framework) recommends implementing “an approach that is action-oriented in so far as it views users and learners of a language primarily as social agents, i.e members of a society who have tasks . . .” (p. 9). In addition, Larsen (2000, p. 129) quoting Morrow holds, “truly communicative activities have three features: *information gap*, *choice*, and *feedback*.” This means that an information gap exists when one speaker has information that the other lacks. In addition, choice accounts for what a person wants to say and the manner it

is said. Namely, the speaker must not be controlled or limited to express a particular answer. True communication must have a purpose, and a speaker needs to assess his/her achievement based on the information provided by the listener. It is pertinent to point out that in order for an individual to become a proficient speaker, it is necessary to be a good listener and show understanding of what others say. For that reason, research shows that listening and speaking are overlapped. Furthermore, listening is no longer considered a passive skill. According to Bachman and others, “listening is not a passive or receptive skill, as it is commonly assumed. Listening is an interactive, dynamic, interpretive process in which the listener engages in the active construction of meaning (qtd. in O’Malley & Valdez, p. 58). For this reason, it would not be commendable to teach speaking in isolation since the increase of communicative competence depends on the internalization of input through listening comprehension in order to build the required knowledge for developing oral communication.

## 2.2 Communicative Competence

Communicative competence accounts for the level of cognition that a learner needs to have for the purpose of expressing himself or herself with others by means of socialization with the aid of an appropriate context that promotes learning. Chang (2011) defines communicative competence by quoting Hymes who states that “the study of human language should place humans in a social world. The definition of ‘communicative competence’ is what a speaker needs to know in order to communicate in a speech community” (p. 3). This means that interaction takes precedence over form through meaningful context. In that way, a speaker will have the opportunity to express his or herself much more for the purpose of developing his or her oral proficiency level of the target language. As to this point, Chang states that “in the real world, not only is a speaker expected to produce a grammatical sentence, but he/she should also consider the situation or context in which the sentences are used” (p. 3). According to Hymes, competence should be viewed as “the overall underlying knowledge and ability for language which the speaker-listener possesses” (Qtd. in Chang, p. 3). He also recommends using four main areas or “sectors” for communicate competence:

First, “whether or not something is formally *possible*” refers to the notion of grammatical competence. It is concerned with whether an utterance is grammatically correct. Second, “whether something is *feasible*” deals with its acceptability, in addition to being grammatically possible. For example, some grammatical sentences cannot be part of competence because of the restricted ability of human information processing. Third, “whether something is *appropriate*” means that a sentence should be appropriate to the context in which it is used. Finally, “whether something is in fact *done*” implies that a sentence may be grammatically correct, feasible, and appropriate in context, but have no probability of actually occurring. It may be concluded that communicative competence consists of knowledge of linguistic rules, appropriate language usage in different situations, connection of utterances in a discourse, and language strategies. (p. 4)

This may mean that a sentence like “*Elephants can fly*” is a grammatically correct sentence that is not likely to happen because of its erroneous semantic nature, and it may probably happen at a very fictional context on T.V, particularly cartoons.

### 2.3 Interactive Approaches

For many years, the teaching of English as a Foreign Language has been based on form and vocabulary, taking into account principles and techniques of the Audio-lingual Method and the Grammar-Translation Method such as *memorization, repetition, emphasis on written language rather on spoken language, and deductive application of grammar rules*. Indeed, the syllabus for this kind of instruction was very structure-oriented. For some language theories, “grammar is the most important element of learning a language” (Lindsay & Knight, 2006, p. 1). As a result, most learners might have made progress in literacy but not in oral communication. Grammar can be taught through inductive and deductive reasoning. Brown (2000) defines both aspects as follows:

In the case of inductive reasoning, one stores a number of specific instances and induces a general law or rule or conclusion that governs or subsumes the specific instances. Deductive reasoning is a movement from a generalization to specific instances: specific subsumed facts are inferred or deduced from a general principle. Second language learning in the “field” (natural, untutored language learning... involves a largely inductive process, in which learners must infer certain rules and meanings from all the data around them. (p. 92)

Even though Nunan (2003) “recommends combining both approaches (inductive and deductive) when teaching grammar, he believes that “inductive techniques appear to result in learners retaining more of the language in the long term” (p. 158). This means that it is pertinent for teachers to focus teaching more on procedural knowledge (usage of gained insights for elicitation) than on declarative knowledge (grammar rules).

Nowadays, the trend in foreign language teaching and learning is to have the students learn the target language in an integrated way by implementing a communicative methodology inside or outside the classroom through meaningful learning in order to enhance the students’ communicative language proficiency. According to Lindsay and Knight, “learning can take place both inside and outside the classroom. It can be an informal process; picking up words from the T.V, magazines, books, or friends; or it can be a formal process-attending lessons and taking part in classroom activities where language and skills are introduced and practiced” (p. 1). Brown (2000) considers meaningful learning an important cognitive-learning principle and refers to it as follows:

Meaningful learning “subsumes” new information into existing structures and memory systems, and the resulting associative links create retention. Rote learning- taking in isolated bits and pieces of information that are not connected with one’s existing cognitive structures- has little chance of creating long-term retention. (p. 57)

The process of developing communicative language proficiency in the target language through an inductive approach and social interaction is possibly slow-going and time-consuming. According to Nunan (2003), “a disadvantage of an inductive approach is that it takes more time for learners to come to an understanding of the grammatical point in question than with a deductive approach. However, inductive techniques appear

to result in learners retaining more of the language in the long term” (p. 158). In addition, “research has confirmed that students may be able to communicate fluently in English after only two to three years of all-English schooling but may take longer, between five and ten years...” (O’ Malley & Valdez, p. 60).

Social interaction is another important factor that contributes to increasing language proficiency. In order to promote interaction, it is necessary to develop communicative activities and meaning negotiation which is an important characteristic of interaction. As to this point, Hwang quotes Long by stating:

One particular kind of interaction, known as *negotiation for meaning* has been proposed in relation to focus on form. Long (1996) characterized this term as follows: "negotiation for meaning by definition involves denser than usual frequencies of semantically contingent speech of various kinds (i.e., utterance by a competent speaker, such as repetitions, extensions, reformulations, rephrasing, expansions, and recasts), which immediately follow learner utterances and maintain reference to their meaning. (p. 48)

Notwithstanding, no single method has proven to be a hundred percent effective enough to guarantee a successful development and mastery of oral communication. It is possible to implement some new approaches to language teaching for communicative purposes like the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and the Task-based Approach (TBA).

#### **2.4 Communicative Language Teaching**

CLT is an improved version of the Communicative Approach which is both communication and interaction-oriented. Larsen-Freeman (2000) states that “Communicative Language Teaching aims broadly to apply the theoretical perspective of the Communicative Approach by making communicative competence the goal of language teaching and by acknowledging the interdependence of language and communication” (p. 121). The effective results of its applicability will be reflected based on the interpretation that teachers make of its main components such as tenets and strategies.

The role of the teacher who uses CLT in developing speaking proficiency among the students is that of a facilitator since his or her major goal is to promote interaction. In addition, the teacher can advise learners by answering their questions and monitoring their work.

CLT focuses on functions rather than forms albeit a functional syllabus is not always used. Various language forms are inductively introduced for each linguistic function to be developed. At the beginning, simple patterns are presented, yet as soon as the learners become more proficient in the target language, the previous functions are introduced again in order to learn more challenging forms. For instance, in learning to ask for directions, breakthrough students might practice *‘Where is the post office?’*, but independent users might learn *‘Do you know where the post office is?’* or *‘Can you tell me where the post office is?’*

Some of the techniques implemented by CLT are the use of *authentic materials*, *language games*, *role-play*, *picture strip story* and other activities that promote social interaction in the target language.

## 2.5 The Task-Based Approach

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) is focused on language use for communicative purposes. Larsen-Freeman (2000) refers to TBLT as follows:

A task-based approach aims to provide learners with a natural context for language use. As learners work to complete a task, they have abundant opportunity to interact. Such interaction is thought to facilitate language acquisition as learners have to work to understand each other and to express their own meaning. By doing so, they have to check to see if they have comprehended correctly and, at times, they have to seek clarification. By interacting with others, they get to listen to language which may be beyond their present ability, but which may be assimilated into their knowledge of the target language for use at a later time. (p. 144)

Since task-based instruction is based upon experiential learning, the teaching of declarative knowledge is not emphasized at all since the teacher, as a facilitator and guide of the teaching-learning process, makes students learn by doing meaningful activities and by providing them with the appropriate context that is task-oriented. With regard to this, Nunan (2003) states the following:

In TBLT, language lessons are based on learning experiences that have non-linguistic outcomes, and in which there is a clear connection between the things learners do in class and the things they will ultimately need to do outside of the classroom. Such tasks might include listening to a weather forecast and deciding what to wear, ordering a meal, planning a party, finding one's way around town and so on. In these tasks, language is used to achieve non-language outcomes. For example, the ultimate aim of ordering a meal is not to use correctly formed wh-questions, but to get food and drink on the table. (p. 7)

Lee quoting Willis says that there are “five principles for the implementation of a task-based approach: (a) exposure to worthwhile and authentic language, (b) active use of language, (c) tasks that motivate learners to engage in language use, (d) a focus on language at some points in a task cycle, and (e) a focus on language that is more and less prominent at different times” (p. 107).

In sum, TBLT is probably one of the most effective approaches to oral language proficiency if the instructors carefully design the tasks that their pupils need to perform in and out of the classroom. Of course, there are tasks for different language proficiency levels. For that reason, it is necessary to determine the level(s) that the student(s) may have.

## 2.6 Factors that Affect the Development of Oral Proficiency

Developing oral proficiency is probably the most difficult communicative goal to reach when learning a second language. This is because every learner is different, and

every person learns at different rates. Lindsay and Knight mention that some of the most common factors that might influence the learning of a foreign language, particularly in terms of oral communication, are “innate ability, aptitude, attitude, motivation, age, embarrassment and anxiety, self-confidence, learner types, relationship with other learners, [teaching strategies], and relationship to the teacher” (p. 7-10).

Learning is a never ending process that can take place inside or outside the classroom. Such a process can be both *informal* (getting pieces of knowledge from a variety of sources: magazines, T.V, friends, life, experience) and *formal* (instruction conducted in a classroom). As a result, learners gain insights through different everyday situations. Of course, the knowledge obtained (learning outcomes) is the result of the strategies (techniques), individual differences, and socio-cultural factors.

Sousa states that “teachers can facilitate a lifetime of successful learning by equipping students with a repertoire of strategies and tools for learning” (p. 24). This means that the market offers a variety of tools to be used to guarantee learning. Many experts have established different taxonomies to group them according to their philosophy. However, no single learning strategy can guarantee the effective mastery of a language. This is similar to the assumption that there is no single method or “teaching recipe” to teach a language the best way. Nonetheless, teachers can and have the obligation of selecting the most outstanding techniques or tools that in their opinion are learning oriented to quench their students` learning thirst.

Learning strategies play an important role in the process of second language acquisition and are highly linked to individual differences that learners might have. This means that educators are responsible, to a great extent, for what happens in the classroom in terms of *the topic or content taught, the materials used, the kind and sequential order of activities, classroom management, and corrective feedback*. Also, teachers need to identify their pupils` needs as well as the learner types they have and design lessons which satisfy their students` learning needs and promote their cognitive development. This is very difficult to do, considering the fact that all groups are not homogeneous and present different characteristics. Moreover, learners must be told not to worry about making mistakes since it is part of the learning process and errors are evidence that learning is taking place. As a matter of fact, learners are also responsible for learning a great deal, and they must use techniques according to his learning idiosyncrasy and take advantage of every single opportunity they have to use the target language, self-monitor and correct. Learning strategies are to be effective or ineffective based on some individual learning differences such as *age, motivation, aptitude, personality, and intelligence*. Although it is highly believed that little kids can master a second language more readily than adolescents or adults, old learners have the capacity as well. They only need to be exposed to a variety of activities that activate their senses (touching, tasting, smelling, visual, and hearing). Moreover, the degree to which learners are motivated and show enthusiasm is important to guarantee success in language learning since the students will have a reason or goal to assimilate L2. This is called intrinsic motivation. Although there are different kinds of motivation, the intrinsic one seems to be much more effective because of the direction it takes to empower learners. Some good ways to

motivate learners intrinsically are preparing lessons that contain colorful materials, developing student-centered activities that promote social interaction, creating a positive environment in the classroom, supporting the students at all times, and making them feel confident of the work they do. If a learner does not have a talent to develop L2 interest, s/he will not probably make it since their aptitude shows that this is something they do not want to do. Nonetheless, other pupils can be more talkative, extrovert, assertive and dynamic. For both cases, teachers need to use learning strategies that lead to control anxiety and be able to succeed. This means that shy learners might have a hard time when doing public speaking. As a result, motivation and encouragement are two techniques used to lower the students' affective filter. On the other hand, extrovert students, particularly AD/HD learners (attention deficit / hyperactivity disorder) can suffer from anxiety for doing tasks. Seldom are they quiet or passive. For this reason, it is necessary to design challenging activities that really keep them interested and lead them to grow as well. Students have intelligence. This concept should not be defined from a psychometric perspective, that is, knowledge is measured in terms of the results by means of traditional tests. Intelligence, according to Gardner, is more than that. Actually, he defines intelligence as a group of multiple abilities or talents that every human being has, and an individual can have all of them or some, but they are developed according to the learner's aptitude. As a result, teachers need to design activities that promote the development of such multiple intelligences.

Socio-cultural factors and learning strategies are highly interrelated in the process of second language acquisition since there is an assumption that states if you are bilingual, you are bicultural. This does not mean that learners will be strictly attached to the target culture, but they will learn it and respect it, but they do not have to be forced to follow all of its components. When living in a foreign country, students face a phenomenon called acculturation which is the adaptation to the target culture patterns. Some experts point out that this is a step by step process that might have the following phases: *honeymoon stage, not like home, period of adjustment, and not so bad*. The honeymoon phase is optimistic to learners since they receive support from the community, friends, and school. This means that the new situation looks promising. With the pass of time, learners realize that living abroad is not like living at home, thus frustration sets in because in many cases there are no tools for understanding new language though they may try. Besides, they feel isolated because oral communication is hard and group support begins to fade. Then, learners experience a period of adjustment, that is, they can recognize cues, facial expressions, gestures, and behaviors. In this stage, they may have very little understanding of language, but they feel comfortable. As soon as they get more into it, they realize that L2 is not bad at all, and there is general acceptance for life in the foreign country. Subconsciously, they like the new place of residence.

### III Methodology

This is a type of descriptive study based on quantitative research which uses the case study as a main strategy, eight non-participant observations done with a group of first-



year students (the sources of information) during the first two months of the first semester, key-informant interviews done to both course professors, and the administration of a survey to the learners as a verifying instrument. The results will help academic authorities of UNA, Sede Regional Brunca, to make decisions when selecting or designing a communicative methodology for teaching the course Integrated English I. Gay (1992) states that “descriptive research involves collecting data in order to test hypotheses or to answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of study. A descriptive study determines and reports the way things are” (p. 217).

Moreover, this descriptive research implies the development of indirect work with the sources of information (the learners and course professors) during eight weeks to determine the both the non-linguistic and pedagogical factors that deprive the students’ from increasing their communicative competence in the target language.

### 3.1 Population, Subjects, and Setting

The population sample is composed of one first-year career group of approximately twelve students which ages range from 17 to 20 years. This class is from Universidad Nacional, Campus Coto, located in Paso Canoas, Corredores. The selection of the institution will be done through convenience sampling because the researcher of this study works at UNA, Campus Coto and has the feasibility to carry out the investigation there due to the fact he does not count on much time or have many funds to conduct the study at other school campuses. Gay (1992) defines convenience sampling as “accidental sampling and haphazard sampling [that] basically involves using as the sample whoever happens to be available” (p. 138). This means that the researcher chooses a sample that is advantageous and convenient to the purposes of the investigation.

## IV Conclusion

In conclusion, learning is an ongoing process that demands the use of many different strategies in order to succeed. This process is hard and can be both formal and informal; thus, learners can be either active or passive. There must be commitment on the part of both learners and teachers to select appropriate techniques, considering individual learning differences, socio cultural factors and learning results. Namely, teachers and students must do team work and be willing to accept challenges in order to grow day after day following the wise principle: “Practice makes it perfect.”

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He has been working at UNA for 14 years in the Associate, Bachelor and Licentiate's degree programs. He has also been a thesis director in the licentiate program. Besides, he worked for 2 years in the CONARE-MEP training program. He has done research in applied linguistics and linguistics to be presented in different congresses and seminars.

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Manuel Navarro Godínez has been an EFL teacher for over fifteen years. He is a graduate of Universidad Nacional with a licentiate's degree in Applied Linguistics and another one in School Administration. He has taught EFL in elementary, middle, and high school. He has also worked as a career teacher at Universidad Nacional for eight years. Manuel has three years of international expertise, having taught ESL at KES (Knightdale Elementary) in North Carolina, USA. He has also worked as both high school principal and assistant principal for two years. He is the chair of the EFL team and currently teaches English to second –year career students at Universidad Nacional, Campus Coto as well as some service courses to students of other majors. Manuel is also studying for his Master's degree in Second Languages and Cultures at Universidad Nacional.

## **Business Activity in the Counties of Pérez Zeledón and Osa and Its Relationship with Translation**

*Jacqueline Araya Ríos<sup>1</sup>*

**Resumen:** El propósito de este estudio es describir el papel de la actividad traductora en el comercio de Pérez Zeledón y Osa. Los objetivos de la investigación son identificar las principales actividades económicas de la región, investigar acerca de las actividades que hacen mayor uso de los servicios de traducción, y evaluar, si es posible, la contribución económica de la traducción al crecimiento de la región. Con el fin de recopilar la información para el cumplimiento de los objetivos planteados, se consultó las páginas web de varias instituciones públicas de Costa Rica, y se tomó la opinión de varios empresarios locales y otros profesionales con respecto al tema.

**Descriptores:** traducción, Pérez Zeledón, Osa, comercio.

**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to describe the role of translation activity in the commercial counties of Pérez Zeledón and Osa. The objectives of the research are to identify the major economic activities in the region, to investigate about the activities that make the most use of translation services, and to assess, if possible, the economic contribution of translation to the growth of the region. In order to collect the information for the fulfillment of the objectives, the web pages of several Costa Rican public institutions were consulted, and local businesspeople and other professionals were interviewed on the subject.

**Key words:** translation, Pérez Zeledón, Osa, commerce

### **1. Geographical and Economic Information about Pérez Zeledón and Osa**

Pérez Zeledón is the 19<sup>th</sup> county of the province of San José. It borders on the north with the province of Cartago, specifically the counties of Paraíso and Turrialba; on the northwest with Dota and a small extension of Tarrazú, both counties of San José. To the east it is adjacent to Limón, specifically the area of Talamanca, while the rest of its territory is demarcated by several counties of the province of Puntarenas, more exactly Buenos Aires, Osa and Aguirre. The latter two are access points to the Pacific coastal area. Due to the proximity between San Isidro de El General—head district of the county of Pérez Zeledón—and nearby beaches, including popular Dominical and Uvita beaches,

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of the district of Bahía Ballena, there is a misunderstanding, even among San Isidro citizens that those beaches belong geographically to Pérez Zeledón. The coastal zone has always been the favorite vacation and retreat spot for families, who by public transport or private vehicle visit the area. At present due to fairly good road conditions, the car travel takes no more than 40 minutes to Dominical beach and 55 minutes to Uvita beach.

Pérez Zeledón is a thoroughfare for thousands of people that go to other places further south, such as Buenos Aires, Golfito or Paso Canoas on the border with Panama, and, most certainly, to the nearby beaches mentioned above. The number of travelers and visitors to the region is considerable, and there are many who, attracted by its nature, warm climate, lush vegetation, and hospitable people, decide to settle in the area permanently. The increase in the number of inhabitants has been the direct cause of growth in the supply of universities and other educational institutions in the area.

Pérez Zeledón and the county of Osa constitute an area of great commercial effervescence due to their geographical location as a transit between the Central Valley and the southern border with Panamá, and as far west as the bridge between San Isidro del General and Pacific beaches. The region has experienced an important tourism boom since the late eighties and this has been a direct cause of the diversification of goods and services in the area. As an example, what used to be a nursery homestead, whose main income was the sale of seeds, ornamental plants and Christmas trees, is now a large company with branches in different locations, primarily in coastal spots, and whose primary revenue sources are service landscaping or garden design and maintenance of large residences, hotels and condos and wholesale sales to other distributors (W. Quesada, La Bonita Nursery manager, personal communication). However, traditional economic activities such as grocery sales, medical services, banking and transportation, have also experienced expansion, in this case parallel to the increase in population in the area. According to the Statistics and Census Institute of Costa Rica, between 1984 and 2008 the population of Pérez Zeledón grew from 82,370 to 140,872 inhabitants (cf. Bibliography, INEC).

The most significant business in the counties of Pérez Zeledón and Osa that generate more resources for the area are in order of importance: 1) agriculture, in products such as coffee, sugar cane, pineapple, tobacco, bovines, pigs and other small farm animals; 2) industry, for example, carpentry and mechanical workshops, sawmills; 3) tourism, such as hosting services, food and transportation associated with this activity (*Plan Regional de Desarrollo Brunca: 2002-2006*, p.73). The service sector should be an important item in the share of resources and sources of employment in areas such as banking, medical and educational services; however, this sector has been poorly studied, and currently there is no statistics that may reveal their contribution to the local economy.

### 1.1 Agriculture

Agriculture, according to the Foreign Trade Corporation of Costa Rica (PROCOMER), ranked second in the county exports for 2008, with 21.3% of total merchandise exports, behind textiles, with a 78.8%. However, these figures would be very different if coffee exports were included in the regional statistics. Unfortunately, for the purposes of this

research it is necessary to clarify that coffee statistics are recorded directly by the Costa Rican Coffee Institute (ICAFE). A similar situation happens with the marketing of pineapples grown in the area. This activity is in the hands of transnational corporations Del Campo and PINDECO, and their trade flows are not registered by PROCOMER Regional Office (cf. Bibliography, PROCOMER).

Part of the local trade includes activities whose target market are a number of consumers who do not speak Spanish as their native language. Agriculture is not one of them, for it remains concentrated in the hands of local producers and farmers. Despite the presence of a large multinational company, Pineapple Development Company, better known as PINDECO, it does not monopolize the agricultural market since it only focuses on the cultivation of pineapple. However, some activities derived from agriculture, such as the production of gourmet coffee, have expanded their marketing scope and started a hunt for foreign consumers. This refers to the particular case of Del Valle, a product line developed by Cooperativa Agrícola, Industrial y de Servicios El General R.L. (CoopeAgri), a local company founded in 1962 for the main purpose of providing incentives to small farmers in the area. This company has expanded its functions and since 1969 operates in the area of supermarkets, cultivation and industrialization of sugar cane (1974), and gas stations.

Del Valle supports local coffee producers and has made available to the consumer a product line of international quality. Therefore, the labels on their products read in Spanish and English. International Sales Assistant of the Cooperative, Lawyer W. Valverde explained that the English version of the packaging of their products is generally done by native speakers of English, young people involved in a volunteer program, mostly from Europe. This program is part of the benefits received by the institution for being part of Fair Trade, which classifies it as Fair Trade Certified Company. For this reason, there has been no need to hire a local translator (W. Valverde, telephonic interview).

## **1.2. Industry**

The industry sector is another major business activity in the area, especially agribusiness, such as the industrialization of sugar cane by-products and forest products and services. There are also companies engaged in the extraction of minerals such as rock and sand—indispensable in the construction field—automotive repair shops, apparel, woodworking, crafts, in short, the inventory is extensive. A list of patents between 2005 and 2009, provided by the Information Services Department of the Municipality of Pérez Zeledón, reveals the existing amount of such patents in different business activities of the county. However, it is necessary to mention that the list shrunk considerably once the process of classification of specific areas started. Through this inquiry it was sought to identify the specific trade activities where there has been no need or, on the contrary, where there has been interest to resort to the diffusion of information about the company in the English language. For example, in the nursery mentioned previously, the site owner in San Isidro de El General explained that management makes sure to have on staff at least one worker who speaks English. Since most of the bilingual communication is established orally, the

need to hire a translator is insignificant. Any written communication, in turn, is made by the same employee with the assistance of a native speaker or other means not specified (W. Quesada Mora, personal communication).

## **2. The Relationship between Commerce and Translation**

The question is: What commercial activities in the region use written communication in both languages (Spanish-English)? And if possible, have these businesses experienced economic growth as a result of offering their services to a larger target audience, one that probably affords to buy more? The results obtained in this investigation do not permit a fully satisfactory answer, mainly due to two reasons. First, the researcher was unable, for reasons of time and displacement, to consult each of the companies in the area, or at least one of each representative group of the companies listed by patents. According to the Information Services department of the Municipality of Pérez Zeledón, 447 commercial activities were registered in 2009. Second, there are no digital yearly records in this public office, except those provided at the request of the researcher, of the patents filed and granted in previous years. This void prevented the observation of any tendency towards an increase or decrease of businesses in either commercial activity. This information, if any, would give the possibility to study the areas of greatest economic growth, reflected in a proliferation of service centers, warehouses, shops, where a particular product or service would be offered. The research would seek, then, to confirm or refute the hypothesis that greater trade openness, understood for the purpose of this research as any company's effort to cover at a wider target clientele including non-Spanish speakers, would provide greater economic success and higher revenues. The research would conclude that translation for these companies is a useful and indispensable tool in their financial accomplishments.

This image would be the ideal picture of results; however, the study must turn to the reality of what is available. In the survey conducted for the purpose of this study professionals from different fields were consulted, such as administrative staff of financial institutions, staff of dental and veterinary clinics, tourist agencies and real estate offices, lawyers, accountants, in sum, the list is very diverse. The results, not surprisingly, are classified into two groups: the offices, shops, that use and pay for translation (mostly written) services and the places that do not.

### **2.1. Economic Activities for which Translation Services Are not Imperative**

In the first group—those that seldom hire translation services—there is a diverse group of businesses and professionals, who share characteristics and criteria that have been mentioned throughout this investigation. A point that is worth mentioning is that a large number of these professionals cite as a reason for not employing translation the fact that they do not handle documents in another language. The prescriptions, business correspondence such as letters or emails, invoices and other types of documentation handled in the center, clinic or office, are customarily written in Spanish only. They explain that if a foreign customer who does not speak Spanish wants a particular document to be translated into English, it is he or she who should be responsible for

seeking this service. If they know a translator or someone who speaks both languages, they make the recommendation, but their involvement in the issue does not go beyond that.

Another reason why it is not imperative to use a translator's services, in the opinion of these professionals, is that when the time comes to draft a contract, as in the case of an architectural or topographic service, it is the lawyer or notary who must undertake this task. Hence there is no pressure or urgency to have a trustworthy translator, as it is for other companies that will be mentioned later. This is the scenario illustrated by staff from both public and private banks, dentists, veterinarians, topographers, mechanical engineers and architects.

Within this group another phenomenon happens, and it is the case of the professional with advanced or intermediate knowledge of the English language. In the communities of San Isidro de El General and Bahía Ballena, in the course of this study, it was possible to identify the profile of a professional, a lawyer, veterinarian or engineer, with a good command of English. This assertion is based entirely on information provided by the individuals themselves when consulted about whether or not they hired translation services. Although these commercial areas do not use translation as support for the daily activities of the company, oral communication in another language, English in this case, does take place. This is not a case of interpretation, for the one who performs the oral communication is not an intermediary but the professional himself, or an employee of the shop, as in the example of the nursery, serving a client.

## **2.2. Businesses that Hire Translation Services**

A key stage in this research is the identification of the trade activities where there is real demand for translation services. Without a doubt, and this is a finding that was expected at the beginning of this research, the field most in need of translators is the legal area, followed by real estate, hotels and travel agencies. They are noted in that respective order, given the amount of English speaking customers and the frequency with which respondents claimed to transact business with them. Real estate in the communities studied is an activity whose target market are primarily foreign residents or buyers who come to the country in search of a residence to enjoy their retirement. There is also often the case of an overseas middle-aged or younger citizen who has decided to move to Costa Rica and buy or rent a shop, be it a bar, restaurant, or lodge, or any other small tourism-oriented business, allowing them to reside on the beach or the mountains and live off the income it generates.

Hotels and other lodging facilities also manage a portfolio of important foreign clients. At present, according to the Municipality of Pérez Zeledón records, the town has 23 hotels, 20 apartment hotels, 5 motels with more than five cabins each, and other 2 with fewer than five cabins, 5 guest houses outside the city and a mountain lodge. According to statistics from the Costa Rican Tourism Board (ICT), the supply of housing by Planning Unit for December 2006 ranked the South Pacific in second place in terms of hotel units behind the Central Valley alone. The ICT website also reports that in 2006 the county of Pérez Zeledón had 689 rooms in 42 hotels, ranking number 2 only behind San



José, the central county, and ahead of other counties with great investing value in the Central Valley such as Escazú with 572 rooms and 15 hotels and Santa Ana with 225 and 7 respectively. The country of origin of the vast majority of tourists visiting Costa Rica, according to ICT data for 1997, is the United States of America with 285,361. Of this, 3,920 entered by land through Paso Canoas, the border area in the south of the country, which connects Pérez Zeledón and other southern locations of the country of Panamá (cf. Bibliography, ICT).

Travel agencies, according to the records of municipal licenses for 2009 are eight, though this field study could not confirm that fact. Of the four that were visited only one, Selva Mar travel agency, has a website and hire bilingual translation services. Yoga travel agency, a branch of Columbus Travel company, which began in the capital San José, does not have its own website and uses the company's, which was designed and is customarily serviced by technicians in San José. The other two, Sunny Travel, a smaller and less busy agency located in the suburbs, and Viajes Alturas, neither has a website nor hires translators.

There was no surprise, as discussed previously in the field study, that the law firms occupy the top spot in demand for translation services in the counties of Pérez Zeledón and Osa. Nineteen of twenty sources interviewed stated that the legal field has higher demand for translators. Beirute (2008) stated that it was the law that "creó la necesidad de un traductor, ese primer traductor que surgió en 1854 y que se denominó Traductor General, en el fondo se podría definir como un traductor jurídico con fe pública "(p.35). In fact, this research project sought to collect and capture the image the general public has regarding this profession. With this in mind, professionals of different fields were consulted regarding their opinion on the translation and the translator. These interviewees, professors, statisticians, accountants, small business owners and so on, supported the notion that in the legal field translation should be a requirement if the firm's goal is to gain a foothold in this world of global competitiveness.

This finding is confirmed by a group of lawyers and notaries of the region. The lawyers, as in the case of Ms. Y. Jiménez Figueroa, assert that the failure to provide services to English speakers has limited to some extent the growth of her business. The main reason for this limitation is her not being fluent in the English language, and the idea that another person communicates with her clients makes her feel uncomfortable, as there are issues that are sometimes very personal and private. She adds that paying for the services of an interpreter or the translation of documents is an investment that few lawyers may afford (Y. Jiménez Figueroa, personal communication).

A novelty in this research is the place that Web site designing and developing agencies and publishing companies occupy in the demand for translation services. Pérez Zeledón is a relatively small community with a population of just over 140 thousand inhabitants, and commercially isolated from much of the Central Plateau. This was revealed by the Plan Regional de Desarrollo Brunca, of which Pérez Zeledón is a part. A translated version of a paragraph on page 73 of this document reads:

Brunca region is an area of recent integration into the national economy, its main feature being the formation of isolated and patchy sub regions with different colonization

processes, which generate various territorial and socio-economic inequalities within the region, and therefore with other regions of Costa Rica, mainly from the Central Valley.

However, it was found that at least three publications and two designing and develop Web pages agencies frequently employ the services of text translation. Paloma Alba and Asociados, which publishes the *Directorio Comercial del Pacífico Sur*; *Estrella del Sur* newspaper and *Caminos* magazine are three companies that distribute their products to the public of Pérez Zeledón and Osa. All of these publications frequently use the services of a translator to work on some articles and advertisements. The translator does all the work from scratch, i.e., takes the text in Spanish and puts it into English, or edits an English version done by someone else. The latter is the case of the editor of *Directorio Comercial del Pacífico Sur*, H. Morales, who hires a translator to "improve his translations" (H. Morales, personal communication).

Chameleon Studio and Zews are two local companies engaged in web design and have a long list of clients in Pérez Zeledón and the entire southern and coastal areas nearby. Many of their customers have requested the Spanish-English bilingualism for their pages, arguing that it broadens their business horizons, explained Sharon Chinchilla, Zews editorial coordinator. In late 2008, the same company launched a local newspaper *Perez Zeledón.net. The Newspaper*, which is a brother service of *Perez Zeledón.net* website, a web portal of wide circulation and popularity among the locals since 2003.

### 3. Conclusion

The counties of Pérez Zeledón and Osa do not escape the economic dynamism of recent decades. Globalization requires companies to diversify and join the world trend in order to expand their business and find success. And although tradition remains strong, in this case reflected by the legal field as the largest customer of translation services, there are other activities where the inhabitants of a small and commercially incipient region struggle to keep pace and go to the battle front. This has been one of the most interesting findings of this research and the researcher personally sympathizes with the efforts of those small companies that with clear and ambitious goals incorporate other professionals, such as translators, in their effort to procure an expansion of their services and products and the growth of their commercial horizons.

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## The Concept of Translation and Translator in the Districts of San Isidro de El General and Bahía Ballena

Jacqueline Araya Ríos<sup>2</sup>

**Resumen:** Este artículo proviene de un estudio de campo que se llevó a cabo en la zona sur de Costa Rica. Tiene que ver con el concepto y el estado de la profesión del traductor en los distritos de San Isidro de El General y Bahía Ballena, en el Pacífico Sur de Costa Rica. El estudio analiza los conceptos de traducción y traductor desde la perspectiva de los contratantes y proveedores de servicios de traducción en el área, los teóricos y la *Ley de Traducciones e Interpretaciones Oficiales de Costa Rica*. El propósito de esta investigación fue establecer cuál es el concepto de traducción y traductor que prevalece, pues esto también puede explicar la situación actual de la profesión en el área.

**Descriptor:** traducción y traductor, *Ley de Traducciones e Interpretaciones Oficiales*, estatus profesional.

**Abstract:** This article comes from a field study developed in the southern region of Costa Rica. It deals with the concept and status of the translation profession in the districts of San Isidro de El General and Bahía Ballena. It analyzes the notions of translation and translator from the perspective of buyers and suppliers of translation services in the area, theorists, and the *Ley de Traductores e Intérpretes Oficiales de Costa Rica*. The purpose of this research was to establish what the current concept of translation and translator is, for that may also explain the status of the profession in the area.

**Keywords:** translation and translator, *Costa Rican Act for Translators and Interpreters*, professional status.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Translation is a novel science when compared with other ancient sciences such as philosophy, pedagogy or physics. If we make a mental exercise on the great personalities that have shaped the history of humankind, it is likely that among the older or more cultured individuals their choices would point at Pythagoras, Socrates, Marx, the Lumière or Wright brothers, Marie Curie, Cervantes, Galileo Galilei, Jesus of Nazareth, Marco

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Polo and Christopher Columbus. Younger people may be inclined to indicate Bill Gates, Saddam Hussein, Madonna, Pele, Michael Jordan, and Lionel Messi.

Regardless of the field of preference and level of identification that would lead a person to propose this or that personality, we would have little success if we ask them to name a famous translator. Is that possible? Is there a famous translator in the history of humankind? We know of the existence of the Bible and other historical texts, but do we know who translated them? How did people of different languages use to communicate in ancient times? Is there a record of such activity in historical treatises and textbooks? The data on this are always either very general or null. The translator and interpreter, unless they have excelled for some other reason, whether the case of famous authors who make translations or as in the case of La Malinche<sup>3</sup>, have remained anonymous ever since.

Perhaps, for those of us in this profession or career, that anonymity is good. We take comfort in the idea that a good translation is one that does not seem to be a translation, one that goes unnoticed. The translator, therefore, must neutralize as much as possible his participation in the text; he is a conduit for others' ideas, not the author. However, as a result of our contact and communion with the translation activity, we know for a fact, too, the general ignorance that prevails in this profession in our country and more specifically in the southern region.

## 2. DESIGN AND SELECTION OF THE SAMPLE

In order to establish what the current concept of translation and translator in the area is, it was necessary to conduct a survey among buyers and suppliers of such services in the area. In short, they are the agents that provide the terms in which this activity is established, which in turn determines the status of the translator. The sample of the study population was defined by the researcher in 30 effective informants (20 buyers and 10 suppliers); however, the final number of buyers closed in 15. It may not be said that the sources were selected randomly, since there is no record of all the local businesses that hire translation services, which could allow for a random selection in a list of choices. However, the same opportunity to be included in the sample was impartially given to the elements of the population, and there was no deliberate preference from the researcher over a certain group of the target population.

It should be clarified that the number of participants is the total of individuals who voluntarily chose to answer the questionnaire, who were contacted by phone or email. Despite the limitations of time and some difficulty in arranging appointments for interviews at times that were convenient for both the interviewer and interviewee, an effort was made to obtain sources from different sectors of the community. However, given the homogeneity of the sample, especially the buyers, most of whom own small businesses, the researcher was satisfied with the number of participants and it is expected

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<sup>3</sup> The reader will recall that Doña Marina, known as La Malinche, acted as an interpreter for Hernán Cortés in the early sixteenth century in Mexico. However, she is mostly known for the betrayal of her people when warning Cortés repeatedly about the ambushes planned by her people against the colonizers (Baker, 2001, p.xv)

that the results achieved are generally representative of the employment status of the local translator and considered valid for this research.

The type of study done is inferential and through this the data may not only be described but the study also allows to make inferences of the results obtained in the sample to the rest of the population, leaving a necessary margin of error, what is known as sampling error (Gómez, 2005, p.18). The risk of error is the price to pay for the benefits in cost and speediness that the sampling provides (Gómez, p.8). The units of study (buyers and suppliers) were addressed by email, mail, telephone or personal interview. It is important, before delving into this survey, to review some of the most widely known definitions for translation and translator.

### 3. THEORISTS' DEFINITION OF TRANSLATION AND TRANSLATOR

Amparo Hurtado (2001) explains that "la traducción es una habilidad, un *saber hacer* que consiste en saber recorrer el proceso traductor, sabiendo resolver los problemas de traducción que se plantean en cada paso" (p.25). She uses Anderson's distinction (1983) between declarative knowledge (*knowing what*) and operational knowledge (*knowing how*) to conclude that knowing how to translate is primarily a type of operational knowledge obtained through practice. Hurtado adds that translation is done "*porque las lenguas y las culturas son diferentes ...para comunicar, para traspasar la barrera de la incomunicación... para alguien que no conoce la lengua, y generalmente tampoco la cultura*" (p.25).

About the translator, Hurtado believes that his main characteristic is to have translation competence, i.e., knowledge about language and technical translation since when translating texts he must "efectuar un complejo proceso mental que consiste en comprender el sentido que éstos transmiten, para luego reformularlo con los medios de otra lengua, teniendo en cuenta las necesidades del destinatario y la finalidad de la traducción" (p.41). However, in addition to knowledge of the language and culture of source and target texts, and being skilled in the transfer of meaning between these linguistic codes, the translator should know how to conduct himself in the medium in which he operates. His responsibility as a communicator entails him to be aware of the requirements of the job market in which he operates and to have the tools to overcome the obstacles faced (p.30).

For Peter Newmark (1988) translation "is a craft consisting in the attempt to replace a written message and/or statement in one language by the same message and/or statement in another language" (p.7). He argues that this practice leads to loss of meaning due to a number of factors and provides two cases: 1) overtranslation, when you increase the level of detail and 2) undertranslation, when you increase the degree of generalization. As for the translator, Newmark (1988) gives him a sixth sense, part sensitive, part intuitive, and "many times (...) during a final revision [of the translation] tells you when to translate literally and also instinctively "(p.4). The translator is, therefore, a professional as any, who must constantly deal with the complexity of choosing from several options, and like everyone else, enjoys the satisfaction of solving these little problems.

Proponents of the Skopos theory, including Katharina Reiss and Hans Vermeer, view translation as a functional act which must revolve around the role the translated text fulfills within the target audience, taking into account the needs and expectations of the receivers and the rules and conventions of the target culture (Reiss and Vermeer, pp.80-87). Thus their theory separates from traditional schools, focused primarily on formal and linguistic aspects of translation, to propose that there are other essential elements in this act of communication such as the culture of the user or receiver of the target text and of the client that made the translation assignment, and the role that the text will play in that culture.

Skopos theory emphasizes the need for the translator to take into account the contextual factors mentioned above, essential in translating literary texts such as medical and scientific treatises and other technical texts. Also, it leaves the translator to decide, as an expert in this practice, what role the source text will play in the translation process. The translator must make conscious decisions that are consistent with the function of the target text, and for every particular case he will establish a specific function that does not necessarily have to coincide with that occupied by the source text in its original context. Therefore, the translation professional is someone who knows in depth the circumstances of the source text and, according to the needs of the translation brief and the target audience, adapts the foreign skopos to the reality in which the target text will be inserted (Reiss and Vermeer, pp.80-87).

### **3. THE CONCEPT OF TRANSLATION AND TRANSLATOR IN THE LOCAL SCENE**

#### *3.1. Act of Official Translations and Interpretations (MREC).*

Although no single theory of translation exists and definitions are counted by the hundreds, it is interesting to consider what is conceived by translation in our country, and for that let us see what is established in the Bylaws to the *Ley de Traductores e Intérpretes Oficiales de Costa Rica* (Act of Official Translations and Interpretations) issued in 2002 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Costa Rica (MREC). In Chapter 1, Article 2 of this act, it is decreed that translation is the "expresión, en una lengua, de lo escrito o expresado en otra." It also clarifies that an official translation is "traducción de un documento del idioma español a una lengua extranjera o viceversa, con fe pública y carácter oficial, efectuada por un traductor oficial debidamente nombrado y autorizado por el Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto" (paragraphs 2 and 7).

It then remains to define what is meant by 'translator' and 'official translator'. In this respect the act states that a translator is the "profesional con conocimiento suficiente de la lengua española y una o más lenguas adicionales para trasladar de manera fiel, en forma escrita, los términos de la lengua fuente a la lengua meta. Es una persona de vasta cultura, con los conocimientos necesarios en gramática, vocabulario general, técnico, jurídico, literal o cultural que la facultan para desempeñar su labor" (Chapter 1, Article 2, paragraph 1). It specifies, in turn, that an official translator or interpreter is a "profesional dedicado a la traducción e interpretación, debidamente nombrado y autorizado por el

Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto, para realizar traducciones e interpretaciones con carácter oficial y fe pública" (Chapter 1 Article 2, paragraph 9).

The concept of translation proposed by this entity is very abstract, but its definition of translator is more detailed and is directed towards the emphasis he must make in order to maintain the fidelity of the source text. At this point the law argues that a faithful translation or interpretation is one that "es fiel reflejo de documentos o situaciones. Para llevarla a cabo, deben observarse y respetarse la forma del original, así como los signos de puntuación, los modismos y la redacción o entonación para evitar que se atribuya una interpretación o significado distinto del que debe tener" (Chapter 1, Article 2, paragraph 10). In these terms the figure of the translator is seen almost as a mirror, someone who is able to formulate a target text that resembles and reflects as closely as possible what is said and the way it was expressed in the original.

### 3.2. The buyers and suppliers' view.

There is some coincidence in what the buyers and suppliers of translation services think of the image of the translator, but it also differs from what is established by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Chapter 1 of the *Bylaws of Official Translations and Interpretations* tells of the spoken language skills and text type knowledge that translators must possess in addition to being well versed in world knowledge. Several of the buyers surveyed agree with this point, and believe that one of the tasks requested from the translator, in addition to translating well, is to make revisions and corrections to translations done by the buyers themselves or by others within the company. The translator is expected to advise and propose other linguistic turns according to the socio-cultural profile of the target audience, something that recalls the premises of the Skopos theory, in which the needs and expectations of the recipients are a central theme.

The buyers explain that it is important that the translator be well versed in technical language and have advanced knowledge in the target language, as their translations will be evaluated by native speakers of that language. The translator must be able to formulate a text that provides a fast and light reading; his writing and spelling must be impeccable. Moreover, they add that it is important that he be precise in the choices regarding linguistic and stylistic factors, so that the documents accurately reflect the meaning of the original. A good translator, according to the respondents, has the ability to express the meaning of the text as closely as possible to its meaning in both languages. Also they argue that as the journalist, the translator should know about many subjects and situations, so that his actions reflect 'savoir faire' and be able to do his job fluently. Even some respondents make reference to binding aspects of a translation, saying that an error of the translator could cause a legal problem.

For providers of translation services in the districts of San Isidro de El General and Bahía Ballena, their work involves, first, the command of the target language. Nonetheless, they argue that translation goes beyond linguistic knowledge. A person may be bilingual or multilingual and ignore how to behave in the face of a technical text, or how to navigate the stylistic scale levels, for example. Of these skills and knowledge writes Hurtado (2001) and she calls it translation competence (p.30). Her proposal is based on the translation model developed by Neunzig and Dams (1994, cited in Hurtado,



p.389), in which there are two types of knowledge: epistemic knowledge, referring to the bilingual quality or purely linguistic competence, and operational knowledge, which is one that distinguishes him from the mere language user and entitles him to use the tools and strategies to conduct his work professionally.

There is little consensus among the translators of the area over which model of translator should be implemented. Some believe that the best translator is one who has studied translation, since throughout his preparation he will have learned how to perform his work adequately and be able to offer a quality product. They note that in the job market there are many pseudo-translators, people who "do translations" because they "speak" English. This phenomenon generates a lot of unfair competition, for there are low fees charged for a job that obviously is not up to the standards of one that is done conscientiously. This situation causes all the translators to be measured with the same scale, especially in terms of payment, and creates profuse dissatisfaction and frustration among the translators who have had academic training in the field of translation.

Other respondents felt that a good translator is neither exclusively nor necessarily the one who has been trained for the job. Within this framework of thought lie most of the responses, being experience in the field the main requirement. Some a little more idealistic or philosophers call it 'life experience'. Others somewhat more realistic and practical agree that experience is what has enabled them to obtain accreditation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which in turn further strengthens their position in the job market. They criticize, in general, some of the university programs which 'launch' to the institutions of primary and secondary education 'professionals' in languages, who know little or nothing about methodology or language. It is understood, therefore, from all the criteria specified, that neither the degrees nor the credits make the professional. A good translator is someone whose performance speaks for itself and whose work is coveted and in demand in the job market, mainly through recommendations and not by advertising or self promotion.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

In this way, and based on the views expressed by the suppliers and buyers of translation services in the communities of San Isidro de El General and Bahía Ballena, it may be concluded that like theorists, views on what is translation and what is a translator vary from person to person depending on their experience in the field, whether it has been negative or positive, close or rather distant. In general, the vision the buyers and some of the suppliers have, especially those with the least training in the field, is as broad as that of MREC. It speaks of a process of transferring what is said in one language to another, of mastering a second language to communicate two receivers or groups of people who do not understand each other because of the language barrier.

As for the translator, the buyers see him as a facilitator, a 'supporter' in the area of communication for other businesses or economic activities of higher returns. In other words, his occupation is not considered a profession in its full range; it is a para-profession, if one may call it so. The person who claims to be a translator should master the basics of both languages, but little attention is given to how he acquired these skills or

knowledge. The image of the translator as an individual who has been educated in the matter and who ensures quality in his work is considered an excessive and unnecessary expense and, sometimes, even a non-existent resource in the region studied.

This notion does not neglect more specific indicators such as the stylistic features of technical texts, in which suppliers and buyers agree that the translator must specialize, for it is in these technical areas that there is more demand for translation services. They also agree on the need for the translator to have vast world knowledge, or at least be aware of the cultural environment of both the 'initiator' of the text and the translated version's recipients, so he can give an accurate and relevant criterion when considering the solutions to problems of cultural transfer. This cultural knowledge, both parties assert, can be obtained through a habit of intelligent and varied reading that allows him to stay updated on the political agenda, economic and social development of the country or region from which the texts and receivers come.

The translator is, in the opinion of those who are dedicated to providing translation services in the area bounded by San Isidro de El General and Bahía Ballena, a communicator, not necessarily with studies in languages, who serves on stable economic activities, mainly those which have experienced a commercial boom in the last two decades due to tourism and the internalization of trade, and provides help in the shooting down of communication barriers that hinder the daily activities of these businesses. However, due to ignorance of the general public about the existence of a degree in Translation and because the region's economic activity falls outside the Costa Rican capital city's ring, there prevails a common idea that translating is a hobby, a task that many bilingual people and professionals in other fields can do in their spare time, and therefore should not be so expensive. The effort and time involved in a well made professional translation is ignored, and the translator is still considered an individual whose livelihood comes from a different career, and who employs translation as an activity that generates additional revenue to his main job.

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## ANNEXES

### CUESTIONARIO 1

*Contratante del servicio de traducción*

1. ¿Con qué frecuencia solicita los servicios de un traductor en inglés?
2. ¿Qué funciones solicitan del traductor además de traducir? ¿Qué tipo de documentos solicita que se traduzca con mayor frecuencia?
3. ¿Solicitan algún requisito del traductor?
  - a. ser graduado universitario
  - b. tener certificación del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
  - c. tener experiencia

- d. tener recomendaciones
- e. probar conocimientos mediante entrevista personal
4. ¿En qué áreas/actividades comerciales considera usted que son más requeridos los servicios de traducción en inglés en Pérez Zeledón?
5. ¿Trabajan ustedes con material publicado en inglés?
  - a. documentos escritos (especifique)
  - b. páginas web
  - c. otros \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. ¿Quién se encarga de procesar esa información?
7. ¿Qué hacen con ese material/esa información)?
8. ¿Quién revisa/supervisa el trabajo del traductor?
9. ¿Qué opinión le merece a usted la profesión del traductor?
10. ¿Qué imagina/le parece a usted que un traductor debe saber/ ser capaz de realizar?
11. ¿Qué cualidades debe tener un buen traductor? ¿Cómo las ordenaría en orden de importancia?
12. ¿Cree usted que un traductor debe ser un buen escritor? Explique.
13. ¿En su opinión debe un traductor leer literatura variada? ¿Qué tipo de material?
14. ¿Conoce a algún otro traductor?
  - a. graduado o certificado
  - b. empírico
15. ¿Ha visto/ha recibido publicidad ofreciendo servicios de traducción?  
¿Qué tipo de publicidad?

¿Cree usted que la publicidad empleada brinda suficiente información sobre el traductor, el tipo de servicio ofertado?

16. ¿Continúa siendo la traducción un servicio o cree usted que se ha convertido en un producto de consumo?

17. Al contratar un servicio de traducción, usted considera (en orden de importancia):

- precio del servicio
- expectativas de calidad (toma en cuenta referencias del traductor)
- tiempo de entrega (cuanto antes mejor, no importa tanto la calidad)
- títulos del traductor que lo acrediten como tal (preferiblemente traductor oficial)

18. ¿Quién considera usted que es capaz de realizar una mejor labor: el traductor profesional o el profesional traductor? ¿Qué lo inclina a pensar de esa manera?

19. ¿Le menciona usted al traductor quién será el destinatario del documento traducido? ¿Revelar esta información le parece importante o no?

20. ¿Ofrece usted su colaboración cómo editor del texto traducido? ¿Le parece trivial o cree que no es su responsabilidad efectuar esta labor?

21. En el tiempo que ha contratado servicios de traducción, ¿cómo calificaría su experiencia al respecto, se siente satisfecho con el servicio prestado por parte del traductor contratado; qué cambiaría, mejoraría?

22. Defina en sus propias palabras los conceptos de *traducción* y *traductor*.

#### CUESTIONARIO 2

##### *Oferente* de Servicios de Traducción

1. ¿Cuál ha sido su experiencia como traductor en Pérez Zeledón?
  - a. ¿Cuántos años se ha desempeñado como tal?
  - b. ¿Cuáles son las áreas comerciales en las que se ha desempeñado?
2. ¿Se ha desempeñado en la traducción (medio escrito) o en la interpretación (medio oral)?

3. ¿Para cuál de las dos considera usted que existe mayor mercado en Pérez Zeledón?
4. ¿Le han solicitado demostrar su capacidad/habilidad para la traducción como requisito para algún encargo?
  - a. títulos que lo/a acrediten
  - b. pruebas escritas
  - c. cartas de recomendación
  - d. entrevista
5. ¿Qué tipo de publicidad ha empleado para ofrecer sus servicios de traducción?
6. ¿Se especializa usted en algún campo?
  - a. textos turísticos, jurídicos, económicos, médicos, etc.
  - b. páginas web
  - c. otros (especifique):  

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7. ¿Es usted graduado universitario?
  - a. ¿De qué universidad?
  - b. ¿En qué carrera?
8. ¿Ha escuchado usted de la carrera de traducción?
  - a. ¿En qué universidad?
  - b. ¿Está de acuerdo con el programa?
9. En su opinión, ¿es necesario estudiar traducción para dedicarse a la profesión?
10. ¿Qué ventajas le ofrece a un traductor el obtener un título que lo acredite?
11. ¿Sabía usted que el Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores es el organismo encargado de acreditar a los traductores oficiales en el país?
12. En orden de importancia, ¿qué considera usted debe poseer un traductor: estudios formales en traducción, acreditación por parte del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, experiencia comprobada a través de un portafolio de encargos bien realizados?
13. ¿Cree usted que un traductor debe ser un buen escritor?
14. ¿En su opinión debe un traductor leer literatura variada? ¿Qué tipo de material?

15. ¿Continúa siendo la traducción un servicio o cree usted que se ha convertido en un producto de consumo?
16. ¿Qué piensa de la traducción como actividad comercial en Pérez Zeledón?
- ¿Existe suficiente demanda de trabajo?
  - ¿Puede un profesional en traducción ‘ganarse la vida’ dedicándose de lleno a esta labor?
  - ¿Es bien remunerada esta actividad?
17. ¿Conoce usted a otros traductores de la zona?
18. ¿Cuáles son sus métodos/técnicas de traducción?
- emplea diccionarios especializados
  - consulta glosarios y bases de datos en Internet
  - emplea el servicio de consultas de traductores en línea
  - consulta con expertos
19. ¿Cuáles de los siguientes aspectos (en orden de importancia) le solicitan con mayor frecuencia para encargarle un servicio de traducción?
- precio bajo
  - calidad del servicio
  - entrega del servicio en corto tiempo
  - títulos que lo acrediten como traductor profesional u oficial
20. ¿Quién considera usted que es capaz de realizar una mejor labor: el traductor profesional o el profesional traductor? ¿Qué lo inclina a pensar de esa manera?
21. ¿Le menciona a usted al traductor quién será el destinatario del documento traducido? ¿El que le proporcionen esta información le parece importante o no?
22. ¿Se ha ofrecido o le ha solicitado usted al profesional que contrata sus servicios revisar/editar del texto traducido? ¿Le parece trivial o cree que no es responsabilidad de esa persona efectuar esta labor?
23. En el tiempo que ha ofrecido sus servicios de traducción, ¿cómo calificaría su experiencia al respecto, se siente satisfecho con el servicio prestado; con la remuneración obtenida; qué cambiaría, mejoraría?
24. Defina en sus propias palabras los conceptos de *traducción* y *traductor*.

## Predominant Stylistic Features in Persuasive Discourse: The Case of Self-Help Texts

*M.A. Jacqueline Araya Ríos*

**Resumen:** Los textos de motivación o autoayuda son un subgénero del discurso persuasivo. Dado que su público meta lo conforman personas con diferentes problemas emocionales, sociales o fisiológico, el autor de un texto de auto-ayuda procura emplear un estilo particular para transmitir sus ideas y lograr una mayor eficacia. El presente proyecto de análisis identifica y enumera las características propias del texto de autoayuda o de motivación con el fin de proporcionarle al traductor información práctica que le ayude a tratar y a solucionar dudas que puedan surgir a la hora de realizar su traducción. Se analizará la función que tiene el discurso persuasivo en la eficacia de la recepción del mensaje y la manera de conservarla o equipararla en el texto de llegada.

**Descriptor:** discurso persuasivo, el texto de autoayuda, estilo, forma, léxico

**Abstract:** Motivational or self-help texts are a subgenre of persuasive speech. Knowing that his audience consists of people with different emotional, social, or physiological problems, the author of a self-help text will use a particular style to transmit his ideas and ensure greater effectiveness. This analysis identifies and lists the characteristics of self-help texts to provide practical information to the translator to help address and resolve questions that may arise during the translation process. It will analyze the role that persuasive speech has on the effectiveness of the message and how to maintain it or reproduce it in the target text.

**Key words:** persuasive discourse, self-help texts, style, form, lexicon

### I INTRODUCTION

This study is based on the translation of several self-help texts for patients with addiction to alcohol and narcotics mainly. The booklets *King Baby*, *Denial*, *Releasing Anger*, and *Forgiveness* are the source of all the examples. These publications, produced and distributed by Hazelden Educational Materials, are tools used by rehabilitation centers in group and individual workshops called *bibliotherapy*. Through the assignment of short readings to patients, therapists promote reflection and awareness of the disease, and especially the desire to recover. The main objective of these documents is to provide the reader with a source of relief and guidance to solve a specific problem. Self-help manuals try to create awareness by using mostly short phrases that the addict can process and internalize. Testimonies and stories that narrate the experiences of addicts or former addicts, and especially the way these people have managed to overcome their



dependencies, are important components as well. To this end, the documents employ a colloquial register accessible to the average reader who has general knowledge of the language, and there is no delving into technicalities.

This analysis attempts to identify and list the characteristics of self-help or motivation texts to provide practical information to the translator to help him address and resolve questions that may arise when making a decision. It will analyze the role that persuasive speech has on the effectiveness of the message and how to maintain or reproduce it in the target text. The market has plenty of literature in the field of self-help and health, but there are few studies related to the translation process of this type of text. The general objective of this work is to identify and analyze the characteristic features in persuasive speech, specifically in self-help or motivation texts. However, due to the limitations of space, the specific objectives target the syntactic and pragmatic components only. This means that the lexical features will not be considered for this study. In addition to making an approximate list of the syntactic and pragmatic features of the texts, this research attempts to analyze the importance of maintaining an equivalent style in the target text.

## **II STYLISTIC FEATURES OF SELF-HELP TEXTS**

Motivational or self-help texts are a subgenre of persuasive speech. The self-help text, in its vocative function, is characterized by being written in a language that ensures quick and easy understanding by the reader (Newmark, 1992, p.65). Knowing that his audience consists of people with different emotional, social, or physiological problems, the author of a self-help text will use a particular style to transmit his ideas and ensure greater effectiveness. Several authors in the field of translation studies and linguistics have defined the concept of style. Among them are Mounin (1977), Crystal and Davy (1976), and Nida and Taber (1982) whose distinction of stylistic resources according to their function will be analyzed in detail.

Nida and Taber (1982) identified the stylistic devices of language. Their classification is based on the function each resource fulfills in the transmission of the message. According to this classification, four major classes of features may be observed in a written text, but only two are predominant in motivational or persuasive speech. The first feature is of a formal nature and refers to the arrangement of words, i.e., the syntactic constructs and organization of ideas within the discourse. The second is lexical and revolves around word choice. The characteristic they share is to provide significance with the least possible effort (pp.191-192). To this end, simple structures and known words with common and familiar combinations are used to allow the reader to understand (decode) the message with a minimum of energy and time. Using these strategies assures both the sender and the receiver maximum effectiveness in the communication process.

For the analysis of the syntactic and pragmatic features of the persuasive text or self-help that allow the conveyance of meaning with the least possible effort, particular cases, such as sentence construction, sentence length, and transitions, will be presented in the following sections. It has been necessary to make a thorough review of the possibilities of the Spanish language in order to find the nearest equivalent. These

specific cases exemplify the implementation of the techniques and methods of translation that were applied in the preparation of a Spanish version for the texts *King Baby*, *Denial*, *Releasing Anger*, and *Forgiveness*.

## 2.1 Formal features that seek effectiveness

### 2.1.1. *Simplicity in discourse structure and statements: the use of contractions*

The full document (the four booklets in the original language) is written in very natural, colloquial English, and one of the features to prove it is the frequent use of contractions. In the English language, economy is evident through certain constructs in which laws of agglutination, juxtaposition, parataxis and asyndeton are applied. López and Minett (1997, pp.72-77) and Vázquez- Ayora (1977, pp.196-200) discuss these phenomena. Similarly, there is in English a more semantic meaning in prepositions and a higher incidence in the use of contracted forms. Contractions in Spanish are limited to two cases in particular: 1) *a + el = al* and 2) *de + el = del* (prepositions *a* and *de* attached to the masculine definite article). However, there are other very common but not officially accepted phrases of regional character, characteristic of oral discourse, such as *pa'* (substituting *para*), *pos* (substituting *pues*), *vu'a* or *vo'a* (replacing *voy a*), and *'e* (replacing the preposition *de*; e.g., *vaso'e leche* or glass of milk). The use of these contractions is localized and limited to certain varieties of spoken Spanish and are not recognized within the standard of written discourse.

In written English, the use of contractions denotes a moderate degree of informality, and they are employed to establish a bond of trust and rapport between the author and the reader, which in turn increases the chances of greater satisfaction by the latter regarding the assimilation and understanding of the ideas presented in the text. In total, in the original text 269 cases of contractions have been documented. The English language has two main types of contractions: One resulting from the union of a noun or pronoun and an auxiliary verb (I'm, he'll, you've, etc.), and another one created by joining an auxiliary verb with the negative particle 'not' (isn't, haven't, didn't, can't, won't, etc.). There is also—and it does not belong to any of the above categories—the phrase 'let's' which in their entirety 'let us' only occurs in very formal situations. Eight appearances of this type were found in the text. The set of contractions used are summarized in table 1 in the annexes. The information in the table helps to observe the impact of such structure and to analyze the orientation of the text, be it present, future, past, and so on.

In the Spanish language there is no equivalent to the contracted forms of English, which is why the translator must compensate for this lack by resorting to other properties of the target language to ensure and maintain the level of familiarity and informality of discourse. For example, he may employ colloquial and currently, and commonly, used lexical units, while maintaining his structures simple.

### 2.1.2. *Use of the imperative mood*

According to Newmark (1988), vocative texts are characterized by the frequent use of modal or auxiliary verbs, the first person plural and the use of the imperative mood,

among others (p.64). The author uses these resources to make suggestions and to give the reader a chance to choose, but it does so through simple commands or orders. The goal is achieved when the receiver identifies the issuer's experience, ability, seriousness and understanding, which, in turn, provide the reliability needed to trust and accept what is proposed. Once this bond of trust is created, the author may suggest the steps to follow to achieve a goal; in this case, to overcome certain moral weaknesses that jeopardize a successful recovery from alcohol dependence or abuse. The examples below illustrate the use of the imperative in the TO and the way they were translated into Spanish.

• *Forgiveness* pp.10-13: Lists a series of exercises or routines that promise to help you forget and forgive resentments, and it does so through imperative sentences like the following:

Original Text	Translated Text
<i>Let go of resentment through the Twelve Steps</i>	Libérese del resentimiento con la ayuda de los Doce Pasos
<i>Use active imagery</i>	Utilice imágenes en movimiento
<i>Write letters</i>	Escriba cartas
<i>Pray for the person you resent</i>	Ore por la persona que le inspira rencor

Dr. Luis E. Sandí, director of Dr. Sandí Rehabilitation Clinic and author on the subject, explains that in the context of cognitive-behavioral therapy, and based on scientific knowledge of how addictions operate, the doctor, the therapist and other professionals working with drug addicts, make use of imperatives to very effectively modify specific aspects of harmful conduct in their patients. The message is conveyed in a clear, precise and direct manner and leaves no doubt in the recipient on the steps and decisions to make.

## 2.2. Indicators of cohesion within the discourse

The original texts use headings and subheadings to guide the reader through the message, indicating the beginning and end of each section and paragraph. This allows the reader to process information quickly, reliably and efficiently, which in itself is the main objective of this resource. Consequently, the use of lists and tables has remained in the same format in the TT, as this ensures the translator a text as effective in conveying the message as the TO.

*King Baby* is the booklet that employs more subtitles (24 in total, one of these with other internal divisions with individual titles), and includes five lists (on pp.5-7, 10-14, 20-21, 26, 27) of different elements. The author, Richard S., uses this format to contrast and compare attitudes and philosophies, presenting the reader with a clear and concise idea of the truths and myths, mistakes and solutions to this personality disorder, which themselves constitute the basis and main purpose of his message.

Dr. Sandí says the headings, subheadings, lists and tables are very useful to the writer who is working with the victims of drug addiction (not only the addict but also their families and friends), because by means of them discussion points may be organized quickly and efficiently, and as a result, you get a text in which the relationship between

paragraphs is clear and meaningful to the reader. He adds that the titles are even more practical when they are stated in interrogative manner, for the segment of the population who these brochures or manuals target are addicts who have a large number of questions. And the fact that paragraphs indicate self-doubt is attractive and at the same time, helps them save time and hassle as readers may consult and focus on areas or issues that concern them.

### 2.3. Indicators of relationship between statements and ideas

This resource is one that shows the connection between the various clauses and ideas of discourse, and in order to facilitate understanding it is important to indicate the type of connection that exists between the ideas (Nida, 1982, p.192). These can be causal, comparison and contrast, addition, illustration, exclusion, and so on. The first page of *King Baby* reveals the high incidence of this resource in the use of such phrases and conjunctions as ‘because’, ‘for’, ‘but’, ‘in other words’, ‘in doing so’. The author expresses preference for conjunctions that demonstrate a causal link and contrast (‘because’, ‘for’ and ‘but’—the latter is used three times on the same page), since the writer is trying to explain the reasons that cause an event or situation, and is, at the same time, contrasting the attitudes that make the difference between an individual who is in control of his impulses, and one who gets carried away as a result of an immature and insecure personality.

The Spanish version has retained all of the indicators used in the OT (*pues, ya que, pero, sino*—both equivalentes of ‘but’— *en otras palabras, y es así*), but has also assured an appropriate hypotactic level for the target language that will provide the translated text more naturalness and specification about the link and depth of ideas.

Original Text	Translated Text
<i>The term King Baby could just as well be Queen Baby, <b>because</b> we all probably have this infantile ego in our conscious minds.</i>	...término que bien podría ser la Reina Bebé, <b>pues</b> es muy probable que todos, sin distinción de género, carguemos con este ego infantil en nuestro inconsciente.
<i>In this pamphlet, we will learn to identify the infantile King Baby ego within us. Our childish personality traits must be surrendered before our disease can be fully arrested. The compulsive King Baby personality can accelerate addiction or lead to relapse.</i>	En este folleto aprenderemos a identificar al Rey Bebé que vive en cada uno de nosotros, <b>a fin de eliminar</b> los rasgos infantiles que impedirían detener exitosamente nuestra enfermedad, <b>teniendo presente</b> que la personalidad compulsiva del Rey Bebé puede acelerar la adicción o llevar a una recaída.

The second example in the table clearly shows how three separate sentences in the OT are constructed in one in the TT, using two connective elements (a prepositional phrase and a gerund) to join the propositions. However, more than simply reducing the number of sentences in the Spanish version, what the translator must keep in mind is to find ways

to make the relationships between the ideas of the OT more explicit, when in the target language a mere, literal translation would be unnatural and ineffective.

#### 2.4. Parallel constructions of subject and predicate

In both English and Spanish prevails SVO order (subject-verb-object), but in modern English this scheme is generally preferred, while in Spanish the variety of verb endings allows a greater degree of freedom in word order compared with English (López and Minett, 1997, pp.65-67). Typical examples of this versatility of the Spanish language is the omission of the subject pronoun, very rare in English, and the ability to place the subject after the verb, a situation that usually serves to emphasize, contradict or contrast any particular element in the sentence. Despite having more freedom, the Spanish language is still basically an SVO order.

Original Text	Translated Text
<i>This pamphlet <b>will show</b> ways to apply the principles of the Twelve Steps to help us express our anger directly. <b>We'll see</b> how denial of anger, not the feeling itself, is what undermines our relationships and serenity. (Releasing Anger 1)</i>	En este folleto <b>se expondrán</b> algunas maneras de aplicar los principios de los Doce Pasos con el propósito de ayudarnos a expresar el enojo directamente. <b>Veremos</b> que es la negación del enojo, y no el sentimiento mismo, lo que debilita nuestras relaciones y serenidad.

The above lines exemplify the inversion of SVO in the TT of the first statement of the TO and the omission of the subject pronoun in the second, as the Spanish verb, by itself, is capable of indicating the subject (first person plural), and the tense (future). García Yebra (1984) advises sticking to the order of the elements of the original when languages are syntactically and semantically similar. However, excessive uniformity of the structures should be avoided, for it results in a dull and unattractive translation for the target reader. He, likewise, urges the translator to be very cautious with fixed expressions of the source language, since they most likely exist in the target language with its own laws (pp.427-428).

#### 2.5. Short statements

Self-help texts in their vocative function, are characterized by being "escritos en un lenguaje de pronta comprensión para el lector" (Newmark, 1988, p. 65). The author of a self-help text knows his target audience is a particular group that mostly consists of people who need to resolve an emotional, social, or physiological problem. Thus, he strives to present to his audience ideas and suggestions through a friendly language of quick and easy assimilation, ensuring greater effectiveness. One of the resources that serve this purpose is the use of short sentences. While it is true that Spanish prefers subordination, leading to longer sentences, it is necessary to remember that sometimes the brevity of the statements is a stylistic feature of the type of speech, and it is prudent that the translator not make hasty decisions that might undermine the goal set by the

author and the effectiveness and impact of the message of the TO. It is advisable, therefore, to consult parallel texts that may guide the translator in the path to follow. The reader may consult the annexes for examples of specific translated passages.

### **2.6. Clear indication of participants**

According to Nida (1982), each language has its own system to identify participants in a speech and refer to them in the following statements; the more clearly identified the participants, the easier it is to understand (p.193). González Bedoya (1990) argues that the personality traits of the speaker that influence the effectiveness of persuasion are competence, honesty, credibility, prestige, authority and the similarity between speaker and audience (p.129) These are the factors that guarantee a greater or lesser degree of audience identification with the author and his ideas.

In the documents that have been translated, the readers are willing to admit the notions and arguments presented to them because they see in the authors people who have had their own troubles and difficulties; they are imperfect beings like them. By tapping the nominal use of the pronoun "we" and presenting themselves as victims of these moral weaknesses or as professionals with years of experience in the field, the authors earn the trust of their audience and lay the foundations for their ideas and judgments to be accepted and supported. It is thus clear that the discourse participants are people who are characterized by having faced the same situations in their daily lives, who have suffered or are suffering the same penalties, and who try to find a solution to their problems or other people's problems in the same way. The translation must attest to the relationships of affinity between author and audience reproducing the associations and situations that are established in the OT.

## **III CONCLUSION**

We can conclude that the main purpose of the translation of a self-help text is to maintain the predominant stylistic features in the source text when the intention of both is the same. The formal features, characteristic of self-help or motivational texts, seek efficiency and interest in the message. The features that were identified throughout this analysis are a simple arrangement of ideas, which may be observed in the clear transition between ideas (use of headings and subheadings, lists, etc.), predominance of subject-verb structures, mostly brief statements, an explicit identification of the participants of the speech, and simple language constructs. The translated version differs slightly from the original text in its use of somewhat more extended sentences and hypotactic structures, resulting from a more frequent employment of indicators. Since they constitute characteristics of Spanish, the translator must respect that.

The linguistic value of the audience in the self-help text is very significant because, as González Bedoya (1990) argues, the role of language as a means of persuasion (not just communication) determines the plasticity of many notions (p.96). This means that the audience of a text is as important as the author and the subject that is dealt with.

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**V ANNEXES**

**5.1 Inventory of the contractions in the OT**

TENSE	contrac. c/ not	contrac. c/ pron.	I	YOU	HE	SHE	IT	WE	THEY	wh- word	there	this/ that	TO- TAL
PRESENT	do+not		9	20	3		10	16	3			3	64
	be+not		1	1			8	3	5				18
	can+not		4	5			1	4	2				16
	should+not		1	2	1			3	1				8
	have+not		1					1					2
	ain't						4						4
	needn't							1					1
		be		18	10	3		43	13	4	5	3	3
	have+pp		2	4				6					12

<b>TOTAL</b>													<b>227</b>
<b>TENSE</b>	<b>contrac. c/ not</b>	<b>contrac. c/ pron.</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>YOU</b>	<b>HE</b>	<b>SHE</b>	<b>IT</b>	<b>WE</b>	<b>THEY</b>	<b>wh- word</b>	<b>there</b>	<b>this/ that</b>	<b>TO- TAL</b>
PAST	did+not				2		3	2					7
	be+not				1		1						2
	could+not		1	1			1						3
<b>TOTAL</b>												<b>12</b>	
FUTURE	will+not		2		2		3	5					12
		will		1			1	5					7
<b>TOTAL</b>												<b>19</b>	
CONDITIO- NAL	would+not					1							1
		would			1								1
		had	1										1
<b>TOTAL</b>												<b>3</b>	
IMPERAT.		let's						8					8
<b>TOTAL</b>													<b>269</b>

**5.2. Examples of the length of statements in the TO and their translation**

Original Text	Translated Text
Titles, subtitles or statements included in lists or tables	
<i>Detach (Denial 22)</i>	Apártese
<i>Keep it simple (King Baby 16)</i>	No se complique
<i>Use active imagery (Forgiveness 11)</i>	Utilice imágenes en movimiento
<i>What angers us? (Releasing Anger 5)</i>	¿Qué nos causa enojo?
<i>Set limits (Denial 21)</i>	Póngase límites
Questions	
<i>What's underneath the anger? (Releasing Anger 12)</i>	¿Qué hay tras el enojo?
<i>But isn't acceptance better? (Denial 6)</i>	¿No es mejor la aceptación del problema?
<i>What's wrong with me? (Denial 1)</i>	¿Qué me pasa?"
<i>How do I feel right now? (Releasing Anger 8)</i>	¿Cómo me siento en este preciso instante?

The comparison between longer statements was not as simple since many of the equivalents became part either of the previous sentence or the latter statement. As a result, it was necessary to use more space in order to show the examples clearly.

- ◆ *If you are having a hard time detaching from a person or a problem, maybe you should consider Al-Anon. It helps. (Denial, p. 22)*



Si a usted se le ha dificultado mantenerse alejado de una persona o un problema, los grupos Al-Anon le podrían ayudar si así lo desea.

- ◆ *Strive for gentleness, clear thinking, and love in your encounters with people. Forget perfection. (Denial, p. 22)*

Esfuércese por ser amable, claro y cariñoso al tratar con otras personas y olvídense de ser o esperar que sean perfectos.

- ◆ *By being overfriendly and charming, we try to win friends. We may be clinging. We often try to control or dominate. (King Baby, p.5)*

Quienes nos dejamos llevar por este instinto intentamos ganar amigos a través de mucho encanto y simpatía; somos muy dependientes y con frecuencia tratamos de controlar y dominar.

- ◆ *Try composing your affirmations. Repeat them. (Forgiveness, p.12)*

Intente construir sus propios pensamientos positivos y repítalos.

## CI-UNA: An Effective Conversation Language Program at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension

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**Resumen:** El valor que radica en la evaluación de programas de idiomas se dirige hacia el poder responder preguntas claves sobre el logro de objetivos curriculares, la efectividad de prácticas de clase, satisfacción de los sujetos (estudiantes, profesores, padres y otras personas interesadas), diseño curricular, idoneidad de materiales para la enseñanza, el progreso del aprendizaje, la institución, el ambiente y el desarrollo del personal (Richards 287). A raíz de la importancia de evaluar programas de idiomas, este documento presenta un reporte escrito de una evaluación realizada a un programa de inglés en la Universidad Nacional, Sede Regional Brunca llamado Centro de Idiomas de la Universidad Nacional (CI-UNA). Esta evaluación se llevó a cabo durante cuatro meses y siguió el paradigma naturalístico con un enfoque formativo e iluminativo. Se diseñaron cinco instrumentos para obtener la información por parte de estudiantes, profesores, desarrolladores y miembros de la comunidad. Los hallazgos dieron como resultado recomendaciones concretas para el programa.

**Palabras claves:** evaluación de programa de idiomas, paradigma naturalístico, enfoque formativo, inglés como lengua extranjera

**Abstract:** The value of language program evaluation is directed toward the answering of key questions related to the curricular achievement of goals, the effectiveness and appropriateness of classroom practices, satisfaction of subjects (students, teachers, parents, and stakeholders), curriculum design, suitability of materials of instruction, learning progress, the institution, the environment and staff development (Richards 287). Due to the importance of evaluating language programs, this paper presents a written account of an evaluation conducted to an English language program at Universidad Nacional, Brunca extension named Centro de Idiomas de la Universidad Nacional (CI-UNA). This evaluation took four months and followed a naturalistic paradigm in which a formative and illuminative focus was given. Five different data gathering instruments were designed and administered to the students, the teachers, developers and community members. The findings resulted in concrete recommendations for the program.

**Keywords:** language program evaluation, naturalistic paradigm, formative focus, English as a foreign language.

## I Introduction

Recent developments in the evaluation of language education programs have incorporated needs assessment, implementation and formative evaluation has taken center stage. It means that this type of evaluation is now directed toward the gathering of multiple perspectives in order to make suggestions and improvements. There is a significant change of direction in this subject. In essence, this shift explained that “Instead of looking only at students achievement-the product- critics were asking that attention be paid to what was happening in the classrooms” (29). Currently, a new perspective of education evaluation can be defined as “rather than forcing a choice between the two paradigms so that the methods available for program evaluation are limited to either positivistic or naturalistic ones, I have argued for the pragmatic stance of allowing the combination of both methods” (39). To do this, evaluators in practice should stop focusing only on test results but to pay close attention to the need to collect information about all aspects of a curriculum including design, teaching and learning processes; material of instruction and teacher’s and students’ variables.

By analyzing the information obtained from the curricular achievement of goals, the effectiveness and appropriateness of classroom practices, satisfaction of subjects (students, teachers, parents, and stakeholders), curriculum design, suitability of materials of instruction, learning progress, the institution, the environment and staff development, not only evaluators but the audience in general will be able to make decisions in order to improve the program under scrutiny. Brown (1995) stated that the value of evaluation is based on the possibility “to determine the general effectiveness of the program, usually for the purpose of improving it or defending its utility to outside administrators or agencies” (233). Based on these premises, aspects such as the effects of teaching methodology, use of the target language and suitability of the textbook delineate this evaluation. Along with the connection between testing and course objectives, the students’, teachers’ and managers’ perceptions are of great focus.

### 1.1 Main Goals

The main components of this program evaluation are *needs analysis*, *objectives*, *testing*, *materials* and *teaching*. As a start, the next objectives guide this evaluation:

1. To evaluate Centro de Idiomas, Universidad Nacional (CI-UNA) as an effective conversational language program offered to the community.

### 1.2 Specific Objectives:

1. To identify the congruency between the program planning/organization and the intended objectives.
2. To identify whether the pedagogical processes implemented in the class are consistent with the program requirements.

3. To identify if the textbook used aids the program expectations.
4. To provide administrators, coordinators and teachers of Centro de Idiomas, Universidad Nacional (CI-UNA) at Universidad Nacional, Brunca campus with a description of the achievement of the program's outcomes.
5. To provide suggestions and recommendations to the administrators to improve the program.

## II Literature Review

### 2.1 Why Program Evaluation

The starting point for this understanding is the definition for program evaluation. According to Lynch (1996), it is “the systematic attempt to gather information in order to make judgments or decisions” (2). Based on this premise, the main rationale for this type of evaluation emerges. That is, language programs must be in constant review, so that the learning process leads to successful outcomes. In order to guide students toward communicative competence, not only goals but also methodology, testing and needs must be under a magnifying glass that can reveal true facts, whether weaknesses and strengths, in any specific language program. Richards (2001) stated that evaluation of a program “focuses on collecting information about different aspects of a language program in order to understand how the program works, and how successfully it works, enabling different kinds of decisions to be made” (286). From this perspective, it can be stated that any evaluation has a final direction which is to make decisions.

### 2.2 Approaches to Program Evaluation

Four main approaches when evaluating a program are identified by Brown. He (1995) outlined the product-oriented, the static-characteristic, the process-oriented and the decision-facilitation approach. First, the *product-oriented* approach is said to be directed toward the evaluation of goals and instructional objectives. Its success lies on the degree to which objectives proposed for that program are accomplished at the end of the process. Second, the *static-characteristic* approach is carried out by outsiders who focus on examining accounting and academic records such as the number of books, capacity of classrooms, the parking facilities and the types of degrees held by the faculty. This type of evaluation is used in accreditation processes in many different institutions. Third, the *process-oriented* approach is considered to be a significant shift from the previous ones since it justifies the need for dynamism by opening to possibilities for unexpected outcomes. This evaluation makes a clear difference between formative and summative models. Goal-free evaluations takes part in this approach, it is explained as “evaluation in which limits are not set on studying the expected effects of the program vis-à-vis the goals” (Brown, 1995, 222). Finally, the *decision-facilitation* approach facilitates decision making by leading evaluators to judgment. As Brown stated, “they [evaluators] favor gathering information that will help the administrators and faculty in the program make their own judgments and decisions” (Brown, 1995, 223). This decision-making factor is what makes program evaluation outcomes valuable since a concise purpose is driven after the scrutiny process.

### 2.3 Positivist versus Naturalistic Evaluation

Two different designs are identified along the process of language program evaluation; they are positivistic and naturalistic. The positivistic design involves a summative perspective in which quantitative data is pursued. In here, testing students and analyzing their grades is an evidence of the effectiveness of the program. As Lynch (1996) explained “when the evaluation audiences and the evaluation goals require evidence of whether, or how well, the program is working, the traditional choice of a design for gathering and analyzing information is one of a set of experimental and quasi-experimental designs” (70). On the contrary, the naturalistic design sees program evaluation as a process in which variables and conditions can not be controlled. It supports the idea that reality is not objective, and that it can only be explained through an interpretation of the context in which events take place that is why tests are not valid sources of information to make judgments about a particular program.

### 2.4 The Elements of Curriculum Evaluation

Language program evaluation must be directed toward the incorporation of specific elements of a language curriculum. These elements are needs analysis, objectives, testing, materials and teaching. Needs analysis is viewed as the identification of the linguistic and social needs of the target population. To accomplish this, not only learners but also “many other sources and types of information must be considered in doing a sound assessment of their needs” (Brown, 2000, 20). Administrators are demanded to survey the needs of the learners in each community. Once the needs are identified, the objectives must be established; they should go together with the students’ necessities. Brown (2000) defined objectives as “precise statements about what content or skills the students must master in order to attain a particular goal” (21). In this specific language program evaluated, conversational needs for professional demands are identified; consequently, the objectives outlined in the program are merely conversational.

The kind of evaluation to be administered must match the needs of the course. Testing or assessment procedures must be delineated in accordance with classroom performance. As Hughes (2003) explained “if the test content and testing techniques are at variance with the objectives of the course, there is likely to be harmful backwash” (1). Summative or formative evaluation takes a key role since final outcomes will be a reflection of its effectiveness. In the course evaluated, testing takes a central role since quizzes and formal tests are included. Another element to consider is the instructional material used. Material development is a reflection of particular philosophies of teaching. Therefore, there must be a match between materials and methodology. As Brown (2000) argued, “material choices and use will be affected by what is learned from each of the other components of a program and will in turn have an effect of their own on those other components” (23). Finally, language teaching defines the methodology to be used in each curriculum.

There are many different methodologies under the Communicative Approach scope; nevertheless, three current types of instruction are the Communicative Language

Teaching (CLT), the Task-based Instruction (TBI) and Eclectic instruction. Though its theoretical principles are not well-defined, the Eclectic methodology plays a significant role because of its flexibility. Larsen-Freeman (2000) explained that in this type of instruction teachers who use it “pick and choose from among methods to create their own blend” (183). Having the program evaluated a communicative goal; the TBI is suggested by the administrators to instructors. In this methodology, students build communication through problem-solving, the negotiation of meaning and the connection between new and previous knowledge. Three basic stages are identified in this pedagogical process which are pre- activity, while activity and post-activity. Three main principles of this instruction are: the uses of information-gap activities, the class activities have a perceived purpose and a clear outcome and the teacher breaks down knowledge into smaller steps to complete tasks (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, 144-149). To accomplish this, instructors attend a training session before teaching.

### **III Validity and Reliability of this Study**

This section defines validity under a specific scope which is language program evaluation. Validity can be interpreted from two different perspectives: positivistic and naturalistic. For the purpose of this project both perspectives play an important role. A positivistic perspective of validity explains that results should be objectively perceived and achieved. As Lynch says “a hallmark principle of this paradigm is the notion that the reality that we seek to know is objective, existing independent of our minds (42).” Cook and Campbell’s contribution in this regards leads to the identification of four dimensions which are statistical conclusion validity, internal validity, construct validity and external validity. The extent to which each of these dimensions are addressed in this project would be explained later in this section. In contrast with this perspective, naturalistic validity comes into play. This perspective defines validity as concept in which reality, in this case results, depends on the particular historical and cultural settings where it takes place. Lynch expands this notion when explaining that naturalistic validity is “the degree to which the evaluator and the evaluation audience place trust and confidence in the evaluation analysis and conclusions (65).” Next, the role of each perspective is explained by making reference to the techniques used to avoid bias and threats in this project.

Though this evaluation is not positivistic in nature (it does not have an experiment), some threats to positivistic validity are intended to be ruled out by addressing them directly. They are low statistical power, instrumentation, selection, inadequate theory and evaluation apprehension. Low-statistical power is diminished by selecting an appropriate amount of sample, eighteen students, one professor and two developers in fact. Instrumentation’s threat is minimized by designing different instruments (questionnaire for teachers, students and administrators), piloting these instruments and establishing clear objectives per each one. Selection is ruled out by choosing the group at random so that it does not influence the results. Trustworthy theoretical basis supports this evaluation in order to minimize the effect of inadequate theory. Finally, evaluation apprehension is treated by carrying out thick and consistent observation to the subjects.

This evaluation is qualitative in nature; that is why validity from the naturalistic perspective takes a central role. To do that, Maxwell’s typology explained in Lynch’s is outlined. His contribution establishes valid evaluation by labeling it as descriptive, interpretative, theoretical, generalizable and evaluative. This evaluation is descriptive since the information provided from the data gathering instruments are well-explained; consequently, a factual account on information is presented. It is interpretative because students’ views about the program are captured through the classroom observations and the questionnaire. This evaluation is theoretical since a literature review is included in section two which supports constructs and concepts on the topic under evaluation. This evaluation was carried out in one group and due to the congruency and similarity with the other groups from this language program, internal validity takes place. Finally, it is evaluative since value judgments are implicitly included throughout this project.

Naturalistic validity is assured by including three assessing techniques which are member check, thick description and triangulation. Member check includes the repeated checking of constructions and findings with the participants (students, coordinator and developers) in formal and informal meetings. Thick description in different sections of this project verifies validity since detailed accounts on the findings and how they were gathered are included. As a final point, triangulation assesses validity by gathering and reconciling data from questionnaires for students/ teachers/developers, observations to the classroom dynamics and interviews with developers and other language programs in the region.

The next checklists were designed and completed to assess this evaluation’s naturalistic and positivistic validity.

### **3.1 CHECKLIST TO ASSESS POSITIVISTIC VALIDITY**

**Evaluator:** Lenna Barrantes Elizondo.      **Date:** June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011

**Program to be evaluated:** CI-UNA

Objective: This checklist aims to minimize the effect of negative constraints that can affect validity in program evaluation from a positivistic paradigm.

THREAT	QUESTION TO ANSWER	ANSWER		REMEDIAL PLAN What can I do to minimize/treat this situation?
		YES	NO	
-low statistical power	Is the sample size large enough?	X (it includes all ss in the course evaluated)		
-inadequate theory	Did I include sufficient theoretical basis to support the constructs involved?	X (more than three topics are)		

		included)		
-hypothesis guessing within program group.	Am I acting authentically? Am I manipulating the information?		X	
-history	Are there events surrounding the participants that can affect them/the program?			Difficult to know, some observations outside the classroom were carried out; however, there was no evidence of an obtrusive event.
-evaluation apprehension	Are the participants modifying their behavior?	X (they are more open to ask questions to the researcher, a less participative role should be played)		
-maturation	Has the population changed/growth?		X	
-experimenter expectancies	Am I influenced by my own expectations?		X	
-testing	Are testing procedures effective?			Does not apply.
-interaction of selection and treatment	Is the treatment influencing the evaluation of the program?			Does not apply.
-mortality	Is the number of participants who finish the evaluation consistent with the number of participants who started?	X		
-interaction of setting and treatment	Is the setting influencing the evaluation of the program?		X	
-selection	Is the selection of participants appropriate?	X (it includes all ss in the course evaluated)		
- interaction of history and treatment	Are previous exciting events influencing the		X	



	evaluation of the program?			
-resentful demoralization	Are participants in the traditional group being demoralized?			Does not apply.

### 3.2 CHECKLIST TO ASSESS NATURALISTIC VALIDITY

**Evaluator:** Lenna Barrantes Elizondo. **Date:** June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011

**Program to be evaluated:** CI-UNA

Objective: this checklist aims to minimize the effect of negative constraints that can affect validity in program evaluation from a naturalistic paradigm.

THREAT	QUESTION TO ANSWER	ANSWER		REMEDIAL PLAN What can I do to minimize/treat this situation?
		YES	NO	
Descriptive validity	Is all the information based on facts I can prove?	X		
Interpretative validity	Did I consider the participants' insights by capturing their opinions?	X (through the questionnaire)		
Theoretical validity	Did I include sufficient, precise and trustworthy theories and principles?	X		
Generalizability:	Can I generalize conclusions?	X (only to this course-level 1)		
Evaluative validity	Are judgments valued and considered?	X		
Triangulation	Did I enhance the evaluation by including multiple data sources?	X (5 different instruments were used)		
Multiple Perspective negotiation	Did I include a consensus among persons from different perspectives in relation to the program?		X	Due to time constraints.
Utility	Are the evaluation findings useful for administrators, managers, and other stakeholders in terms of the	X		

		decisions they need to make?			
Authenticity	Fairness	Did I take into account the multiple perspectives of the various evaluation stakeholders and participants?	X		
	ontological	Did the participants gain information?			Not all of them. Teacher and administrators did, but students did not.
	Educative	Are understandings and appreciation of the program increased?	X		
	Catalytic	Are clear decisions made from this evaluation?			Not yet.
	Tactical	Are program stakeholders and participants empowered by the evaluation?			Not yet.

This next section outlines the main elements included in the procedures and analysis of data of this language program evaluation. Aspects such as audience, subjects, data gathering instruments and interpretation of data are the main focus here.

### 3.3 Audience

The audience of this research is three folded since it involves administrators, coordinator and developers, and teachers of the language program Centro de Idiomas, Universidad Nacional (CI-UNA) at Universidad Nacional, Brunca extension.

### 3.4 Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension Administrators

Universidad Nacional, BruncaRegion campus (UNASRB) is a branch of Universidad Nacional. It is located in San Isidro de El General, the main district of Pérez Zeledón county. In 2010, professionals in the English department started a language program offered to the community. This program is named Centro de Idiomas, Universidad Nacional (CI-UNA).

### 3.5 CI-UNA Coordinator and Developers

CI-UNA does not require the admission test of UNA; instead, students take a placement test if they want to. Otherwise, they start the program in level 1. This program has increased its population since it started with three groups from the first level. This program takes two years; it is divided into ten courses (levels) which are taught in a two-month period each. CI-UNA offers conversational courses which aims to develop the four linguistic skills. Students attend classes five hours a week, one of them is taught in the language laboratory. There are different schedules for community members to

choose, depending on their needs. Students must pay one fee and buy the required textbook which is *American English File*. There is one coordinator and three developers, who are also professors at UNASRB, in charge of the project.

### 3.6 Teachers Working for CI-UNA

To work with CI-UNA, teachers must fulfill specific requirements. Some of these are: to have a graduate degree in the field, carry out a professional interview and participate in training on the Task-based instruction. Once, they are hired there are responsibilities they have to follow. It is mandatory to use the Task-based instruction, keep a weekly plan with a specific format, administer the tests, use the evaluation rubrics and follow the schedule in the course outline.

The next chart states the audience profile by delineating possible perspectives and expectations from each of the subjects involved in this project. This information will assist the evaluator to have a clear view of interests.

Table 2.1 CI-UNA Evaluation: Audience Profile

Grouping	Members	Perspectives and expectations
<b>Managers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program coordinator</li> <li>• Dean</li> <li>• Academic director</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsibility for reputation</li> <li>• Academic rigor</li> <li>• Prestige concerns</li> <li>• Success</li> </ul>
<b>Staff</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program developers</li> <li>• Teachers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional improvement</li> <li>• Program improvement</li> <li>• Success</li> </ul>

**Note:** This table was adapted from *The Elements of Language Curriculum: A Systematic Approach to Program Development* by James Dean Brown.

### 3.7 Evaluation Design and Data Collection

In order to gather key data, this program evaluation follows a naturalistic design. The main reason lies on the contribution this method brings to classroom scenarios. As Lynch explains, choosing this design helps evaluation since it “can describe the program from a variety of points of view” (107). Taking into account different perspectives is a feature characteristic of this project since it incorporates views from the teacher, the coordinator and developers, and students. The information will be recorded, summarized and interpreted in the form of words. However, the quantification of certain data will be displayed in graphs. In addition, a formative point of view shapes this evaluation. According to Brown, , its aim is to “collect and analyze information that will help in improving the curriculum” (225) and this is, indeed, one of the main goals of this evaluation since it schedules a stage devoted to give an oral report to administrators and

teachers, so that they reflect on the possibility to make decisions based on the results obtained.

### **3.8 Data Collection Instruments**

The data collection instruments designed gather data from each of the elements of program evaluation. In order to obtain data about needs analysis, the coordinator and developers were interviewed. Revealing information about program objectives is provided from different sources which are key-informant interviews and a questionnaire for students. In addition, a key-informant interview with the developer in charge of designing the testing procedures is included. Different structured non-participant observations are conducted to gather information about the pedagogical processes implemented in the class as well as the materials of instruction used. Finally, a questionnaire for the teacher and another one for students provide insights regarding the role of the instructional materials used. Next is a description of each of the instruments designed.

*Questionnaire for students:* it includes questions about the role of the material used, testing and the organization of the course.

*Questionnaire for the teacher:* information about the methodology implemented is the aim of this instrument. Data about the textbook and organization of the course are also included.

*Structured non-participant observation:* a reconstruction of classroom events focused on pedagogical strategies and use of materials will come out through these observations. They are structured since both are composed of a chart with specific descriptors and a tally record to quantify behavior. In addition, it is labeled as non-participant because the evaluator will play an unobtrusive role in the class development. To do this, the evaluator designed two scales. One of these observation charts aims to gather specific information to identify if the textbook used aids the conversational expectations of the course. The second chart is directed toward the collection of data to identify whether the pedagogical processes implemented in the class are consistent with the program requirements.

*Key-informant interview (developer):* its main goal is to gather information about the tests designed for the course. They are not accessible to the public.

*Phone interview:* four different language schools were called in order to get key data regarding CI-UNA's current accessibility for the community members. The main objective was to get other programs' characteristics to compare and contrast them with the program under evaluation. The information requested was fee, duration and materials.

### **3.9 Data Analysis and Interpretation**

This program evaluation consisted of analyzing needs analysis, objectives, methodology, the use of the textbook, testing, the use of the mother tongue and the course itself. In addition, perception solicited from students, teachers, and administrators is included as a salient part at the end. The purpose of this section is to provide information about the

results of this data analysis. The first part presents a summary of the coding used when analyzing the data. This code will be used in the graphs and matrices.

<b>TXT</b> = textbook	<b>+</b> = positive comment
<b>OBV</b> = observation	<b>-</b> = negative comment
<b>TBI</b> = methodology	<b>I</b> = interview
<b>E=OT</b> = evaluation, oral tests	<b>QT</b> = questionnaire for teachers
<b>E=WT</b> = evaluation, written tests	<b>QS</b> = questionnaire for students
<b>Obj</b> = objectives	

### Needs Analysis

In order to state that CI-UNA indeed satisfies the members of the community needs regarding accessibility and quality, information from other language programs in downtown San Isidro was obtained. Then, a comparison and contrast analysis was carried out. The next diagram summarizes information from all programs.

**Figure 3.1 Information about Language Programs in the Community**

	Monthly fee	hours per week	overall duration
<b>CI-UNA</b>	• ₡27 875	5 h	2 y. / 2 m
<b>Shakespeare Institute</b>	• ₡21 400	2 h, 30 min	2 y. / 6 m.
<b>Escuela Internacional de Idiomas</b>	• ₡40 000	3h, 30 min	2 y.
<b>Centro Cultural Costarricense Norteamericano (CCCN)</b>	• ₡44 500	3h	2 y. / 2 m
<b>Universidad Estatal a Distancia (UNED)</b>	• ₡20 000	4 h	2 y. / 8m

**Note:** This information was gathered through phone-interviews.

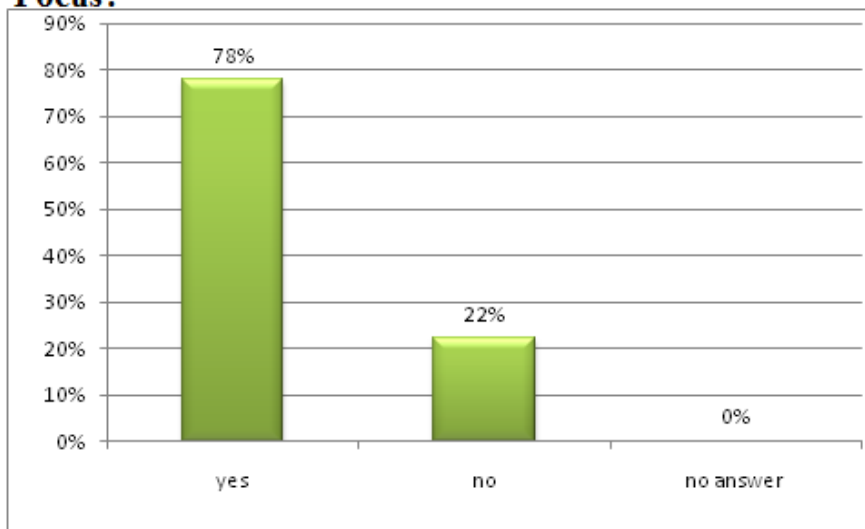
As this figure shows, all programs vary in monthly fee, hours per week and duration. Regarding hours per week, CI-UNA is the one that has more weekly contact hours with students which leads to the conclusion that students have more exposure to the language. Though UNED seems a cheaper option, it does not offer accessibility regarding registration possibilities since it offers just two courses a year. The course already started,

so people who are interested should wait until year 2012. When hours per week and monthly fee are contrasted between Shakespeare and CI-UNA, one can realized that even though the former is cheaper, students attend half of the time students in CI-UNA do. EscuelaInternacional de Idiomas is not only the most expensive program but also the shortest that makes it not a good option. Centro Cultural CostarricenseNorteamericano is also an alternative for the community; however, it is also more expensive and contact hours are less than the ones offered by CI-UNA.

### The Objectives

Developers revealed that the main objective of this language program is to provide the community with an accessible high-quality learning of English which has a clear emphasis on developing conversational skills. That is why, not only the teacher but also the students were asked about this issue. Concrete data were revealed. The next graph shows the students opinion about the matter.

**Figure 3.2 Does the Course Evidence a Conversational Focus?**



The big majority of the group (78%) agreed that the course has a conversational objective that is accomplished through everyday class performance. In contrast, a 22 % of the students did not share the same opinion and answered that the course does not have a conversational focus.

The observations carried out by the evaluator reveal that the course provides a high-quality conversational focus since students have access to a language laboratory in which speaking activities were performed. In addition, the linguistic level of the teacher provides students with challenging input since she has shown to have a high level of performance. The textbook used also gives learners the opportunity to practice the speaking skill. In addition, throughout the observations students were given the chance to make use of the target language in real situations.

The information obtained from six structured non-participant observations carried out is the basis of the analysis of this topic; however, answers provided in the questionnaires by the teacher in charge and the developers reveal key facts. According to the teacher and developers, the program suggests teachers to use the Task-Based Instruction (TBI) to everyday teaching. This method focuses on engaging students into a task for which meaningful communication is needed to attain a linguistic goal. In this methodology, students build communication through problem-solving, the negotiation of meaning and the connection between new and previous knowledge. Also, language instructors must make full use of the textbook. Based on these premises, the next eight events shed into light.

First, during all the observations the teacher used the textbook as main source of instruction; that is, the number of exercises done with the textbook exceeds the exercises without the textbook. Nonetheless, the textbook does not follow the TBI since it follows a topical syllabus with explicit grammatical and phonological explanations. Exercises are presented as isolated units and not as a step by step process that engages students into a task for which meaningful communication is needed to attain one linguistic goal. Only one class was directed toward the performance of a role play in which the teacher built schemata, and after that the students developed some exercises from the book that help them get input in the form of a step-by-step procedure. During the rest of the observations, there is no record of pre/while and after activities. Second, in none of the classes observed the teacher provided information-gap activities which is a principle from TBI. Third, students were usually asked to work in pairs. In fact, during all the classes observed they solved one, two or three exercises in pairs. This issue gave them the opportunity to use the target language to give authentic use of it. In addition, in all the observations the teacher provided students with speaking activities. Some of them were to create a picture story, to interview a partner, to present a role-play, to check homework and to answer direct oral questions. Fourth, students showed some constant use of the mother tongue (L1) in all the classes. They used it when solving pair or group work exercises, when answering oral questions and when they were off-task. Their low proficiency level might be the main reason for this practice. It is important to mention that the teacher constantly encouraged learners to avoid the L1 by explaining the class rules in English.

Fifth, deductive instruction of grammar structures was present throughout the classes. The theme was presented in the book and then the teacher gave one more explanation on the board. After that, students solved exercises in the grammar section of the book. The use of possessive pronouns, possessive adjectives, subject pronouns, simple present, the use of *get* versus *have* and the possessive “s” were the grammatical structures presented. Students reacted toward this type of instruction by paying attention, giving their own examples and taking notes. Sixth, students were constantly checking long homework from the workbook. In fact, in observations 3 and 4, students and teacher took more than 40 minutes to check it. In addition, the way homework was checked was monotonous because the teacher just read the sentence or question from the workbook and students answered voluntarily which means that not all students participated; hence,

not all doubts were clarified. They usually checked from two to three pages which took a significant amount of time in the class. Actually, a student commented that this aspect needs improvement since practicality is not clear. S/he said that doubts cannot be clarified when exercises are solved at home, and that there is not enough time in class. Seventh, the teaching resources available consisted of a CD player, the teacher's textbook, a classroom with desks for each student and the language laboratory. In this laboratory, students made use of the console to solve listening and speaking activities. While observed, they worked there three times. They work in pairs creating conversations while the teacher monitored what they did. They also used the headphones to listen to conversations and fill in the blanks. Finally, due to administrative decisions, people from different ages can enroll the program. Thirteen is the minimum age and there are no limits for adult people. As a consequence, in this group the multi-age phenomenon arises.

### The Textbook

In order to gather enough and reliable data about the effectiveness of the textbook used in the course, different instruments were designed and applied. They were the structured non-participant observation scales, the questionnaire for the teacher and the questionnaire for the students. The textbook used is *American English File 1* published by Oxford University Press. Next is a description of the corresponding findings. This information was provided by the participants of the course. Percentages show that students were not very sure about the conversational emphasis of the textbook since only a 28% agrees that the book has this focus. In contrast, a 39 % partially agrees, and still a 22 % disagrees. Their answers are an evidence of a disparity between the students' perception and the goal of the course since there is not a clear majority agreeing with what the conversational focus of the course. The teacher also provided key information about the topic. She said that the topics in this textbook are interesting, and that they offer enough speaking and listening exercises. She also answered that it gives communicative tasks for learners to interact. These findings reveal a contrastive perception of the communicative goals of the textbook in which the teacher and students differ. Students have a clear and common opinion about the significance of the book since all of them said that it is an important tool for the course development. This finding is supported with the data gathered from the observation scales which reveal that the textbook is used a lot. In all the classes observed, students and teacher solved exercises and carried out activities by using the book as reference. In addition, none of the students ever forgot to bring it to the class. Some of the exercises included in the textbook were fill-in-the-blanks, completion, error correction, true and false, matching (pictures and words/ words and definitions), reading and listening comprehension. The instructor promoted individual, pair and group work with the book; however, individual work was more frequent. She also solved exercises by working with the students, it means she read the instructions and asked specific students to give the answer. When doing this, she called out students at random.



## Testing

Testing was a key theme of evaluation in this research. The information gathered revealed positive and negative aspects regarding this topic. The data provided by the teacher unveil that there is a match between the kind of testing carried out and the topics, the class exercises and the conversational aim of the course. In addition, the developers and teacher agreed on the quantity of tests. They mentioned that students take four quizzes and two tests in which listening comprehension and speaking production are emphasized. The teacher is in charge of designing the test while one developer designs the midterm and final tests. According to the teacher, an aspect to improve regarding testing is the kind of item to solve. Students must take an interview and she thinks that it limits the students' ability to ask questions because they get accustomed to give answers only. The students also provided key data about the topic. Students answers revealed that most of the students (83%) agree that the types of tests they take follow the similar format, content and procedures that they carry out in class. Only 6% of the group disagreed and said that they are not. Learners' answers disclose the fact that the developers and the teacher direct testing toward the same conversational goal of the program, which highlights speaking and listening.

A negative aspect found regarding testing is the fact that the test procedures are not designed in accordance with the time available. It was observed that the teacher took too much when administrating an oral test (I). She started at 5:00 p.m. (an hour before the class started) and finished at 7:40 p.m. (one hour before the class was finished). Though the teacher assigned some exercises from the book, the class performance was not successful since students were constantly off-task. This test requires one-to-one proctoring which makes it impractical, and practicality is a classic criterion for testing a test's accuracy.

## The Use of the Mother Tongue

As a salient topic regarding classroom dynamics, the use of the mother tongue by the teacher deserves special attention. That is why, the next information provides a glimpse of the impact of its use during the observation process. Students' insights about the issue are also analyzed. When asked whether or not the teacher used the target language (L2) in class, the majority of students agree that the instructor used it while 17% of the class did not think the teacher used it all the time. This finding is supported by the data gathered from the observation scales that reveal that the teacher always used the L2. In fact, there is no record of Spanish use. English was used in all the stages of the class since the beginning when greeting, when giving instructions, when checking homework, when solving and checking the exercises, when pushing them to speak more in the L2 and when assigning extra class work. Most of the students believe that using the target language during the whole class may shadow English learning while only 22% of the class responded that it is definitely hindered. 17 % of informants said that using only English does not affect their learning process. Their main argument to be against the full use of the L2 is that they do not understand everything that is said in class, and perhaps they are not internalizing concepts and topics, as they could do, if some explanations in

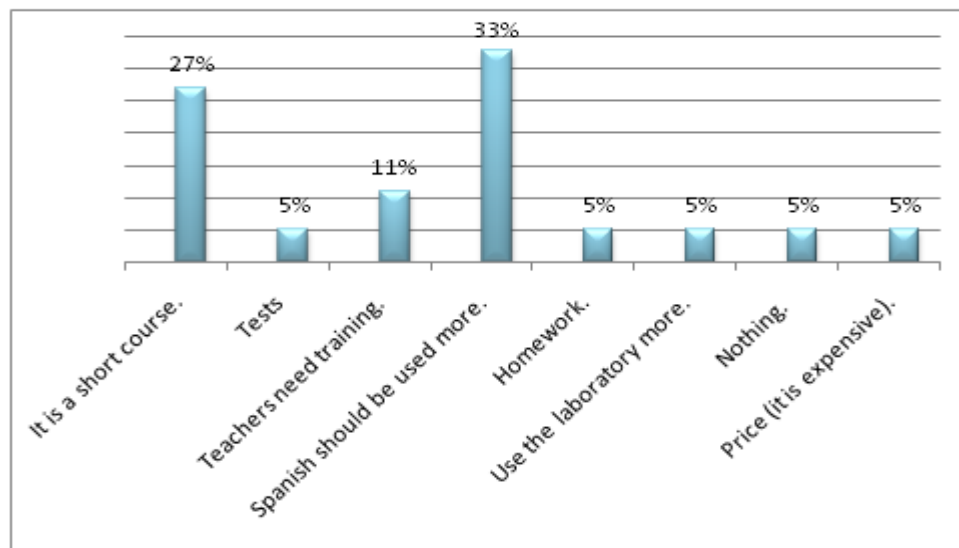
their mother tongue will be given. The teacher also said that students show some difficulty when following the book. This situation can be a consequence of a linguistic constraint that limits their successful performance.

When students were asked to give their opinion about whether or not the teacher should use more L1 in class, only 28% agreed and the big majority (56%) was not really sure. A low number of students (17%) believe that it should not be used at all. Some of the pupils' arguments to be in favor of the use of Spanish in the class consist of the necessity of giving clearer instructions since sometimes they do not understand the topic or what they have to do. They urged the need to provide some L1 explanations at the beginning levels of language instruction which is the case of CI-UNA 1. On the contrary, students who agree with using only English answered that this is the only way to learn faster and better. In addition to the informants' answers, it was observed during classes that some students were always asking others for clarification or guidance because they did not understand the steps to follow.

## The Course

The next analysis presents general aspects of the program that according to the students, teacher and developers need to be improved. The questionnaires are the primary source of data gathering in this section of this evaluation.

**Figure 3.3 Aspects to Improve**



**Figure 3.3** This information was obtained from the students' questionnaire.

Since this was an open-ended question, students' answers vary. However, similar opinions were given. First, many of the students believed that Spanish should be used more in order to improve the program. Next, they agree that it is a really short course and that time is serious constraint in their learning. Also, 11% of the students said that the

teacher needs specialized training. The rest of the informants said that homework need to be redefined, that they should use the laboratory more, and that it is an expensive course. Only 5 % of the students responded that the course does not require any improvement. When the informants were asked about the price specifically, the majority of students (67%) said that it is not an expensive course since it is accessible. On the contrary, 33% of them believed that the course is not affordable. In fact, they mentioned that the price was higher this period and that perhaps they would not be able to continue with the program. One student said that for people who do not work it is hard to pay the fee. Developers also revealed salient data regarding some of the improvements the course and the program require. They think that among the aspects to improve there is a need to train teachers in the way they should handle the textbook effectively. Also, they think that developers need more information regarding paperwork procedures and managing requirements since they have never gotten any administration training. In addition, they identified a need to restructure testing procedures since the items suggested (the interview) took about three hours and a half. This idea is reinforced by one of the teacher’s comments that shed light into the disadvantages of testing.

### The Subjects

This section systematizes information previously mentioned to uncover in a clearer way the subjects’ opinion about themes under evaluation. Information provided by the subjects reveals similarities and differences in opinion. In order to have a better understanding of their position about the different topics evaluated, the next matrices will be displayed and interpreted. The coding included at the beginning of this chapter is a must so that the connections in this section are understood.

Table 3.2 Effects Matrix: CI-UNA Project Evaluation

AS SEEN BY	OBJECTIVES	PROGRAM	TESTING
<b>STUDENTS</b>	+ 78% of students agree it has a conversational emphasis	- Spanish should be used more - it is not accessible (\$)	+ integrative tests (OT/WT) +connection between what is done in class
<b>TEACHER</b>	+ they match with testing, methodology and the TXT	- it needs improvement	- tests take too long - in I, students only answer questions
<b>DEVELOPERS</b>	+ high-quality courses + accessible courses for the community (\$) + conversational emphasis	+ it is fulfilling their expectations - it needs some improvement (testing, administration and teacher training)	+ 4 quizzes, 2 tests + speaking emphasis - tests take too long

Similarities encompass subjects' opinions when they mentioned that tests take too long when administrated. Also, they agreed when addressing the conversational focus of the course, and when showing consciousness about the need for improvement. A remarkable difference is in evidence when students and developers contradict their opinion about the price. Some learners said that it is an expensive program while authorities argued that it is accessible for the community. Students and teacher also share their ideas regarding the connection between testing and class work because both embed a conversational focus. While some students think it is not an accessible course, developers agree that it is.

Table 3.3 Effects Matrix: CI-UNA Project Evaluation

AS SEEN BY	TEXTBOOK	METHODOLOGY	USE OF THE TARGET LANGUAGE
STUDENTS	+ it is significant for the course + They like the book +it has a conversational focus (61%)	+ speaking is practiced a lot	-It hinders class performance and learning + it is necessary to have full contact (no Spanish)
TEACHER	+ enough conversational focus -Too fast (ss have difficulty following the steps)	+connection between methodology and the textbook - contradiction between the course obj and the TXT	+/- uses the target language all the time
DEVELOPERS	-teachers need training on how to use it	+ teachers must follow the TBI	

Some of the similarities identified are that teachers and students agree with the conversational focus of the book. Also, they said that there is a connection among the textbook, the methodology used and the speaking practices performed in class. There is a difference in opinion in the informants. They have a different perception about the use of the target language. Some believed they should use it all the time while others answered that they need some Spanish in key steps during the learning process. This same issue was observed, and it showed that some learners did not have any problem in understanding; meanwhile, other pupils needed help from another student. In addition, the teacher believed that the book is difficult to follow due to its organization, but the majority of students like it.

## Recommendations

This evaluation has denoted issues in need of improvement. In this final section, the evaluator outlines a set of recommendations. First, it is recommended to include more information in the brochure distributed to the community since it includes vague details.

Second, a restructuration of the methodology used must be considered. To shift from the TBI to the CLT seems a good option because the book used has a clear match with the CLT. The CLT “aims broadly to apply the theoretical perspective of the Communicative Approach by making communicative competence the goal of language teaching” (Larsen Freeman 121). This principle is in accordance with the goals of CI-UNA. Changing the book is not a good choice because it has shown to satisfy the conversational needs of the course.

Another recommendation is to ask the teacher to use more body language and to reformulate information given in the class to reach low-proficient learners. It was noticed that those students are at a disadvantage because they do not understand simple classroom instructions. Then, if easy instructions were not grasped, it is clear that more complex explanations are neither understood. Consequently, the teacher needs to switch naturally to simplify input. Though students recommended using the mother tongue in certain circumstances, it will be better to avoid its use and reinforce the negotiation of meaning to attain all students’ understanding. Another pedagogical recommendation is to use different grouping techniques so that students are forced to mingle with other classmates. It was observed that learners tended to sit next to the same people and in the same place all the time.

It is also recommended to consider students’ age when organizing groups. The multi-age phenomenon can hinder the learning process. Whether students are too young to assimilate structures or learners are too old to receive nurtured instruction. Adults are able to handle linguistic metalanguage because of their intellectual capacity. They can also concentrate for an extensive period of time while teenagers are at a transition stage in which their attention span can still be short. As Brown explains “adults have superior cognitive abilities that can render them more successful in certain classroom endeavors” (90); in contrast, teenagers surrounding factors like ego and self-esteem are different; consequently, “care must be taken not to insult them with stilted language or to bore them with overanalysis” (92). Based on this premise, age differences must be a determiner to place students into specific groups.

It is also recommended to schedule a training session with OUP representatives. It is known that they train teachers on how to use the textbook successfully and to take advantage of all the elements of the book pack. This multipack includes student book, workbook with MultiROM, teacher’s book, videos, class audio CD, test generator and a website. This session should be directed not only to teachers but also to the developers, so that they can train future teachers.

Another recommendation is directed toward the duration of each course. After analyzing the course outline and its corresponding topics, it is concluded that the course is too short to teach all the topics included. An alternative choice would be to shorten the list of topics; in that way, the teacher will be free to devote more time to reinforce complex aspects, and students will not feel pushed to finish the mandatory topics.

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#### **Author's biography**

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## The Value of a Good Start in the EFL Classroom

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**Resumen:** EL aprendizaje exitoso va de la mano con la motivación y disposición de los estudiantes. Con el fin de maximizarlo, los profesores deben de sacar el máximo partido de la experiencia de clase a través de actividades motivadoras. Los primeros minutos de la clase pueden hacer una gran diferencia en la actitud de los estudiantes hacia los diferentes retos lingüísticos. Albert Einstein una vez dijo “La enseñanza debe ser tal que lo que se ofrece se percibe como un regalo valioso y no como un deber difícil”. Sus palabras retan a los profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera en la medida en que las actividades de clase deben de ser presentadas de manera tal que se perciban como una valiosa oportunidad. Las actividades de inicio son indudablemente una alternativa para afianzar el aprendizaje y fomentar la motivación. Este estudio investiga las percepciones de los profesores y el uso de estas actividades en la clase de inglés como lengua extranjera en la Universidad Nacional, Sede Regional Brunca, campus Pérez Zeledón. También analiza las percepciones de los estudiantes sobre los efectos de iniciar la clase con una actividad lingüística creativa y atractiva. A raíz de la información obtenida de cuestionarios y un grupo focal se propone una serie de actividades flexibles que pueden ser modificadas para ser implementadas en cualquier clase de inglés proveyendo así a los profesores con una herramienta para promover un ambiente áulico motivador.

**Palabras claves:** motivación, actividad lingüística, actividades de inicio, inglés como lengua extranjera

**Abstract:** Successful learning goes hand in hand with students’ willingness and motivation. In order to maximize students’ learning, teachers need to get the most out of the classroom experience through motivational activities. The very first minutes of a class can make a difference in students’ attitude toward linguistic challenges. Albert Einstein once said “Teaching should be such that what is offered is perceived as a valuable gift and not as a hard duty.” His words challenge EFL language teachers inasmuch classroom activities should actually be

presented in a way that students perceive it as a valuable opportunity to learn to avoid the idea of learning as a hard endeavor. Warm-ups and class starters are undoubtedly alternatives to support pupils' learning and foster motivation. This study investigates teachers' perceptions and use of class starters at Universidad Nacional, Brunca extension, Pérez Zeledón campus. It also analyzes students' insights regarding the effects of starting the class with a creative and catchy linguistic activity. Based on the results gathered through questionnaires and a focus group, a practical set of flexible class starters that can be modified is proposed as a tool to promote a motivational atmosphere in the classroom.

**Keywords:** motivation, warm-up, linguistic activity, EFL

## I Introduction

The teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) has evolved through the years. The last decades have witnessed significant changes in classroom dynamics in which students' motivation has a key role. From curriculum development to methodology, changes have reconfigured and shaped language instruction to identify and satisfy learners' affective, social and linguistic needs. It was in the early 70s that the revolutionary Communicative Approach shed into light widening instructors' and curriculum developers' views. This approach sprung up the proposition that language is communication; hence, new methodologies should direct instruction toward effective communicative outcomes rather than just grammar-based models. Those changes made clear that learners were no longer blank slates who needed to be filled with knowledge, but builders of their own linguistic performance. This reconceptualization had a profound effect on classroom dynamics. Language education moved from traditional grammar-oriented practices in which learners answered rote paper-and-pencil exercises towards using communicative language activities as the core units of teaching. Additionally, language games are identified as motivating activities that generate curiosity, interest and a positive attitude toward learning.

### 1.2 Research Questions

1. Which class starters are EFL teachers using at Universidad Nacional, Brunca extension?
2. Which are the benefits of starting the class with a motivational activity?
3. What class starters can be suggested to enhance a positive environment and interactive language learning?
4. What materials can be recommended to implement class starters?

### 1.3 General Objective:

To establish the contribution of class starters to the linguistic development of EFL students of the English Teaching Major and the Associate's Program in English at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension in Pérez Zeledón



#### 1.4 Specific Objectives:

1. To identify the type of class starters implemented in the language English programs at Universidad Nacional, Brunca extension.
2. To determine possible benefits of starting the class with a motivational activity.
3. To suggest a set of class starters to enhance a positive class environment and interactive language learning.
4. To recommend EFL instructors material for the development of different class starters.

## II Literature Review

Teaching a foreign language has many implications. Through the years, linguists, researchers and teachers have given important contributions to the field of teaching methodologies. This section provides theoretical derivations that shape current practices in an attempt to reach communication in the EFL classroom.

### 2.1 The Communicative Approach

An approach refers to the theories and principles about the nature of language and language learning behind classroom practices. Approaches state the way people learn a language and delineate the path to follow for instruction. In such a case the Communicative Approach (CA) which emphasizes that in language learning communicative competence is the desired goal. CA promotes students' communication in the target language by negotiating meaning in a process that involves linguistic forms, meaning and functions. To understand this approach in depth, it is important to review general principles. Brown (2007) outlined some general ones as follows:

Language learning is learning to communicate. Any device that helps the learners is accepted-varying according to their age, interest, etc. The target linguistic system is learned through the process of struggling to communicate. Teachers help learners in any way that motivates them to work with the language. Language is often created by the individual through trial and error. (p. 49)

Based on these premises, it is concluded that classroom practice should provide opportunities to rehearse real-life situations so that students can develop communicative strategies that are required outside the school setting. The provision of real-life classroom experiences and communicative activities guarantees learner centeredness in which students are recognized as active participants who take a central role in their learning process. Additionally, when practicing these types of activities, pupils can see the direct benefit of learning.

While traditional approaches focus on accuracy, the CA focuses on communication. Consequently, students and teachers grasp the idea that being understood takes precedence over correct grammar. A fine-tune process of grammatical structures comes in a later learning stage though. It comes into play the belief that an emphasis on engaging learners in more useful and authentic language rather than repetitive phrases or grammar patterns may bring greater linguistic development. Given language learners real-life

classroom experiences, teachers need to use authentic activities and materials more than they would with traditional settings. Authenticity then takes center stage in this context.

## 2.2 Reaching Authenticity in the Classroom

One key principle of communicative methodologies is the use of authentic materials in the classroom. A classification of authentic materials is usually limited to newspaper and magazine articles. However, the concept also entails songs, web pages, radio and TV broadcasts, films, leaflets, flyers and posters that is to say anything created in the target language and used unedited in the classroom. Larsen-Freeman (2000) summed the assertive contribution of authenticity by determining it helps “to overcome the typical problem that students cannot transfer what they learn in the classroom to the outside world and to expose students to natural language in a variety of situations” (p.132). But authenticity goes beyond the mere use of particular material, as Mishan (2005) summarized “Use of authentic materials does not imply that tasks will be authentic [...] it is what trainees or students DO that counts (cited in Arnold, 1991, 238)”. It is assumed then, that authentic teaching/learning is reached inasmuch materials and classroom activities portray situations in the outside world.

There is no doubt the classroom will always be an artificial setting; however, in EFL contexts, it is almost always the only source of interaction and input. Under this circumstance, reaching authenticity poses a challenge for teachers. If they are to foster natural language, they will need to find ways to predict real-life situations students may encounter and provide tasks accompanied by material that guide them to be able to transfer classroom practice to these situations. Once learners realize they are equipped with language tools to satisfy social demands, their motivation will increase and in that event their internalization of language is boosted.

## 2.3 Motivation

Motivation takes a central role in the language classroom. Not all students in a group have the same rate and type of motivation. Students have different reasons to be in a language class. For instance, some may be there because their parents or the educational system say so, like in the case of children and teenagers in school or university students taking required courses for a degree. However, there are other situations in which learners are committed to learn a foreign language to satisfy certain demands. Ainslie (2010) explores the concept of instrumental motivation by establishing it as “a practical reason for learning” (p. 3). A high standard of living for ones’ family and job opportunities are some of the demands faced by learners. In addition to these contributions, Borton (1995) gave a more detailed conception of motivation by defining instrumental motivation as a determiner of students’ success.

Learning investment is delineated as a possible generator of students’ interest in getting access to resources that privilege language speakers have (p. 17). She expanded this idea by adding:

The conception of instrumental motivation generally presupposes a unitary, fixed, and ahistorical language learner who desires access to material resources that are

the privilege of target language speakers. In this view, motivation is a property of the language learner-a fixed personality trait. The notion of investment, on the other hand, attempts to capture the relationship of the language learner to the changing social world. (p.17)

Motivation is a complex area for teachers since teaching choices weigh heavily on their shoulders. Perhaps the most useful perspective is to identify what is behind each student to focus on providing enhancing experiences. EFL teachers under the CA approach should pursue to engage students' interest and motivation to participate in communicative activities effectively. One way to incorporate these practices and at the same time encourage learning is through games.

#### **2.4 The Role of Games in the Classroom**

Using games in the classroom is far to be a controversial issue. Currently, language instructors are aware of the contributions of providing authentic situations where students can use the target language of the lesson in less formal performance. At a linguistic level, games promote spontaneous interaction to solve problems and face challenges. They allow opportunities to assess learners' performance in context which will put in evidence their true knowledge as Larsen-Freeman (2000) ascertained "Games are important because they have certain features in common with real communicative events (p.126)". When participating in a game, students need to think fast and accurate to succeed. Consequently, they resort to structures and rules in their language system to come up with immediate answers. This situation helps the teacher to monitor weaknesses and strengths that can be addressed in future classes. At an affective level, when the class starts with anxiety-reducing games, teachers find the students more motivated to learn. Reducing negative feelings in the EFL classroom assures successful learning experiences. Krashen's contribution to the subject reveals that emotions such as anxiety and boredom interfere with the second language acquisition process. Those feelings function as a filter between the speaker and the listener which reduces the amount of input the listener internalizes. This is known as the Affective Filter Hypothesis which also states that this obstruction can be reduced by enlivening interest, providing low anxiety environments and boosting self-esteem (Krashen, 2003, 140).

The process of choosing the right game should not be understated; indeed, it implies a thoughtful consideration of students' age, linguistic level, and group size. Ersöz (2000) outlines a blueprint to use games in the EFL classroom. He stated that:

- games should be regarded as supplementary activities. The whole syllabus should not be based on games only,
- when choosing a game the teacher should be careful to find an appropriate one for the class in terms of language and type of participation.
- Once the game has begun, the teacher should not interrupt to correct mistakes in language use.
- The teacher should not compel an individual to participate. Forcing students to participate usually does not have successful results,

- A game which looks wonderful on the paper may not work in the actual classroom setting. It is tiring or boring, it should be stopped.
- Give clear instructions (p.1).

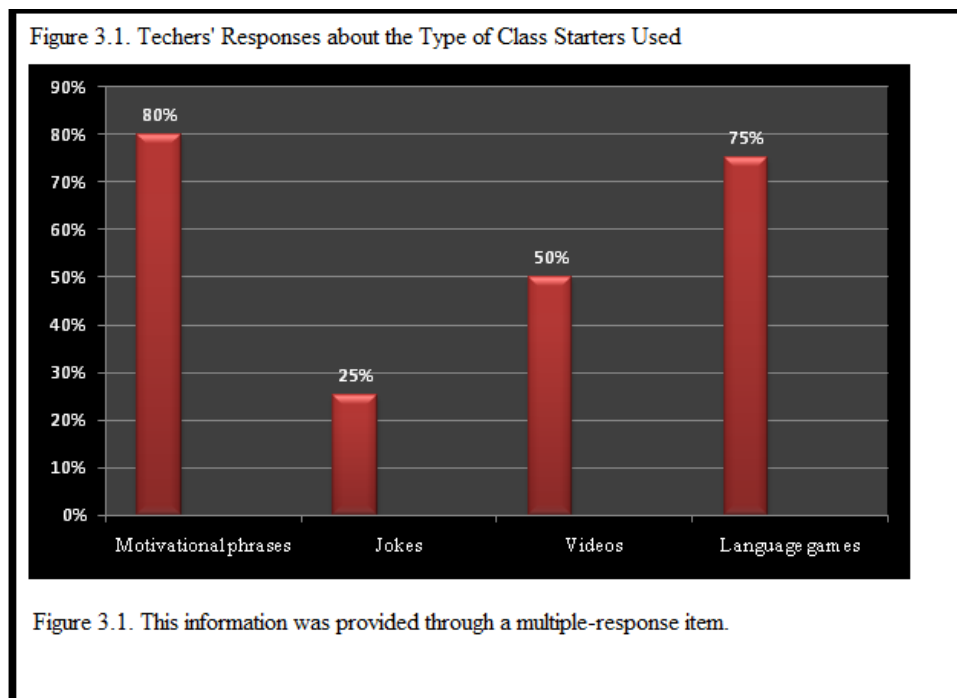
Games in the EFL classroom make their greatest contribution to teaching and learning by suggesting that teachers can expand their repertoire of class tools beyond the typical activities predominantly used to test achievement. In doing so, a broad range of motivating experiences can awaken pupils' enthusiasm which at the short and long term will satisfy both teachers' and students' linguistic expectations.

### 3 Implementation of Class Starters and Warm-ups

In this study, six professors from the English teaching major and the Associate's Program in English completed a questionnaire to gather data about current practice about the subject, their responses revealed key information. Additionally, the data from the students were garnered through one questionnaire answered by 20 pupils in the English Teaching Major and the Associate's Program in English and the participation of ten students in a focus group (annex 2).

#### 3.1 Teachers' Perceptions and Use of Motivational Starters

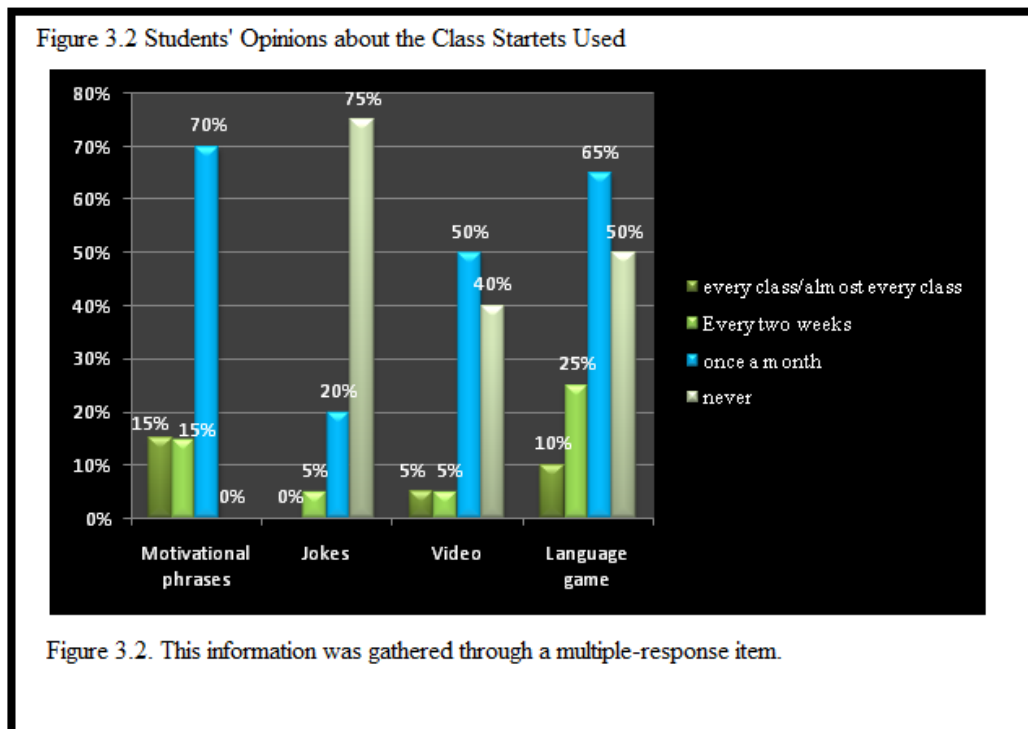
A questionnaire was the instrument used to gather teachers' insights about the role of class starters in the EFL classroom. Their responses about the type of warm-ups they frequently use are summarized in the next graph.



The data revealed that teachers show preference for motivational phrases and language games as class starters. Indeed, 80% and 75% of the informants answered that they use them at least once a week. Teachers also responded that they never call the roll to start a class, but always review last session's topics. These informants identified particular benefits of using motivational starters. They mentioned that they enhance language points, arouse students' interest, bring their attention to a point or the English class, wakes students up, keep them motivated, make them release stress and feel comfortable since the very beginning. Selecting a class starter should be an intrinsic step when planning a class. Consequently, language instructors should not undervalue the consequences of careless choice. By selecting those activities carefully, teachers are affirming a comfortable classroom atmosphere since the very beginning while assuring effective classroom practice that will be reflected on students' linguistic achievement and positive attitude. The teachers in this study stated specific aspects to consider when choosing effective class starters. These aspects are currency of the language point, length, level of interest and motivation it may awake, level of difficulty, the number of learners in a class, their age, space in the room and skills to be emphasized.

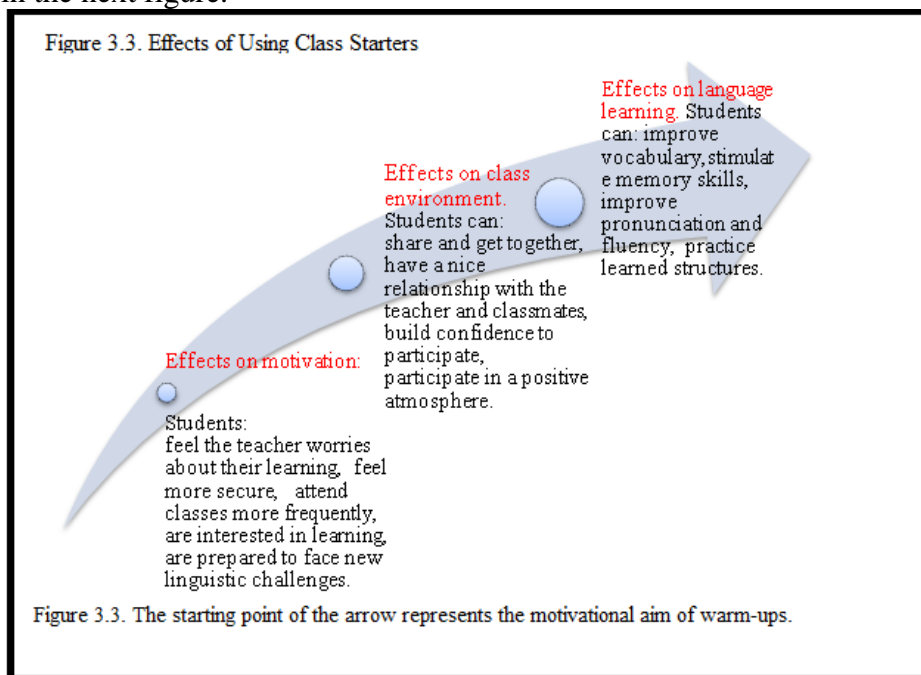
### 3.2 Students' Insights Regarding Class Starters

Contrary to what teachers responded, learners reported a not frequent use of class starters. Indeed, the *every class or almost every class* category was recorded only once. Their responses are displayed in the next figure.



These data reveal that motivational phrases are the class starters most used followed by language games. It is important to clarify that students' responses agree with the

information provided by the teachers. In this regard, learners mentioned that there are specific language classes that prompt their learning. They listed classes in which: they have to participate individually, the teacher starts with an interesting short activity, and present challenges. On the contrary, classes in which the teacher controls every step do not help them. These same informants were also requested to list the most common warm-ups used in the courses they were taking. They stated that in the Writing Workshop they usually draw and read famous quotes, in Oral Communication courses they frequently draw, watch videos and read phrases, in pedagogical courses they play games and create their own quotes. They reported not to be introduced with warm-ups in the other courses. In order to gather deeper insights, ten students participated in a focus group. They mentioned the effects that warm-ups or class starters have on language learning, class environment and motivation. Their insights were summarized and outlined in the next figure.



When teachers start a class with a warm-up or class starter, their intention is usually to build a cozy atmosphere during the first minutes of the class that will prepare students to face linguistic challenges. The arrow in the previous figure shows the process in which the starting point is to provide a motivational environment that will ascend to help learners reach a linguistic ultimate goal. Students identified benefits of the use of class starters. The most remarkable ones are that when teachers implement those activities they show they care which in the long run makes learners reflect on their own interest. They also mentioned that these short games help them feel more secure and self-confident. At the linguistic level, they assured that vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency and memory skills are stimulated.

Informants also identified negative aspects of the use of class starters. They mentioned that if they are not well-organized, they take a lot of time; teachers need to

create new material and buy prizes, engaging all students to participate is difficult, competitive participants may lose track and end up fighting, and handling big groups makes teachers avoid warm-ups. In this same data gathering instrument, learners outlined a list of recommendations for teachers who plan class starters. They mentioned that those activities should be creative, and short but meaningful. They should also involve kinesthetic performance and authentic material. Finally, they suggested that teachers should be practical and incorporate reusable material and be enthusiastic.

### 3.3 Analysis of Courses Outcomes

Five different course outlines were analyzed in order to identify their flexibility in regard to the implementation of class starters. The courses were Writing Workshop, Juvenile Literature, Oral Communication and Listening Comprehension 1, Composition, and Didactics for English Learning. Two out of these syllabi belong to the Associate's Program in English, the other five to the English Teaching Major. The main finding of this analysis is that all courses give room for critical thinking and language improvement that can be promoted through short class warm-ups. Indeed, some of these flexible course goals are:

- To generate and organize ideas (Composition).
- To continue developing oral communication and writing skills (Juvenile Literature).
- To express and defend opinions (Oral Communication and Listening Comprehension 1).
- To express creativity through the production of texts according to interests (Writing Workshop).
- To promote an autonomous professional attitude (Didactics for English Learning).

## 4 Conclusions

This study revealed that class starters and warm-ups are for sure a necessary tool in the EFL classroom. Teachers who want to use them should plan these activities around the lesson plan. In addition, careful planning of these activities require considering students' age, proficiency and class size. There is a time limit in their use, class warm-ups should not be the sole activity of a lesson; instead, they should be used during the first minutes to build an anxiety-reducing learning process. For class starters and warm-ups to be successful, specific features should be taken into account: they should promote authenticity to ensure meaningful language learning, they should be developed in a stress-free environment where students feel free to participate to produce spontaneous language, teachers should monitor learners' performance to make decisions about lesson plan and evaluation and they should encourage individual and social skills. At the individual level, class starters should promote critical thinking skills and self-confidence while at the social level they should promote negotiation of meaning and teamwork. Finally, this study puts in evidence that class starters can be easily incorporated into any course in the programs analyzed.

## 5 The Proposal

Based on the results gathered, a set of practical and flexible class starters is proposed. Each activity can be modified to be implemented in any EFL class as a tool to promote a motivational atmosphere in the classroom and prompt linguistic achievement. The boxes on the left specify the skill(s) to be emphasized in each activity (S= speaking, L=listening, V=vocabulary, R= reading, W= writing, CT= critical thinking). Three different categories are included in this document which are: class starters with songs, class starters with encouraging phrases and class starters with language games.

### CLASS STARTERS WITH SONGS:

**L** **S** Procedures:

- a) The teacher chooses a song (remember to consider topic and students' interest).
- b) The teacher chooses words and phrases from the song and look for pictures that illustrate each of them. S/he sticks the pictures on the board.
- c) The teacher divides the class in two or three groups, depending on class size, and asks them to stand in line facing the board.
- d) The teacher gives a marker of a different color to each group.
- e) The teacher plays the song while students listen carefully.
- f) The teacher asks the students to run to the board to circle the picture they listen to. Once a student participates, s/he moves to the back of the line to let others participate. The group that circles more words is the winner.
- g) The winners distribute words and phrases from the board to each of the groups and ask them to create a short oral story or new song.

**L** **S** Procedures:

- a) The teacher chooses a song (remember to consider topic and students' interest).
- b) The teacher chooses words and phrases from the song and lists them on the board.
- c) The teacher distributes an empty bingo card with six grids to each student (if the group is large, students can work in pairs or groups).
- d) The students complete the card with they choose from the ones listed on the board.
- e) The teacher plays the song while students listen carefully. They circle the words they listen to.
- f) When they complete the grids, they shout "BINGO".
- g) The teacher checks the winning card. The game can be played four corners, sideways, up and down and diagonally.



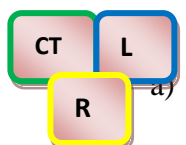


Procedures:



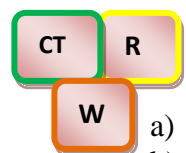
- a) The teacher chooses a song with an interesting/thoughtful topic (appendix 1).
- b) The teacher distributes a piece of paper and color pencils to each student.
- c) The teacher asks students to listen to the song carefully and list their feelings while listening to the song on the piece of paper.
- d) The teacher plays the song again and asks students to draw a picture in which they relate the lyrics and the feelings they listed on the back of the page.
- e) Volunteer students share their list of words and drawing.
- f) Students and teacher participate in a macro-group discussion about the topics that emerge.

#### CLASS STARTERS WITH ENCOURAGING PHRASES:



Number 1: Procedures:

- a) The teacher divides the class into three groups. The “beginning” group, the “end” group and the “author” group.
- b) The teacher distributes pieces of paper with the beginning part of famous quotes to the “beginning” group, the last part of the quote to the “end” group and a small card with the names of the authors to the “author” group.
- c) Each student in the “beginning” group reads his/her phrase aloud and whoever has the answer in the “end” group reads it aloud. Finally, the student with the name of the author reads the name.
- d) If the phrases and name match, the students get together. If they do not, they continue until the right matches are found.
- e) Once all students are correctly grouped, they discuss the teaching or moral behind the quote. They share their thoughts with the class.



Number 2: Procedures:

- a) The teacher distributes a card to each student.
- b) The students write an encouraging phrase they know or create one of their own.
- c) The students put all cards in a bag.
- d) The teacher takes one card from the bag and gives one to each student. S/he verifies they do not get the phrase they wrote. They read the quotes aloud and share the meaning.



Number 3: Procedures:

- a) The teacher divides the class in groups of three or four students, and explains students this is a timed activity. The winner will be the group that finishes first.
- b) The teacher distributes an envelope with a quote which is cut into pieces. All groups have the same quote.
- c) When the teacher shouts “Go!” the students arrange the quote.
- d) The winning group reads the quote aloud.
- e) The teacher and students discuss the meaning behind the quote.

#### CLASS STARTERS WITH LANGUAGE GAMES:



Number 1: Procedures:

- a) The teacher divides the class in small groups.
- b) S/he distributes the worksheet annexed (appendix 1) to each group.
- c) The teacher asks the students to come up with as many words beginning with each letter of the alphabet as they can in five minutes. The teacher can narrow the activity by limiting the list to a specific topic.
- d) The teacher asks the winning group to share the words they gathered.
- e) The winning group lists some of the words on the board, and they ask the other groups to create oral sentences with the words listed.



Number 2: Procedures:

- a) The teacher divides the class in two teams.
- b) Each team must explain the difference between two words/phrases from a set of cards (appendix 1).
- c) The teacher gives each team a card; they have one minute to explain the difference aloud.
- d) If the difference is correct, they score a point. If it is not correct, the other team has a chance to score.
- e) The winning team is the one who scores more points.



Number 2: Procedures:

- a) The teacher puts a set of photos from old magazines on a table. This table is placed in front of the class.
- b) The teacher asks students to stand up and choose a picture that “talks” to them. It means a picture they can relate to a past event, future plans, daily life or feeling.

- c) Each student shows the picture chosen and explains the reason behind their decision.

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### Author's biography

Lena Barrantes Elizondo holds a master's degree in Second Languages and Culture from Universidad Nacional. During her twelve years of teaching experience she has taught in different areas. She has worked for the Ministry of Public Education as a primary school teacher and a teachers' trainer for in-service teachers. She is currently a professor at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension in the English teaching major and the Associate's Program in English, and coordinator of different projects in this institution.

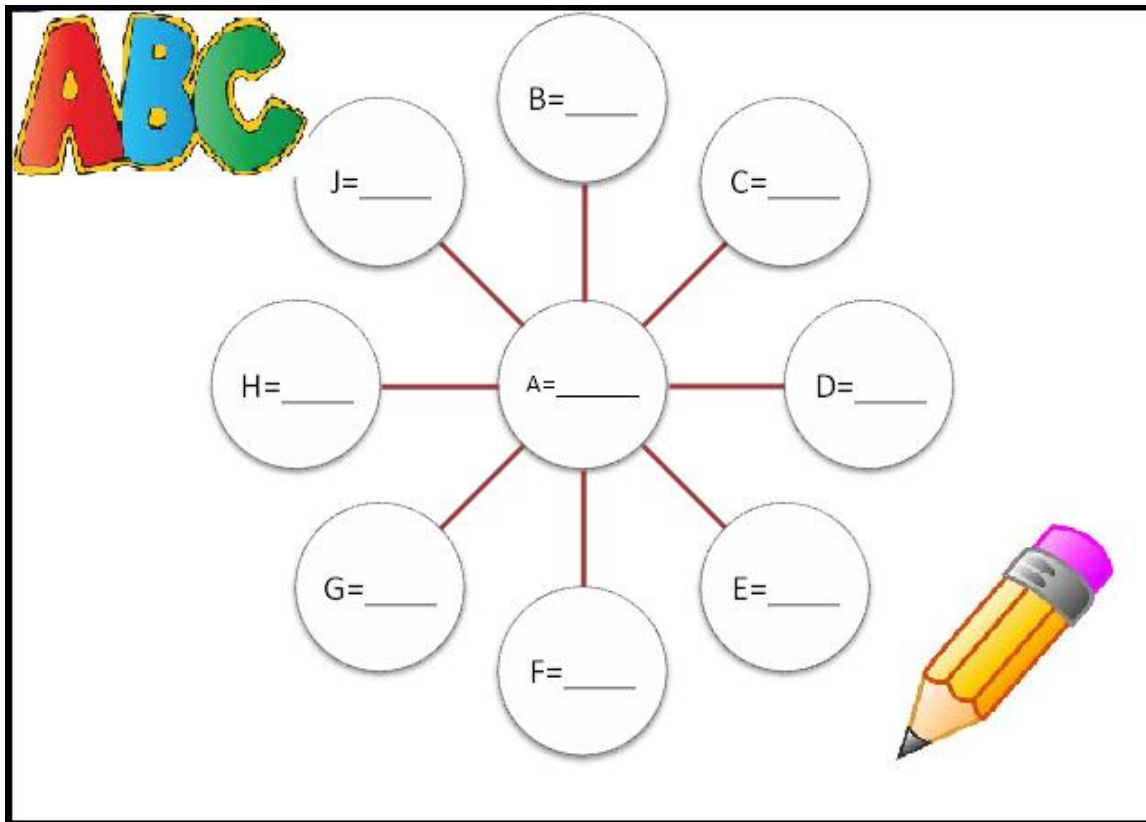
### Appendices

#### Appendix 1: Material for class starters

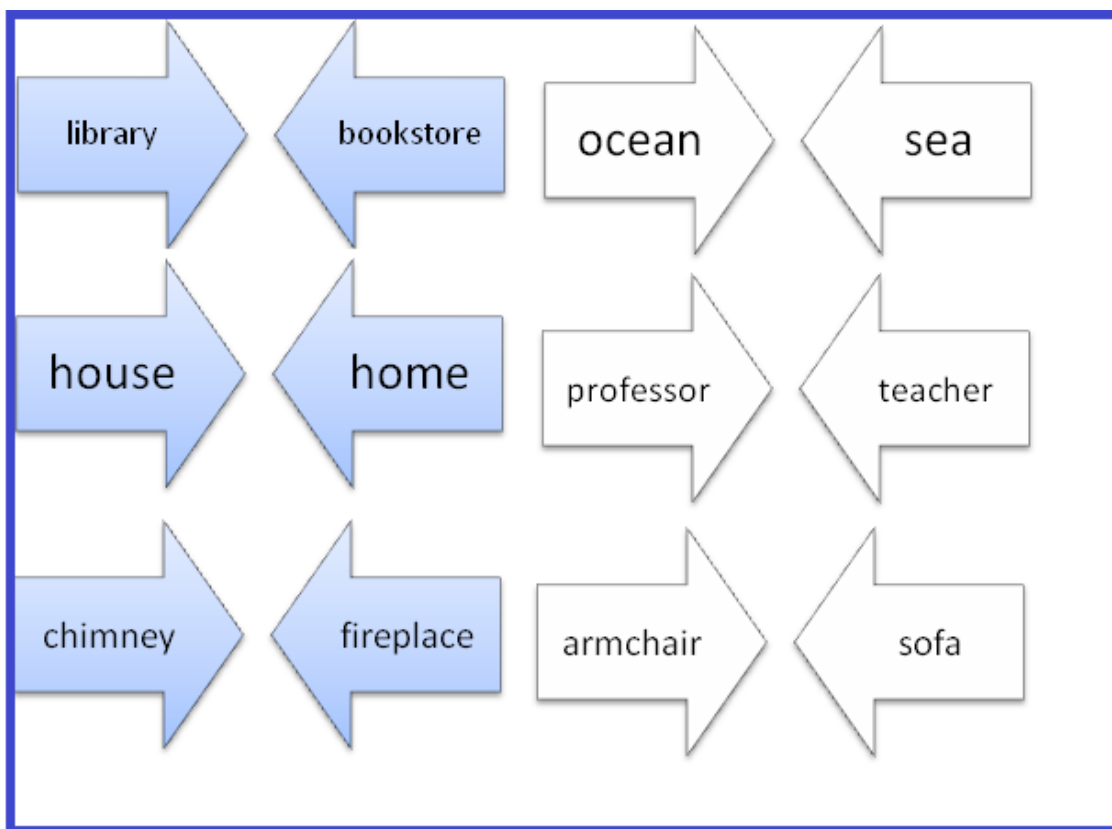
#### SONG ACTIVITY 3

Song	Singer	Topic
The Climb	Miley Cyrus	Perseverance
I Believe I Can Fly	Seal	Determination
Living in the Moment	Jason Mraz	Peace of Mind
I Can See Clearly Now	Johnny Nash	Optimism
All You Need Is Love	The Beatles	Love-Solidarity

LANGUAGE ACTIVITY 1



## LANGUAGE GAME 2

**Appendix 2: Focus Group methodology:**

This instrument recorded students' insights about the research topic in-depth. To understand its implementation a description of the participants, place, time, procedures and material is given.

1. **Participants:** Ten students from the English Teaching Major were the participants in this focus group. Eight of them are in their third year and two in their fourth year. Their ages range from 21 to 27 years old.
2. **Place:** The focus group was conducted in room A2 at Universidad Nacional, Brunca extension. The chairs were arranged as a semi-circle. In the same way, this room was fully equipped with the necessary conditions to develop the activity as expected. These conditions were: quietness, a chair for each participant, a desk, and a board.
3. **Time:** It was carried out at 9:00 a.m.
4. **Procedures**
  - a. **Welcome activity: 5 minutes.**

1. Introduction of the researcher.
2. Each student was given a tag to write their name.

**b. Warm-up: 10 minutes**

1. Twenty cards were stuck on a small board. Each card has a word.
2. Each student stood up and chose a card.
3. They shared with the group on how those words relate to their experience as EFL learners.

<b>Success</b>	<b>Language games</b>	<b>Scores</b>	<b>Songs</b>	<b>Obstacles</b>
<b>Frustration</b>	<b>No time</b>	<b>Teamwork</b>	<b>Internet</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
<b>Fun</b>	<b>Homework</b>	<b>Professors</b>	<b>Board games</b>	<b>Encouraging phrases</b>
<b>Goals</b>	<b>Tests</b>	<b>Classmates</b>	<b>Routines</b>	<b>Limitations</b>

**c. Presentation: 10 minutes**

1. The moderator of the focus group gave a short presentation about the use of warm-ups or class starters in the EFL classroom.
2. Students were asked to give their opinion on the topic.

**d. Individual work:**

1. Four cardboards with different colors each were organized on a table in front of the room. Each of them had a phrase.

<b>Green</b>	<b>Yellow</b>	<b>Orange</b>	<b>Pink</b>
A positive aspect	A negative aspect	A recommended aspect	A challenging aspect

2. Each student was given a marker. They were asked to write their ideas under each category.
3. A macro-discussion was carried out by using the information from the cardboards.
4. Four new cardboards with different colors each were organized on a table in front of the room. Each of them had a phrase for students to generate their own arguments.

<b>Light-blue</b>	<b>Red</b>	<b>Purple</b>
<b>The effects of warm-ups on language learning.</b>	<b>The effects of warm-ups on motivation.</b>	<b>The effects of warm-ups on class environment.</b>

5. A macro-discussion was carried out by using the information from the cardboards.

e. **Material:** name tags, cardboards, markers, masking tape.

3. **Characteristics of this focus group:** Its main purpose was to record the students' insights regarding the effects of warm-ups or class starters on the EFL class. This instrument was implemented in the final stage of data collection since it aimed at capturing deep perspectives from students.

The SWOT analysis method was used so that the researcher could identify the strengths and weaknesses of the research topic as well as the opportunities and threats of the students. Activity one in the section individual work captured the strengths and weaknesses of using warm-ups in the class by asking students to identify *positive, negative, challenging and recommended aspects* about this technique. In the same way, activity four in this same section garnered data about the opportunities and threats of learners who participated in warm-ups. In this activity, informants listed on the cardboards the benefits of using these short activities at the beginning of the class. They referred to specific threats and opportunities on language learning, class environment and motivation.

## Board Games: An Innovative Attempt to Enhance the Students' Speaking Skill

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**Resumen:** El aprendizaje de un idioma extranjero es, por su naturaleza, altamente interactivo. A la luz de esta teoría, Oxford (1990) recalcó que “el lenguaje es una manifestación del comportamiento social, gira en torno a la comunicación, y ésta ocurre entre dos o varias personas” (p. 114). Por ello, la implementación de actividades grupales en la clase de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL, por sus siglas en inglés) es esencial puesto que los estudiantes construyen destrezas sociales y lingüísticas. Los juegos de mesa son, en este sentido, un medio para hablar en el lenguaje meta, pues estos promueven la interacción en el salón de clase. Se puede asegurar que tales juegos enfatizan la práctica oral mediante el uso de vocabulario que los estudiantes dejarían de lado si no estuviesen participando en una tarea agradable. Es decir, una clase de EFL debería de ser dinámica debido a que la interacción y la participación se manifiestan de diferentes formas. Bajo esta premisa, la siguiente propuesta intentó mejorar la habilidad del habla a través de la utilización de juegos de mesa interactivos en las clases de inglés conversacional. La investigación se desarrolló con el grupo 8-4/B del Liceo Las Mercedes con Orientación Tecnológica y consideró La Enseñanza Comunicativa del Lenguaje (abreviado CLT en inglés) como la metodología de enseñanza correspondiente, ya que dicha filosofía promueve la interacción y la comunicación real en la clase. Durante la realización de estas actividades, los estudiantes practicaron el lenguaje meta con distintos juegos de mesa y comunicaron ideas sencillas a sus compañeros. Al final, los resultados reflejaron que, a través de la ejecución de juegos de mesa basados en la comunicación oral, los estudiantes mostraron una mayor participación y mejoraron su habilidad del habla, cumpliendo así con el objetivo principal planteado inicialmente.

**Palabras clave:** juegos de mesa, comunicación, interacción, habla, implementación.

**Abstract:** The nature of foreign language learning is highly interactive. In the light of this principle, Oxford (1990) pointed out that “language is a form of social behavior; it is communication, and communication occurs



between and among people” (p. 114). For this reason, the implementation of group-work based activities in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom is essential since students build social and linguistic skills. Board games are, in this sense, a means to reinforce the speaking skill by promoting interaction in the classroom. Certainly, such games emphasize the oral practice through the use of lexical items that students would leave aside if they, as learners, were not participating in an engaging task. This means that an EFL class should be dynamic, for interaction and participation arise in different manners. Following this premise, the next proposal aimed at enhancing the students’ speaking skill by implementing interactive language board games in the conversational English class. Such treatment took place in group 8-4/B at Liceo Las Mercedes con Orientación Tecnológica and considered Communicative Language Teaching as the corresponding teaching methodology because such a philosophy promotes interaction and real-life communication in the class. During the implementation of the activities, the students practiced the target language by playing with different board games and communicating simple ideas to their classmates. In the end, the results indicated that, by playing oral-communication based board games, the students participated more actively and improved their speaking skill, fulfilling the main objective of the study.

**Keywords:** board games, communication, interaction, speaking, implementation.

## I Introduction

The globalization process has forced professionals from different fields to speak English. Due to this fact, the curriculum developers for the Costa Rican Ministry of Public Education (2005), MEP (according to its acronym in Spanish), agreed that English as a subject in public high schools should stress the ability to communicate for practical purposes, developing attitudes required for further study, work, and leisure (p.14). Complying with such requirements entails attaining communicative competence to be fully functional in the target language (TL). Grounded on the interactive nature of language, English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers should have students carry out tasks in pairs, groups, and with teachers and visitors (MEP, 2005, p.20). To encourage teamwork, it is essential to use different didactic resources for the students to participate in a more dynamic way, and board games can be useful to achieve such goal. According to Rief and Heimburge (2007), “game days provide a more relaxing environment for children to interact orally with other students” (p. 112). Therefore, the communicative principles stipulated in the English program demand the incorporation of interactive tasks and games that help student surmount their difficulties when learning English.

This study was conducted with a thirteen-people group of eighth grade EFL students at Liceo Las Mercedes con Orientación Tecnológica, Pérez Zeledón, Costa Rica.

In this rural area, students received both academic and conversational English lessons to ensure more exposure and better results regarding the learning of the foreign language. Despite this advantage, learners showed certain weaknesses with respect to the speaking skill. In four classroom observations carried out before conducting this research, the author detected that oral communication in the TL hardly ever took place in the conversational English classes. Actually, many students avoided the use of English in the classroom and relied on their mother tongue (Spanish) to convey meanings and intentions. On the other hand, the students who used the TL to speak in the classroom performed poorly inasmuch as they used chunks to convey basic meanings but left aside sentence formation in discourse. Considering these scenarios, this research describes how implementing interactive language board games enhanced the students' speaking skill in group 8-4 at Liceo Las Mercedes con Orientación Tecnológica.

### Research questions

1. Do interactive language board games contribute to the development of the speaking skill in EFL learners?
2. What kinds of interactive language board games can teachers implement to reinforce the speaking skill?

### General objective

- To enhance the students' speaking skill by implementing interactive language board games in group 8-4 at Liceo Las Mercedes con Orientación Tecnológica.

### Specific objectives

1. To design language board games so that the spoken language can be used in an interactive way.
2. To implement language board games so that the speaking skill can be emphasized by means of interaction.
3. To provide the students with interactive language board games so that they, as EFL learners, can interact while speaking the target language.
4. To analyze the results of the implementation of interactive language board games in enhancing the speaking skill.

## II Theoretical Considerations

### 2.1 The Communicative Approach

EFL teachers from Costa Rican public high schools uphold a specific philosophy to teach the language in the classroom. The MEP (2005) determined that the *communicative approach* (CL) provides the adequate environment to learn the foreign language (p.23). Such approach "stresses the need to teach communicative competence as opposed to linguistic competence; thus, functions are emphasized over forms" (Doggett, 1986, p. 3). In this sense, students learn the TL to be fully functional and communicate their intentions successfully. On the other hand, from Larsen-Freeman's (1986) viewpoint on the CL, the teacher is a facilitator of students' learning, becoming a manager of

classroom activities. As a matter of fact, the educator is responsible for establishing situations likely to promote communication (p. 131). The previous idea suggests the teacher is an advisor who provides students with feedback and monitors their performance in different tasks. In this fashion, the communicative approach can be considered a practical method to teach EFL nowadays. This approach is usually employed under the *communicative language teaching* and *task based instruction* methodologies.

## 2.2 Communicative Language Teaching and Task Based Instruction

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a methodology that promotes communicative competence over grammatical competence. In fact, Richards (2006) pointed out that communicatively competent people can “know how to vary... [their] use of language according to the setting and the participants” (p.3). In addition, Larsen-Freeman (1986) suggested that communication occurs by having the interlocutor and receiver negotiating meaning (p.131). The purpose of this methodology is to address each activity with a communicative intent. For this reason, the students need knowledge of the linguistic forms, meanings, and functions so that they can communicate in real life situations. Based on these facts, CLT is a methodology whose ultimate purpose is to have students attain communicative competence.

Task-based instruction (TBI) is considered one extension of the CLT movement. This methodology arose from a focus on classroom processes (Richards, 2006, p.30). Richards (2006) ascertained that “in the case of TBI, the claim is that language learning will result from creating the right kinds of interactional processes in the classroom, and the best way to create this is to use specially designed instructional tasks” (p. 30). Actually, the author affirmed that, in such methodology, grammar and other dimensions of communicative competence can be developed as a by-product of engaging learners in interactive tasks (Richards, 2006, p. 30). Nunan (as cited in Buyukkarci, 2009) defined task as a piece of classroom work that leads learners to understand, produce, and interact in the target language while the student’s attention is focused on activating their grammatical knowledge to express meaning (p. 314). Such perspectives give way to a more clear understanding of the importance of TBI in the EFL context. Summing up, through TBI, students use the TL interactively to create communicative competence.

## 2.3 Resources to Enhance Communication

The material used in the class plays a relevant role in teaching speaking properly. Teachers should pay more attention to this means since the students will attempt to fulfill the purpose of any activity by employing it. Crawford (2002) stipulated that for the resource to be useful, it must fulfill a number of specific criteria. Among them, she pointed out that the material should be contextualized, purposeful, realistic, authentic, and learners’ needs oriented (p.84). In the first case, since language is functional, the students should be familiar with what happens in the context presented in the practice for the activity to be meaningful. Likewise, every resource in language teaching has a purpose; in the case of speaking activities, their focus is on achieving communication. Subsequently, since

communication takes place in real events, the material could be authentic so that students do not use the language with artificial constraints. Finally, these resources also have to address the students' needs. This means aim should be to foster the learners' autonomy, cater to individual and contextual differences, and engage learners both affectively and cognitively (Crawford, 2003, p. 84-87). In this light, teachers must make sure that the material employed in class is useful to assure that communication is enhanced.

Interactive activities help learners achieve effective communication in the TL. Brown and Wu (as cited in Poon, 2001) remarked that "it is through constant interactive practice that language skills are acquired and progress is made" (p. 135). In other words, the nature of language learning is interactive; in consequence, implementing activities where two people or more work together making use of the target language is paramount for language acquisition to take place. Rivers (1987) defined *interaction* as a process in which, by eliciting and receiving information of interest, "students achieve facility in using language when their attention is focused on conveying and receiving authentic messages" (p. 4). Certainly, this process makes the learning more meaningful since students use the language with communicative purposes. Under this assumption, employing interactive language exercises is necessary, especially because these activities are means to elicit students' participation and initiative (Rivers, 2002, p.10). An EFL teacher, thereby, cannot expect a class to be quiet at all, for interaction and participation arises in different manners. Based on the previous ideas, interactive activities foster communication in the EFL class and lead students to improving their performance in the TL.

Board games are a novel option for the students to use the target language. Students may find these games not only challenging but also interactive. Brandt, Messeter, and Binder (2008) sustained that these tools promote "...the leveling of power relations or other structuring relations between participants" (p. 61). This statement refers to the fact that board games are interactive; as a result, they enhance language acquisition. As Reif and Heimburge (2007) pointed out, these tools can be used orally to help students become more adept at speaking clearly (p. 112). These games might, indeed, provide oral practice by emphasizing the use of vocabulary and phrases that would be barely used if the students were not involved in an engaging activity (Maxom, 2009, p. 346). Furthermore, according to Dang and Ruitter (2005), these activities are easily adaptable. For instance, the same authors provide the example of a bingo card whose numbers are replaced with grammar points and vocabulary items so that teachers can apply the game in EFL classes (p.284). These authors also consider that students will be more willing to demonstrate their linguistic prowess when they are involved in the activity (p. 283). Hence, board games enhance oral communication because they present meaningful situations to the learners.

### **III Methodology and Data Analysis**

#### **3.1 Design**

The implementation of language board games took place during four weeks, one day per week, three lessons each day. The length of every lesson was forty minutes. The techniques included in this methodology are described with in detail subsequently.

#### Die pronunciation game<sup>4</sup> (Appendix 1)

This board game consists in having students practice pronunciation with several words from lower to higher levels of difficulty. The student who pronounces more words suitably at the end of the competition wins.

#### Guess where? (Appendix 2)

The purpose of this game is to have students guess the location of a character on a map by giving oral locations and directions. The student who guesses more people at the end of the game wins.

#### Town's monopoly (Appendix 3)

In this board game, students practice and learn expressions to locate goods and services on a map by providing accurate information in their answers. In this way, learners can obtain properties and rent them or sell them to their partners. The person with more money wins the game.

#### How can I get to...? (Appendix 4)

To play this game, students give specific directions by answering questions based on pictures projected by the teacher on the whiteboard. The first participant to reach the finish line wins.

#### Little town<sup>5</sup> (Appendix 5)

When playing this interactive language board game, students guide their classmates by giving directions and commands to get to particular places. The student who guides more of their partners to the target location wins.

#### My die says (Appendix 6)

Using a map to give directions, students answer questions in order to make money according to the level of difficulty suggested by the colors that the die indicates. The student that obtains more money at the end of the competition wins.

#### Ladders and snakes (Appendix 7)

This next game combines reading and speaking skills, for students answer oral questions based on a reading in order to reach the finish line first.

#### Honey bee (Appendix 8)

This board game requires a reading about directions in Costa Rica. Students answer questions according to the notes that they take from the text. The students move forward their chips with each correct answer so that they can win.

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<sup>4</sup> This game does not require a board to play, but it is a board game as students need with chips and cards.

<sup>5</sup> This game was played in two ways, by punishing students when the answer was wrong and by providing them with a specific number of points according to the answer given.

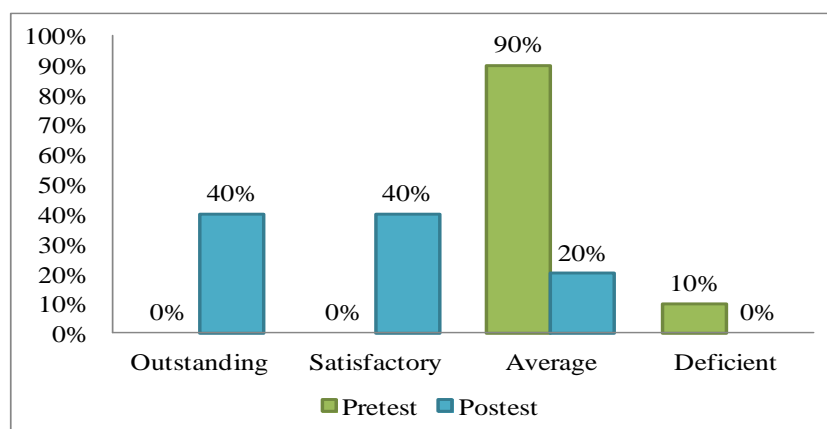
### The turtles' race (Appendix 9)

In this interactive language board game, students go over expressions to give directions by replying the teacher's questions about specific places on a map projected onto the wall. With each correct answer, students can move forward their turtles to cross the street (the board game) and win the game.

### 3.2 Data Analysis and Interpretation

The pretest and the posttest (Appendixes 11 and 12 respectively) were administered to evaluate the effectiveness of language board games in enhancing the students' speaking skill. The instruments tested the learners' oral proficiency level before and after the implementation of such methodology. Figure 3.2.1. illustrates the results

■ **Figure 3.2.1.** Comparison of the Grades Obtained in the Pretest and the Posttest



By comparing the students' oral performance in the pretest and the posttest, the results indicate that there was an important progress after the implementation of this methodology. In fact, according to the speaking level disclosed in the pretest, students were not competent enough to give and follow directions suitably before carrying out this study. The highest grade in the pretest was a 60 while the lowest one was a 20. In contrast, the lowest grade in the posttest was a 64, and the highest one was a 92. This change evidences the improvement that students had in their oral performance when giving directions in English by playing with interactive language board games. In this sense, learners interacted with their classmates to be able to solve specific tasks and activities that entailed a communicative purpose. On the other hand, in the posttest, most students obtained a grade in the outstanding or the satisfactory level. This increment is positive, considering that none of them scored a grade within these levels in the pretest. Moreover, the fact that no student obtained a deficient grade in the posttest indicates that, after the implementation of this methodology, students were more communicatively competent when using their speaking skill to give and follow directions. In the light of

these results, interactive language board games were effective to enhance the speaking skill of students in group 8-4/B at Liceo Las Mercedes con Orientación Tecnológica.

#### IV Conclusions

The study suggests that interactive language board games are effective to have students practice their speaking skill. The results from the pretest reflect that all students needed to reinforce this ability in the target language. After playing with interactive language board games, students of group 8-4/B at Liceo Las Mercedes con Orientación Tecnológica could enhance their speaking skill. This fact can be verified by analyzing the improvement in the grades of the posttest with respect to the pretest. Based on this evidence, the author can make specific recommendations to develop the teaching/learning process in conversational English classes at public high schools. First, teachers should implement interactive activities more frequently in the classroom so that students can work on reinforcing their speaking skill. In the same way, even though the elaboration of board games can be time consuming and expensive, they should be present in the classroom more regularly because students' participation and use of the target language are fostered through these activities. Therefore, the author of this paper expects that this methodology can be useful for teachers in the MEP that desire to implement it in their English for Conversation lessons.

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### **Biography**

Kevin Armando Brand Fonseca is a student of the licentiate's degree in Applied Linguistics in English at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension. He holds a bachelor's degree in English teaching from the same university. He was granted an award of excellence in 2012 for being the best student of the English teaching major. He is currently working for the CI-UNA project, teaching conversational English courses.



**Appendix 1: Die pronunciation game**

1- What – when – Where – How – Mall -- Bank – Bus – Taxi – Candy — house – city – gas – direct

2- Cinema -- Left - parlor - school -- park— high school – teacher – town – turn -- select – Across

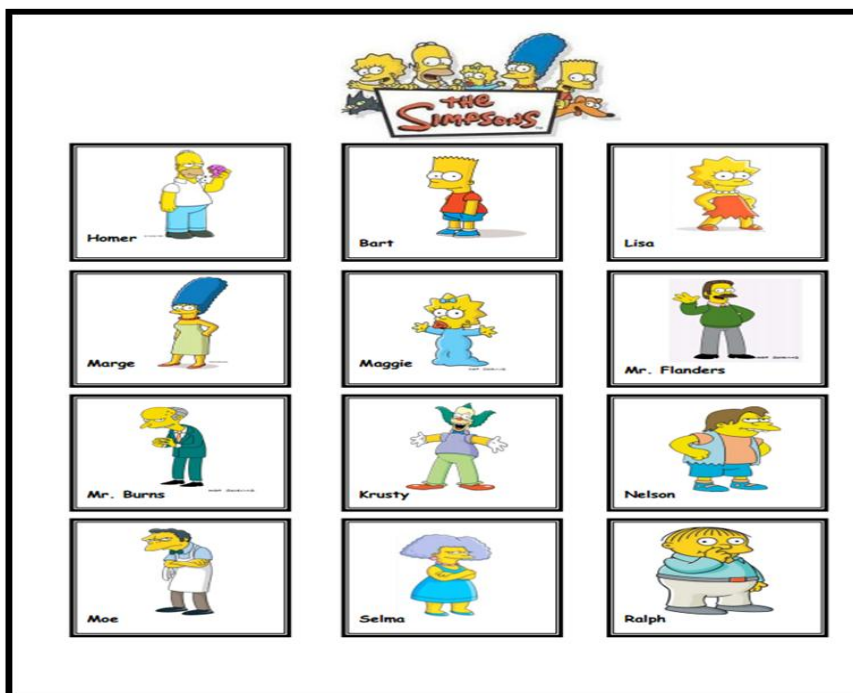
3- Block -- Shop -- Police – Run – East – West – Terminal -- street – people – Doctor - Next between

4- Beside -- Store -- Walk – Hotel -- Shoes - Right – hospital – Airport – gasoline – Church – sign

5- Clothes -- North – South – Factory -- temple -- Apartment – Restaurant – Avenue – path – behind

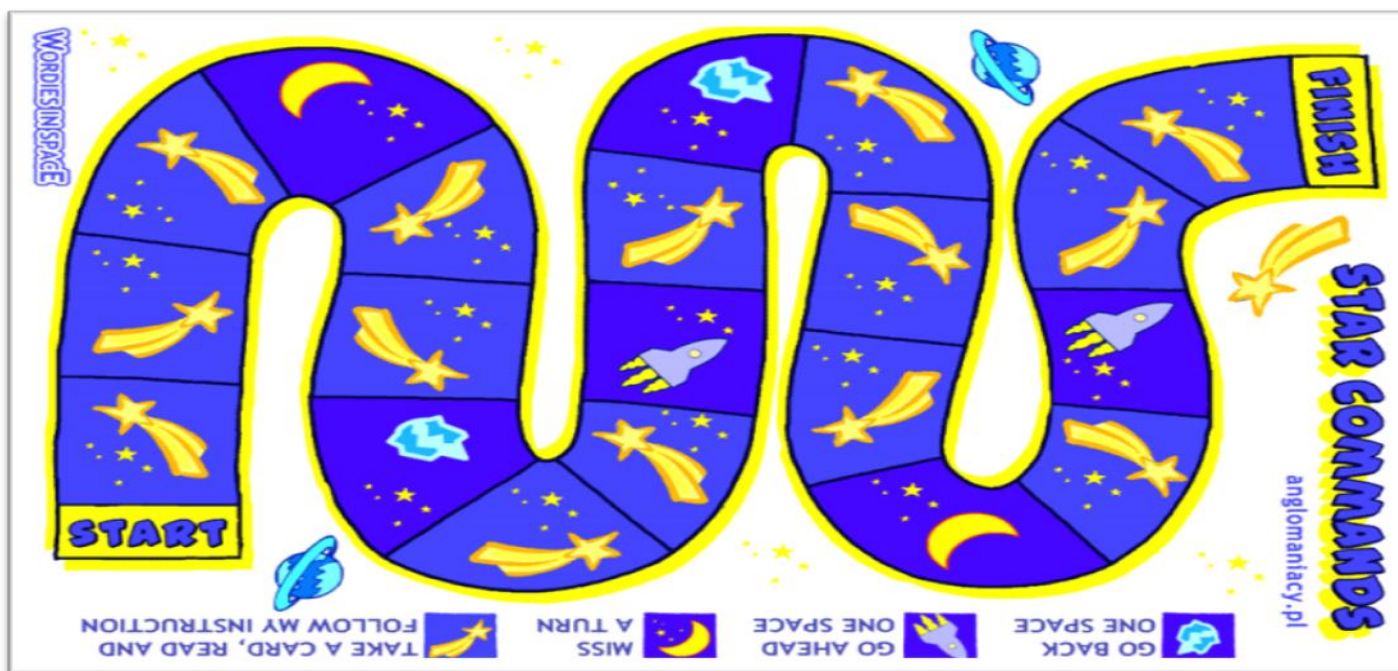
6- Stadium – Museum — Convenience – Clothing -- Grocery -- -- Movie Theater -- Fire Station - lighthouse

**Appendix 2: Guess where?**

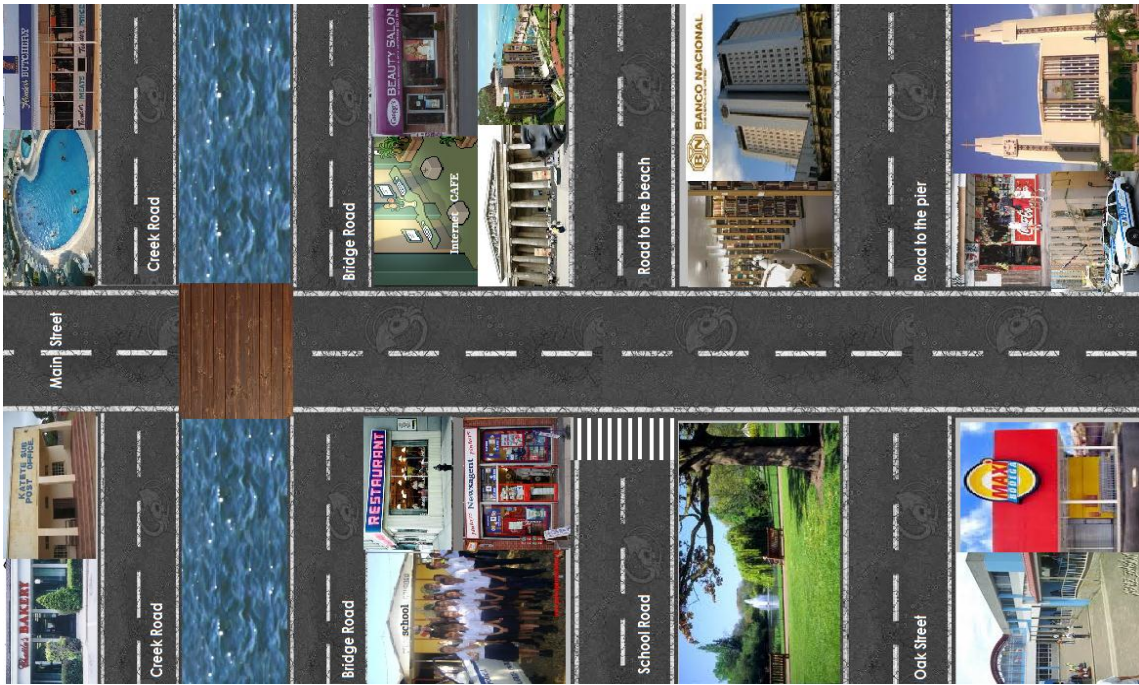


Appendix 3: Town's Monopoly


Appendix 4: How can I get to?



Appendix 5: Little town



Appendix 6: My die says



HOW CAN I GET TO

Appendix 7: Ladders and snakes

The board game grid consists of 48 squares arranged in 6 rows and 8 columns. The game starts at the bottom right and ends at the top left. Questions are placed in the squares, and ladders and snakes are drawn across the board.

PRONUNCIATION CARD	Where is the museum?	How can Karla get to the travels agency?	Where is the movie theater?	Where is the museum?	How old is Karla?	Where is the gym near or far from her house?	What is Karla's favorite place to visit?	How can Karla get to the bank?
How can Karla get to the movie theater?	PRONUNCIATION CARD	How can Karla get to the museum?	PRONUNCIATION CARD	Does Karla like the museum?	PRONUNCIATION CARD	PRONUNCIATION CARD	PRONUNCIATION CARD	PRONUNCIATION CARD
Where is the park?	Where does Karla live?	Where is Karla's House?	Where is the girl's name?	How can Karla get to the hospital?	Where is the Theme Park?	Is the Theme Park near or far from Karla's house?	Where is the mall?	How can Karla get to the mall?
FINISH	PRONUNCIATION CARD	PRONUNCIATION CARD	PRONUNCIATION CARD	PRONUNCIATION CARD	PRONUNCIATION CARD	PRONUNCIATION CARD	PRONUNCIATION CARD	START

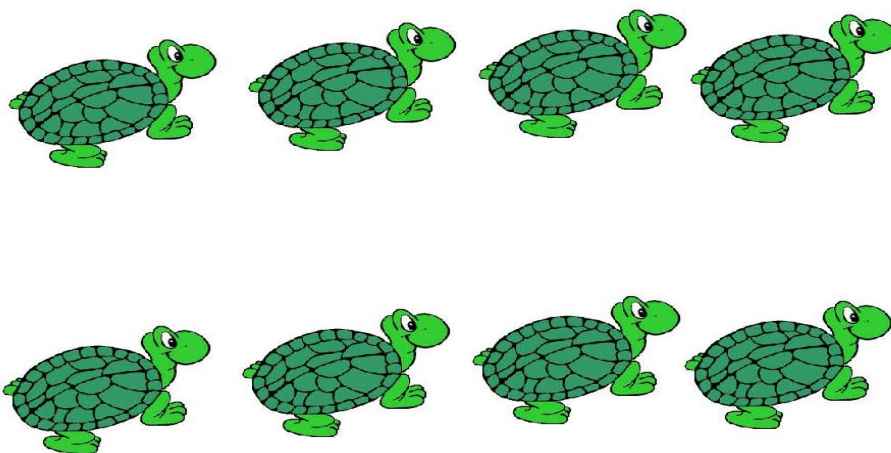
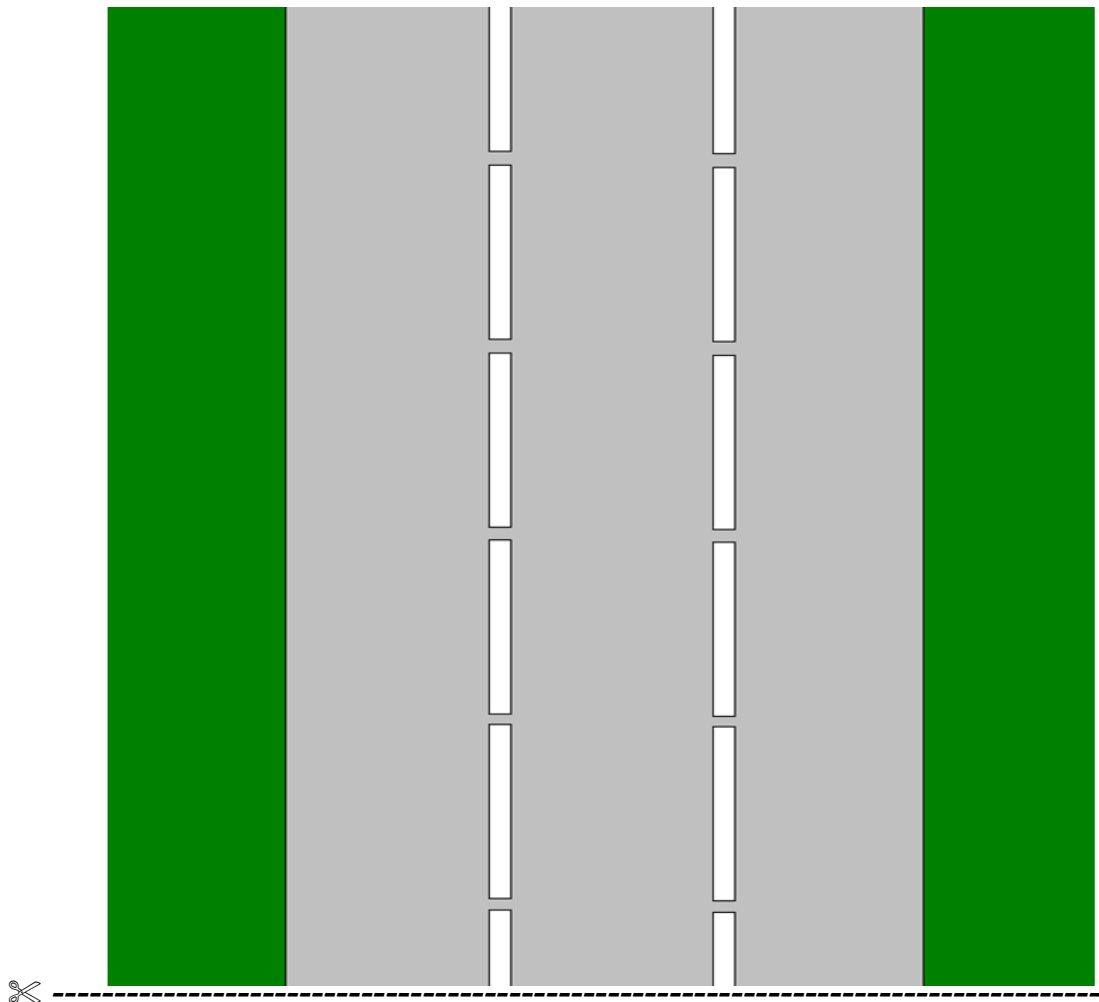
Let's Talk 1: Units 9-12. Copyright Cambridge University Press

Appendix 8: Honey bee

The board game 'THE HONEYCOMB CHALLENGE' is played on a honeycomb grid. It starts at a 'START' square and ends at a 'GOAL' square. The board includes several challenge cards with bee illustrations and instructions:

- START**: Your honey was stolen! Go back 3.
- Challenge 1**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 2**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 3**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 4**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 5**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 6**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 7**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 8**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 9**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 10**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 11**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 12**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 13**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 14**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 15**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 16**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 17**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 18**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 19**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 20**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 21**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 22**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 23**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 24**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 25**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 26**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 27**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 28**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 29**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 30**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 31**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 32**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 33**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 34**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 35**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 36**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 37**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 38**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 39**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 40**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 41**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 42**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 43**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 44**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 45**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 46**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 47**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 48**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 49**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 50**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 51**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 52**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 53**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 54**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 55**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 56**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 57**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 58**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 59**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 60**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 61**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 62**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 63**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 64**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 65**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 66**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 67**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 68**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 69**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 70**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 71**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 72**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 73**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 74**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 75**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 76**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 77**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 78**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 79**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 80**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 81**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 82**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 83**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 84**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 85**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 86**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 87**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 88**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 89**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 90**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 91**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 92**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 93**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 94**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 95**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 96**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 97**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 98**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 99**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.
- Challenge 100**: A friendly bee helps you. Go ahead 3.

**Appendix 9: Turtle race**



**Appendix 10: Pretest and posttest**

<b>Universidad Nacional/ Sede Regional Brunca</b>	<b>Total Points: 25</b>
<b>I Congreso de Lingüística Aplicada de la Universidad Nacional</b>	Points Earned
<b>Pre-test and Post-test</b>	Date of Administration: _____
<b>Place of Administration:</b> Liceo Las Mercedes con Orientación Tecnológica	<input type="text"/>
<b>Researcher:</b> Kevin A. Brand Fonseca	<b>SCORE</b>
<b>Subject:</b> English for Conversation	<input type="text"/>
<b>Student:</b> _____ <b>Group:</b> 8-4/B	

**Objective:** To test the student's oral proficiency level .

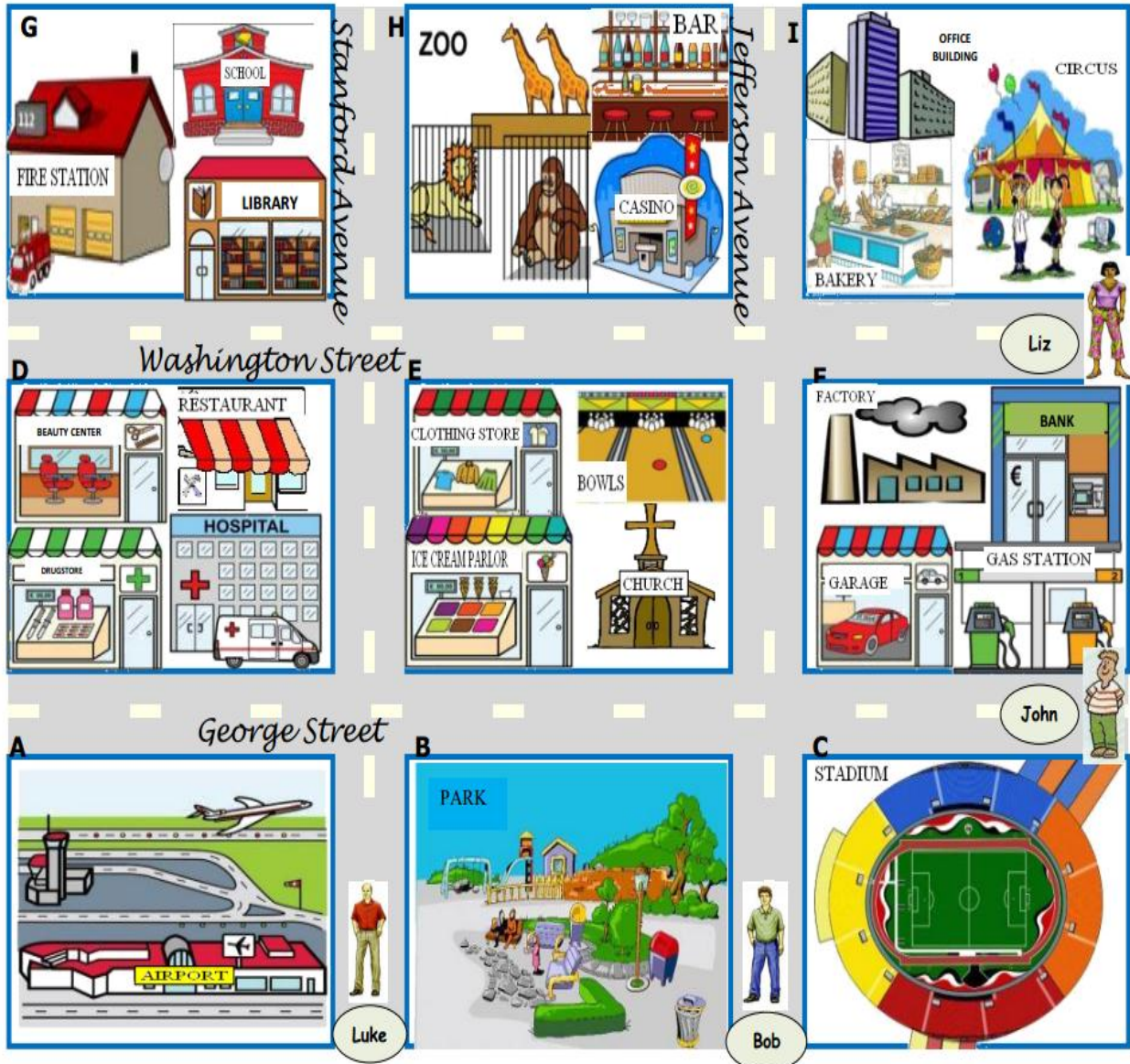
**General Instructions:** Pay attention to the instructor, and ask any question before the test.

**Part I:** Based on the picture shown by the instructor and the situations presented, choose one of the people named in the image to help him/ her get to his/ her destiny by giving him/ her the appropriate directions and offering the corresponding location. The criteria below shall be used to evaluate the student's performance (25 points).

- Situations:** 1. Luke needs to go to the stadium. 3. Bob needs to go to the bank.  
 2. Jenny needs to go to church. 4. John needs to go to school.

<b>RATING SCALE</b>	
<b>Task Completion</b>	
• Outstanding completion of the task; content is rich and very well developed.	5
• Satisfactory completion of the task; content is enough and developed.	4
• Average completion of the task; content is vague.	3
• Limited completion of the task; content is somehow undeveloped.	2
• Poor completion of the task; content is frequently undeveloped and/or somewhat repetitive.	1
<b>Communication</b>	
• Content is delivered smoothly; very accurate use of stress, rhythm and intonation patterns.	5
• Content is delivered with little hesitations; somewhat accurate use of the stress, rhythm and intonation patterns	4
• Content is delivered with some hesitations; fair use of stress, rhythm and intonation patterns.	3
• Content is delivered with many hesitations; deficient use of stress, rhythm and intonation patterns.	2
• Content is delivered with many pauses; very deficient use of stress, rhythm and intonation patterns.	1
<b>Pronunciation</b>	
• Very accurate articulation and enunciation of sounds. Words are very comprehensible.	5
• Somewhat accurate articulation and enunciation of sounds. Words are fairly comprehensible.	4
• Fair articulation and enunciation of sounds. Words are still comprehensible.	3
• Deficient articulation and enunciation of sounds. Words are barely comprehensible.	2
• Very deficient articulation and enunciation of sounds. Words are quite incomprehensible.	1
<b>Vocabulary</b>	
• Rich command of words and idiomatic phrases in context.	5
• Adequate command of words and idiomatic phrases in context.	4
• Average command of words and idiomatic phrases in context.	3
• Limited command of words and idiomatic phrases in context.	2
• Poor command of words and idiomatic phrases in context.	1
<b>Grammar</b>	
• Very adequate control of the basic language structures. Ideas expressed with varied and elaborated syntax.	5
• Adequate control of the basic language structures. Ideas expressed with somewhat varied and elaborated syntax.	4
• Somewhat adequate control of the basic language structures. Ideas expressed with varied and fair syntax.	3
• Deficient control of the basic language structures. Ideas expressed with somewhat undeveloped syntax.	2
• Very deficient control of the basic language structures. Ideas expressed with vey undeveloped syntax.	1

Appendix 10 (Continued): Picture for the pretest and posttest



## **Evaluating the Efficiency of the Textbook *Play and Learn* to Enhance Fourth Grade Students' English Proficiency Skills at a Rural Primary School in Costa Rica**

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**Resumen:** La presente investigación evalúa la eficacia y conveniencia del libro de texto *Play and Learn* para promover las habilidades del idioma inglés en el aula a estudiantes de cuarto año de la escuela Finca Seis en Río Frío de Sarapiquí de Heredia. Además, estudia las actividades pedagógicas, cognitivas y lingüísticas y la relación que existe entre su contenido y los temas propuestos por el Ministerio de Educación Pública. La información se recolectó con la ayuda del director del centro educativo, personal administrativo, educadores, estudiantes, padres de familia, y la editorial "Publitex"; además, profesores y estudiantes de otras instituciones como Escuela El Bambu, IDA Otoyá y Finca Dos. El objetivo fundamental de contar con diferentes participantes permitió obtener una visión más amplia sobre la efectividad del libro y el papel que desempeña como herramienta pedagógica entre el maestro y los estudiantes. Como resultado de esta investigación surge la necesidad de incluir más actividades pedagógicas para fortalecer las destrezas de escucha y habla lo cual permitirá que el estudiante mejore sus conocimientos del inglés. Además de incorporar el componente de cultura. Se resalta el fortalecimiento de las cuatro destrezas del idioma y no solamente dos de ellas, esto a través del diseño de un programa virtual interactivo que resume cada una de las siete unidades establecidas por el Ministerio de Educación Pública. Al finalizar cada unidad el estudiante resolverá con sus compañeros y la docente de inglés, las actividades pedagógicas relacionadas al tema visto durante las lecciones establecidas.

**Palabras Clave:** Libro de texto, evaluación de textos, selección de libros de textos, evaluación de materiales, evaluación, materiales auténticos, materiales.

**Abstract:** This research evaluates the efficiency and suitability of the textbook *Play and Learn* to enhance the English skills of fourth graders at Finca Seis elementary school in Sarapiquí. Moreover, this study examines the book's pedagogical, cognitive and linguistic activities and the relationship between its content and the seven units required by the Ministry of Public Education. The information was provided by the principal of the school, administrative authorities,



teachers, students, parents, the publisher “Publitex”, teachers and students from other primary schools such as El Bambú, IDA Otoya y Finca Dos. The purpose of having different participants allowed to widen the researcher’s vision about the effectiveness of the textbook and its role as a pedagogical tool between the teachers and the students. This investigation draws the need to include more pedagogical as well as culture activities to the textbook. It also recommends strengthening listening and speaking skills which will allow students to improve their knowledge of the language. In addition, there is an interactive virtual software proposal on developing not only two skills of the target language but also the four English skills. This software summarizes each of the seven units recommended by the Ministry of Public Education. As a result of this investigation complementary material was designed to approach specific needs identified.

**Key words:** Textbook, textbook evaluation, textbook selection, material evaluation, evaluation, authentic materials, materials.

## I Introduction

The main objective of teaching English as a foreign language is to enable learners to develop communicative competence in English so that they may interact successfully in the real world using this international language. Textbooks have played an important role in facilitating this process. They have also been the most common form of teaching materials. Likewise, they are important references that teachers use for teaching a variety of languages. They have been considered very effective tools since they can be used as a syllabus or pedagogical guide to direct the process of teaching and learning of a course.

English teachers use textbooks as a basis for their lessons; however, in some cases these textbooks do not reflect the reality of the classroom in terms of students’ needs and interests. They might not provide the type of activities needed for teaching. Therefore, teachers should have the expertise to evaluate a textbook in order to choose the activities that serve learners’ needs, course objectives and curriculum content. In addition,, other pedagogical materials should also be carefully selected or designed by teachers themselves. Textbooks should be used as supplementary support to teach the lesson. Once teachers identify what textbook to use for their course, they should start creating, adapting, and adopting materials to help students learn in a more effective way.

Due to the need that fourth grade students at Finca Seis School have in the educational region of Sarapiquí<sup>6</sup> to develop their four English skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) in the educational region of Sarapiquí, the English teacher always has to find ways to facilitate this development. Therefore, the textbook “Play and Learn”<sup>7</sup> from Publitex (a Costa Rican publisher) was chosen for this purpose. This textbook was

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<sup>6</sup> The educational system in Costa Rica works in the seven provinces as follows: there are 27 branches around the country called Educational Regions. Here, the regional advisors are in charge of supervising both elementary and secondary schools that need to comply with the laws and the English curriculum established by the Ministry of Public Education.

<sup>7</sup> Year 2010

chosen based on the contents stated in the seven units that the MEP English curriculum<sup>8</sup> suggests for public elementary schools. Similarly, this textbook intends to improve students' skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking by making them become more independent learners. Even though MEP recommends this textbook, it is not supplied to the teachers. Consequently, they should search for the most appropriate textbooks to use in their schools since they have been empowered to select the best materials to provide the students with tools that really fit the curriculum's requirements. These materials should include sensitiveness to other cultures, broader knowledge of the world, and discovery of new ways for communicating with others (through linguistic, social and cultural options).

Particularly, this research intends to evaluate the pertinence and appropriateness of "Play and Learn" used in two fourth grade groups at Finca Seis School. The research will not only be essential to explore the role that the book has on learning and teaching English to develop learners' communicative competence, but also the role it has in real life situations inside the classroom, and thus determine the learners' and English teachers' perceptions concerning the advantages or disadvantages (effectiveness and suitability) of this textbook.

### 1.1 The Problem and Its Importance

The study was conducted in two fourth grade groups at the Finca Seis School located in Río Frío, Horquetas, Sarapiquí, Heredia, Costa Rica. The purpose of this study is to assess the overall effectiveness and suitability of the primary school level textbook entitled "Play and Learn" for fourth graders. This textbook follows the content of the English curriculum for fourth graders at elementary schools of Costa Rica's Ministry of Public Education.

Hence, the use of this textbook becomes important because it not only facilitates the planning process, but also encourages the students to work more independently in the classroom. Moreover, the textbook leads the teacher to plan and develop more appropriate activities to improve students' English proficiency level in reading and writing.

However, it has some weaknesses for instance; it lacks wrap-up activities, warm-ups, listening and oral activities. Additionally, the textbook does not have pedagogical activities, such as board games, videos (CD), songs, games, flashcards, puzzles, crosswords, letters soups, jeopardy, pictures and memory games that can enhance motivation and fun in the classroom. This is a limitation for all English teachers to teach English, and those from the educational region of Sarapiquí are not excluded from it. The lack of pedagogical materials from textbooks has forced some teachers of English to adapt, design and create materials to solve the problem. Some others decide to buy other textbooks provided by some publishers such as Santillana, Eduvision, and Publitex.

In fact, teachers should consider not only what materials should be used to fit the students' needs, but also MEP's curriculum. This consideration and the searching for materials to teach a curriculum could become a frustrating process for some teachers

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<sup>8</sup> Units of the MEP curriculum: socializing, keeping healthy, family ties, my social life, holidays and Celebrations in my region, Costa Rican identity and environmental education.

because there is not an adequate book to base their teaching on. Teachers necessarily become creators, designers, and artists because they must think of obtaining the most appropriate materials to meet the curriculum goal and. For this reason, some teachers have created their own booklet of additional materials.

The process of creating, adapting, and adopting materials also requires one to be acquainted with the main purpose of teaching English, to know what and how to teach, and the ways students learn best. According to the national English Curriculum, the main objective is:

To integrate and interrelate the four skills as understanding, performing and following relationships in the communication process which reflects the distinction between receptive (listening and reading) and productive performance (speaking and writing) to achieve the communicative competence appropriate for the level (National English Syllabus for II Cycle: 2005, 38).

If the textbook “Play and Learn” does not fulfill some of these four skills, it is necessary to elaborate a complementary proposal of the textbook used in order to accomplish MEP’s objectives. This complementary proposal will be designed considering the information received from the application of the community diagnosis<sup>9</sup> and the different instruments applied to elicit all necessary information from the students. Moreover, the application of the diagnosis included questionnaires and checklists to better understand the most relevant negative factors of the textbook and to come up with the most appropriate solution to strengthen language weaknesses from the information elicited in the diagnosis, and the instruments applied to the informants, Finca Seis School Institutional Plan<sup>10</sup> (2011, 58) indicated some social factors that could guide these students positively or negatively in their learning process. Following will be presented some information found in the institutional plan.

First, the institutional plan mentions that some parents have an income that ranges from one hundred thousand to two hundred thousand colons every two weeks. This may be a limitation for some of these students when trying to buy materials like English textbooks or textbooks for other subjects such as Science, Social studies, Math, and others. Second, other parents have an income that ranges from two hundred thousand to more than three hundred thousand colons every two weeks which means that students can afford buying what the school authorities require in terms of didactic materials. This is not perceived as a limitation for the parents. Affording textbooks helps learners to be motivated to study or at least provides them with better conditions for learning. Finally, the institutional plan stated that some parents are teachers, nurses, managers, or work in the administrative department of a public or private institution, such as the National Bank, the hospital, or the pineapple and banana companies. In fact, the parents’ academic level of education is an advantage that can positively influence in the students’ learning process. Notwithstanding, in most of the cases both parents work and this means that students are taken care of by relatives or

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<sup>9</sup> This data collection instrument was designed and applied by the school board and it was taken into consideration in the development of this research.

<sup>10</sup> This is an updated and private file that contains the background and whole information of the community, the institution since it was founded and the students.

babysitters. Additionally, there are some parents who did not complete their basic formal education. This is a negative factor that may interfere or affect the process of learning for some students because these parents mentioned that they did not know how to explain the English assignments to their children.

In fact, the researcher came to the conclusion that it would be necessary to design complementary material for the textbook from which the students can interact more actively in the classroom. This material should help learners to develop their English skills. Considering the above needs and some of the conclusions presented in the institutional plan, the researcher will suggest and design pedagogical material that includes board games, videos (CD), songs, flashcards, games such as, puzzles, crosswords, letter soups, jeopardy, memory games, and will help both teachers and students on how to use voice thread, scribus and wikis to accomplish some of the objectives established by the school, the publisher, and MEP's curriculum. Finally, any kind of materials that the teacher can use should be evaluated in order to determine if they are effective and useful for teachers and students in regard to content and teaching activities.

## **1.2 Objectives of the Research**

These are the main and specific objectives to be accomplished throughout this research.

### **1.3 General Objective:**

The main objective of this study is to evaluate the overall effectiveness and suitability of the textbook "Play and Learn" for two fourth grade groups at Finca Seis elementary school in Sarapiquí.

### **1.4 Specific Objectives:**

1.4.1 To determine if the textbook "Play and Learn" is useful for the teacher in terms of pedagogical and social needs.

1.4.2 To determine if the textbook "Play and Learn" is useful for the students in terms of cognitive and linguistic needs.

1.4.3 To elaborate complementary pedagogical material to facilitate the process of learning established in MEP's curriculum.

## **1.5 Research Questions**

1.5.1 Is the textbook useful to achieve the students' cognitive and linguistic needs?

1.5.2 Does the book have activities that enhance the four language skills?

1.5.3 Does the textbook meet the teacher's pedagogical and social needs?

## II Framework of Reference

The following section describes the impact of materials evaluation on language teaching and the importance of using textbooks when teaching a foreign language. In addition, textbooks have become not only one of the main sources for teaching, but also the core element to support a lesson in the teaching and learning process. However, this was not the case three or four decades ago. Tomlinson analyses the history of materials development, and explains that, “educators had not given any real importance to textbooks until the 1990s when books on materials development started to be published [...] and that the topic on material development was treated as a subcategory of methodology” (qtd in Fredriksson and Olsson: 2006, 7, 8). In this regard, Fredriksson and Olsson explain the reasons for teacher’s interests in materials development. They say, “What is really important in the development of materials is the realization of teachers” (2006, 8). This realization means that the teachers may become aware and proud of the type of work they may develop with the students and the progress they perceive from them as a result of using a particular textbook when learning a foreign language. Therefore, teachers need to be able to evaluate, adapt, and produce materials that are appropriate and that complement their teaching.

Unfortunately, some teachers are more concerned with teaching content and using the right methodology so they do not pay attention to how to develop communicative competency. In this regard, Wei states, “The primary role of the teacher in the classroom is to facilitate the student-student communication process through effective learning tasks” (2010, 78). This means that the learners should be the center of the learning process. Therefore, the teacher should create a learning environment that motivates students to actively engage in the classroom. That is one of the reasons why software design is important. The purpose is to have students develop virtual activities to enhance their knowledge from a different perspective. They will learn by doing. They will learn by playing virtually.

Another reason to consider when evaluating and selecting teaching materials is that students come to school already exposed to different kinds of resources such as technology and textbooks. These resources have become a challenge for teachers. This challenge has made teachers come up with new approaches including the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) that aims broadly to apply the theories of the communicative approach by making communication the goal of language teaching. Another approach, Task-Based Instruction (TBI) helps teachers make the lessons more attractive for the students. This means that the lesson, in which they have to complete a central task, must be student centered. Moreover, the amount of language learned is determined by what happens while students are completing the task. Teachers should consider that technology not only facilitates the inclusion of various types of media within a lesson but also addresses the needs of multiple learning styles and abilities.

On the other hand, the traditional approaches are based on the use of language in communicative situations without resort to the native language. The term natural approach came up in the eighties and according to Krashen merely emphasized that the principles underlying the method were believed to conform to the principles of naturalistic language

learning in young children (qtd in Richards and Rodgers: 2001, 179). In this approach there is an emphasis on input rather than practice. This approach mentions that grammar is not the central component of the language, but language is viewed as a vehicle for communicating meanings and messages. This refers to the way students learn and acquire a second language. In addition, Krashen and Terrell stated that “acquisition can take place only when people understand messages in the target language” (qtd in Richards and Rodgers: 2001, 180) the Input Hypothesis (IH) says that an important condition for language acquisition is the acquired input language that contains structure beyond his/her current level of competence in the language. Moreover, Krashen states that “acquisition is the natural and unconscious process that involves the naturalistic development of the language proficiency through understanding language and through using language for meaningful communication (qtd in Richards and Rodgers: 2001, 181). This is an unconscious and intuitive process of constructing the system of a language, not unlike the process used by a child to pick up a language. On the contrary, learning “refers to a process in which conscious rules about the forms of a language are developed” (qtd in Richards and Rodgers: 2001, 181). Learners are generally aware of their own process. Fluency in second language performance is due to what learners have acquired, not what learners have learned and learning cannot become acquisition. In fact, learning cannot lead to the acquisition of a language.

On the other hand, it is significant to say that teaching should also be students centered where interaction lead them to the improvement of the learning. The Cooperative Language Learning (CLL) is an approach that makes maximum use of cooperative activities involving pairs and small groups of learners in the classroom. These learners can interact and work together with classmates and the teacher as the instructor of the lesson. This approach is according to Olsen and Kagan “group of learning activity organized so that learning is dependent on the socially structure exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others” (qtd in Richards and Rodgers: 2001, 192). Considering that learners develop communicative competence in a language by conversing in socially structured situations teachers should provide natural environments in the classroom.

In fact, the teacher must provide cooperative learning activities and group work rather than competition while learning. Richards and Rodgers state that “cooperative learning is the instructional use of small groups through which students work together to maximize their own and each other’s learning” (2001, 195). In this approach the teacher has to create a highly structured and well organized learning environment in the classroom. The teacher should set goals and assign students to group, role and select materials and time. Finally, should teacher provide broad questions to challenge students’ thinking.

These approaches guide the selection of materials. The teacher should consider using a textbook as a crucial resource in developing the lesson. Teachers should know what to analyze when selecting textbooks and how to evaluate them by recognizing that this is an ongoing process. In other words, the evaluation process occurs before, during and after the development of materials. This process will also allow teachers to review textbooks that

can help learners and teachers to study the language in a more effective way.

When selecting a textbook, the teacher should consider certain aspects such as the cultural component, length, size, and pictures that accompany the text. Does the text line up with the (national standards) national curriculum? These and other considerations can fulfill and develop the students' communicative competences. Textbooks provide teachers with tools that help facilitate the teaching process. Tomlinson, defines a textbook as a book "which provides the core materials for a course and which covers many issues in a single volume" (qtd in Aytug: 2007, 2). This means that these textbooks are prepared according to specific requirements established in a country or by private organizations. These guidelines can be used to design textbooks to teach subjects such as science, reading, listening or any other subject according to the level of the student. Textbooks are designed to be used around the world without consideration for specific cultural aspects, pedagogical needs, or social context within a given country. These types of textbooks take various aspects of different countries and generalize them to fit any learning situation. The main issue in selecting textbooks is to search for the appropriateness of the textbook in a particular teaching context. Material designers cannot say whether a textbook is appropriate or not, but textbooks are helpful tools to support the lesson. It is difficult to find a perfect textbook which can be suitable for a particular group of students; this research focuses on analyzing whether or not the textbook is effective in enhancing the students' language skills.

These textbooks for children lead them in the process of learning English when teachers use strategies. Young learners are very active; they process new experiences, ask questions, and try things out, experimenting, practicing over and over until they master new skills. They are always more active and enthusiastic than adults because they learn by doing. As Nunan cites, he recommends an approach that encourages students to become active explorers of language (qtd in Cowan: 2008, 34). Children need activities as cooperative work individually or in groups, games, materials as pictures, flashcards realia and natural environments to fulfill their needs. They also learn by listening to music and watching videos, imitating sounds, sentences, gestures, role-playing, singing, playing games, and observing.

### **III Conclusion**

This study is the result of an attempt to analyze descriptively the English textbook series, 2010 edition of the Book "Play and Learn", which covers all the seven units suggested by the Ministry of Public Education and it is meant to be for students in fourth grade at primary school whose ages are from nine to eleven years old.

This study explored the efficiency of the textbook "Play and Learn" used at Finca Seis Elementary School concerning the developing of the four English skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) and the accomplishment of the MEP's objective in Costa Rica. Another aim of the study was to design a complementary and pedagogical material for the textbook. The results showed that the participants agreed on the efficiency of the textbook in regards to reading and writing activities, but its evaluation depicted lack of listening and speaking activities. Also, there are some other deficiencies of the book such as

instructions since they are not clear; they are just commands like, write, color, listen, repeat, read, practice, answer, cut and paste, match, draw, circle, unscramble, and complete. This does not mean that the instructions are incorrect, what the textbook intends to is make it easy for the students when working alone. However, it is necessary to make the instructions clear in order to guide the students specifically to complete the tasks.

Even though the results indicated that the textbook is appealing for the students in terms of price, images, length size, and content, it is not appropriate to teach the target culture because it does not contain information about the countries where English is spoken as a native language. In other words, it is ineffective in terms of reflecting the representations of the target language culture (L2). This research intended to analyze whether or not the textbook is useful for the students in terms of cognitive and linguistic needs. The information gathered said that the textbook matches the students' English proficiency and cognitive level which allow them to work without any problems in the classroom. Additionally, it is useful for both teachers and students since it meets some of their pedagogical and social needs when interacting in the classroom.

Finally, the textbook accomplishes the seven units of study set by MEP. It also develops reading and writing well because it makes the students create short paragraphs (a three or four lines paragraph) without teaching them grammatical rules since grammar is taught by the teacher inductively. The book uses a discovery learning approach in which the students learn throughout an inductive approach. As a result, to reinforce the four English skills was designed complementary pedagogical material to facilitate the process of learning. This complementary material intends to help the students develop pedagogical wrap-up activities. However, since there is no single textbook that can provide adequately all the needs of the learners, they should, therefore, be exposed to enrichment supplementary materials as complements. It is recommended that teachers provide extra-materials to guide the learners in every single activity and make the textbooks learner-centered.

## **IV Recommendations**

Based on the information gathered from the different instruments applied to collect the data there are a series of recommendations for both teachers and authorities, as well as the publishing house.

### **4.1 Recommendations for the Teachers of English and the Authorities**

Every teacher should be conscious of the fact that teaching a foreign language is time – consuming and requires materials development. They should have in mind that a textbook is not the only tool to work with the students. Textbooks just help them to accomplish their work. The teachers' responsibility is to complement the activities provided in the book with some others designed by them. Textbooks can be used as a syllabus or pedagogical guide to direct the process of teaching and learning in a course. They serve as a guide to the teacher when conducting the lessons. This study was based on the development of the four language skills but further research can be made based on teaching culture.



On the other hand, the application of the instruments and their interpretation should be conducted three months before going through the field. For example, observations can be carried out this way; the researcher would observe the possible reactions of the teachers and students to the elements of the textbook. Similarly, the most and the least required aspects of the textbook can be determined by taking into consideration the students' participations. But again, it requires time and the researcher should be aware of it. Finally, a teacher must design his/her own materials because if the textbook does not have appropriate or enough tasks for different skills, the lesson would become boring. Moreover, the authorities (principal and regional advisor), the English teachers and parents should meet to make the decision on the kind of textbook to be used, ways to encourage students to use L2 and communicative activities that make them work successfully. This researcher will gladly contribute to future researches considering in details some of the complement that a textbook should have.

#### **4.2 Recommendation for the Publishing House**

The study made the teacher and students identify some of the virtues and weaknesses of this textbook. For example, it should include the aspect of culture not only from Costa Rica but also from the countries where the target language is spoken so, students understand other ways of living. Instructions should be clear to avoid misunderstandings. Colorful images should be included to catch the students' attention better. Finally, listening, speaking activities and the cultural background should be included that the features mentioned above become part of this textbook.

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## Implementation of GBT Games to Improve Students' Speaking Skill

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**Resumen:** El uso de juegos en el aprendizaje de un segundo idioma es relacionado con importantes factores tales como ¿Cuándo?, ¿Cómo? y ¿porque usarlos en la clase? Incluso, va más allá de divertirse pues su contribución radica en la exposición de los estudiantes a un auténtico uso del idioma, la creación de un ambiente de enseñanza relajado, y la interacción significativa entre el profesor y el alumno. Basados en la clara contribución de los juegos, una investigación cuasi-experimental fue llevada a cabo en un colegio público en Pérez Zeledón. El estudio se desarrolló para investigar la efectividad de los juegos GBT (guessing, board and tell-tale) en el reforzamiento de la expresión oral en un grupo de octavo año del colegio nocturno de Pérez Zeledón. Finalmente, los resultados evidenciaron que, cuando se usa apropiadamente y con suficiente tiempo, los juegos GBT pueden convertirse en una buena herramienta para reforzar la expresión oral de inglés en los estudiantes.

**Palabras clave:** expresión oral, actividades dinámicas, juegos GBT, mejoramiento, aprendizaje

**Abstract:** The use of games in language learning deals with important factors such as when, how, and why to use them in the second language class. The implementation of games in the classroom goes beyond having fun; its contribution entails the exposure to authentic use of the language and the building of a relaxing teaching environment. It also promotes meaningful interaction between teachers and students. Based on the clear contribution of games, a quasi-experimental investigation was conducted in a public school in Pérez Zeledón. The study was directed toward researching the effectiveness of GBT (guessing, board and tell-tale) games to reinforce eight graders' speaking. Finally, the results evidenced that, when used appropriately and with enough time, guessing, board and tell-tale games are helpful tools to reinforce students' English speaking skill.

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**Key words:** oral expression, dynamic activities, GBT games, improvement, learning

## I Introduction

Learning a foreign language helps to bridge the gap among people from different countries. In fact, mastering English is a common goal individuals look for in order to improve their knowledge and have better job opportunities. Because of this assumption, schools and high schools in different countries offer opportunities to study a second language as part of their curriculum. The Ministry of Public Education (MEP) in Costa Rica stated in the English syllabus (2001) that “the English program offers the students a second language which enables them to communicate within a broader social-economic context in and outside Costa Rica” (p 13). This governmental decision favors high schoolers directly since they are provided with language learning opportunities from early stages.

Speaking is one of the most difficult skills to master since it involves aspects such as pronunciation, intonation patterns, vocabulary, and fluency. Teaching speaking in high schools is essential to empower students to participate in active and real communication situations. Its importance lies on the fact that it is difficult to be communicatively competent. However, the relevance of speaking instruction in high schools is currently underestimated. Even though teaching this skill is a hard and time consuming task, it should always be emphasized as a means to prepare linguistically competent students so that they can use the language to communicate their ideas effectively.

The reinforcement of the speaking skill in English classes can be achieved by the use of different and interesting activities with varied levels of proficiency. It requires innovative teachers willing to implement creative activities to get students involved in class development. Moreover, games in the classroom can provide meaningful interactions between teachers and students, and create confident working environments. In regard to this, Wright, Betteridge and Buckby (1984) agreed that “games help and encourage many learners to sustain their interest and work”(p. 2). By incorporating games in the lesson plans, students might feel that they are not actually working but playing in a relaxed environment while learning without even noticing it. Additionally, the level of anxiety and pressure that students may feel in the classroom can be lowered by using active oral games. Lee (1995) postulated that the way of learning is a serious process; consequently, fun and laughter are not part of learning (p.2). However, she also admitted that there are reasons why fun and games contribute positively to learning a language. She emphasized that “It is possible to learn a language as well as enjoy oneself at the same time. One of the best ways of doing this is through games” (p.2). Indeed, oral active games may improve students’ English learning and boost more confident and comforting environments for teachers and students.

Keeping in mind the previous conceptions, a study about the role of games in the classroom as a way to improve speaking abilities emerged. The objectives postulated for this investigation are:

**1.1 General objective:**

To improve the speaking skill of students through the use of GBT games (guessing-board-tell tales) in group 8-6 at Pérez Zeledón Night High School.

**1.2 Specific objectives:**

- To design creative GBT games.
- To implement the GBT games in group 8-6 in Pérez Zeledón Night High School.
- To analyze the impact of GBT games in the students speaking performance.

**II Literature review****2.1 Language Learning**

Every person acquires his/her mother tongue, naturally. This process of acquisition takes time. Little by little children deal with the language and improve it until they are able to manipulate the language at will. Learning a foreign language is a very different process. Students do not pick the language from the environment, but they must force themselves into the language in order to be successful. This process can be sometimes hard and tiring. Nonetheless, throughout this development of language management there is a character who plays a main role: the teacher. Professors are the guides that help students to learn a language. However, they deal with factors regarding the learners, environment, and the language itself. Teaching is a very complex process. It cannot be described just as delivering information to someone, but includes a variety of aspects to consider.

When teaching a language, educators must be aware of the different students' features like intrinsic motivation, learning conditions, cognition, age, and sex. Fincher (1994) depicted learning as a progressive route from a certain point (unawareness) to another (knowledge) (p. 58). She defined learning as: "... a process of progressive change from ignorance to knowledge, from inability to competence, and from indifference to understanding." (p.58) Furthermore, Johnson, Johnson, and Smith (1991) delineated learning in terms of interaction when expressing that "Learning is a social process that occurs through interpersonal interaction within a cooperative contest. Individuals, working together, construct shared understandings and knowledge" (p. 26-27). In addition, Svinicki, Hagen, and Meyer (1996) adjoined the importance of students' aim claiming that in order to start learning, students need to feel motivated to learn (p. 4). They consider students' intention to learn as a condition in order for the knowledge to be accessible.

The implementation of a communicative methodology provides opportunities for students to be in contact with real communication in the target language which leads to a holistic mastery of it. According to the MEP's English syllabus, teachers should follow the communicative approach which "provides the basis for the methodology used in the English classroom" (p. 23). The main characteristics of the communicative methodology are the use of authentic language that should be introduced to produce real contexts; the target language is vehicle for classroom communication; and games are important because they share some common characteristics with real communicative events. Then, the role of

a communicative methodology in the classroom is purposeful because it leads students to have real contact with the target language.

Teachers who intend to use the communicative approach should focus on goals that lead students to be able to communicate in real-life situations. According to Galloway (1993), the major goal of a communicative class is that students can become competent in communication in the target language (para. 3). Moreover, students must be able to use the language appropriately in specific social contexts and negotiate meaning with their interlocutors. Another important aspect of the communicative approach is the use of authentic material which serves students to feel that they are actually dealing with real situations as if they were native speakers. In sum, the relevance of a communicative methodology is visualized in the student's ability to produce the target language in authentic contexts.

## **2.2 English Teaching in Costa Rica**

The main aim established by the Ministry of Public Education in the English syllabus (2001) regarding the teaching of this subject are “to offer students a second language which will allow them to communicate with people from other countries, both in Costa Rica and abroad, and to give students a tool for direct access to scientific, technological and humanistic knowledge” (pp.13-14). With this intention, this system gives equal opportunities to all students to develop their abilities, to reach social and personal growth. Education provides the tools and means by which students learn, experience, and then, shape their capacities to enhance their understanding of the world. In this syllabus, the general objectives are to develop the ability to use the language effectively in practical communication, to develop language skills and attitudes required for further study, to offer an insight of the culture of other countries where language is spoken, to develop awareness of the nature of the language, to provide enjoyment and intellectual development, to promote positive attitudes towards foreign cultures, and people, and to develop students' understanding of themselves and their cultures (pp. 13-14). In brief, the English syllabus was designed to led students go in a linguistic path that enable them to become communicatively competent and open mind toward other cultures.

## **2.3 Games to Reinforce the Speaking Skill in the EFL Classroom**

The process of learning a second language can be tough, but there are ways to ease its complexity. Language learning requires a lot of effort and sometimes it causes frustration and hard work on the part of those involved in the process. Since language learning is a long-term process, teachers deal with difficulties and sometimes complicated situations in their classrooms. Mainly because students might feel frustrated not only towards the target language but also towards the teaching methods. There is a way to make language learning less complex and more interactive, which is by using games. Games can help students to reduce feelings such as fear, anxiety, frustration, dissatisfaction and anger. Ersoz (2000) pointed out that if games are well-chosen, they can become an invaluable tool for teachers because they give students a break and let them practice speaking, listening, reading and writing (p.5). Nonetheless, there are some aspects that contribute to the importance of using

games in the classroom such as the behavioral game theory, the use of games in language learning and speaking games in English classrooms.

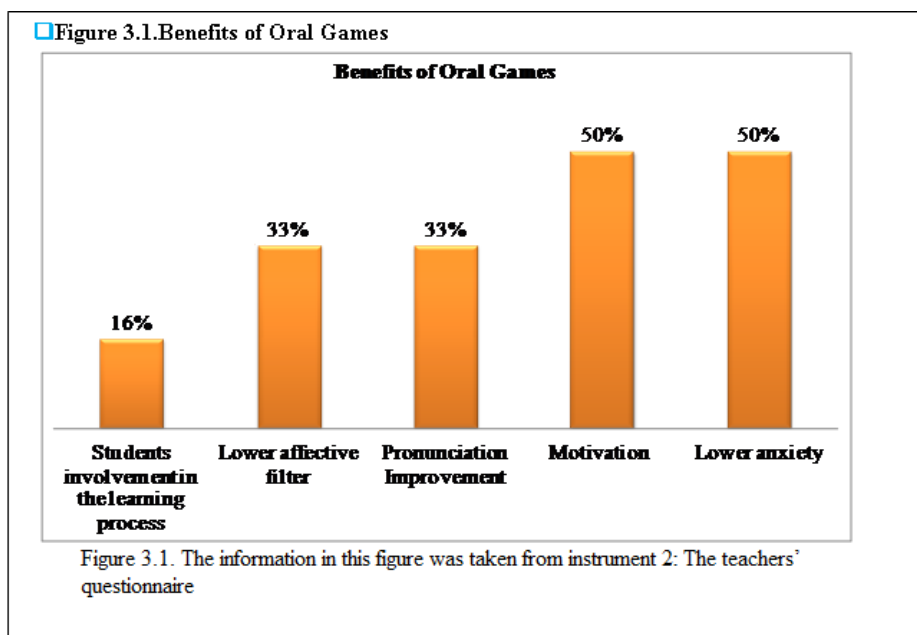
The Behavioral Game theory helps to understand how people and even students react or behave in different contexts where strategic situations are imposed by other mechanisms or people. Camerer (2007) said that “a person needs time to understand the situation; besides, he or she must anticipate what others will do and what others will infer from the person’s own action” ( p. 10). In the classroom, students need time to understand instructions, methods and strategies to dig up the lesson. Thus, teachers’ tolerance is important to infer the students’ needs and support them in the class. In regard to game strategies, the educator in charge of the game requires to set a number of rules to make the game interactive and effective; otherwise, it will not work as a part of the teaching process.

One of the main goals of speaking games in English classrooms is to improve learners' communicative competence. In order to do this, teachers have to plan active and useful lessons where students can express themselves and learn how to make use of rules related to social and cultural environments. A distinguishing characteristic of effective use of games is that that students should not be allowed to use their mother tongue while playing. Thus, the use of conversational games in classrooms will succeed as part of teaching speaking process of second language learning. Teachers should not overuse classroom games, but they certainly have to know when and how to use them to avoid time waste and unsuccessful learning. Games can be useful tools because students can feel more confident and motivated to speak. Nonetheless, games are very helpful activities in that they provide fun, motivation and encouragement to second language learners to speak in the target language.

### **III Data Analysis**

This study is quantitative in nature since its main goal is to find out events and results from the phenomenon observed and show a quantitative account of results. It followed a pre-experimental one-group pretest/posttest design where one experimental group received a treatment and took a pretest and posttest to measure the effectiveness of this aforementioned treatment. The population considered was eight graders (thirty six girls and twenty five boys) in a public night high school. This group was selected due to the principal and the collaborative teacher’s permission and willingness when carrying out the implementation of the methodology. The instruments administered to collect the information were questionnaires class-observations, a pre-test and a post-test. A description of the treatment is included in appendix one in this document.

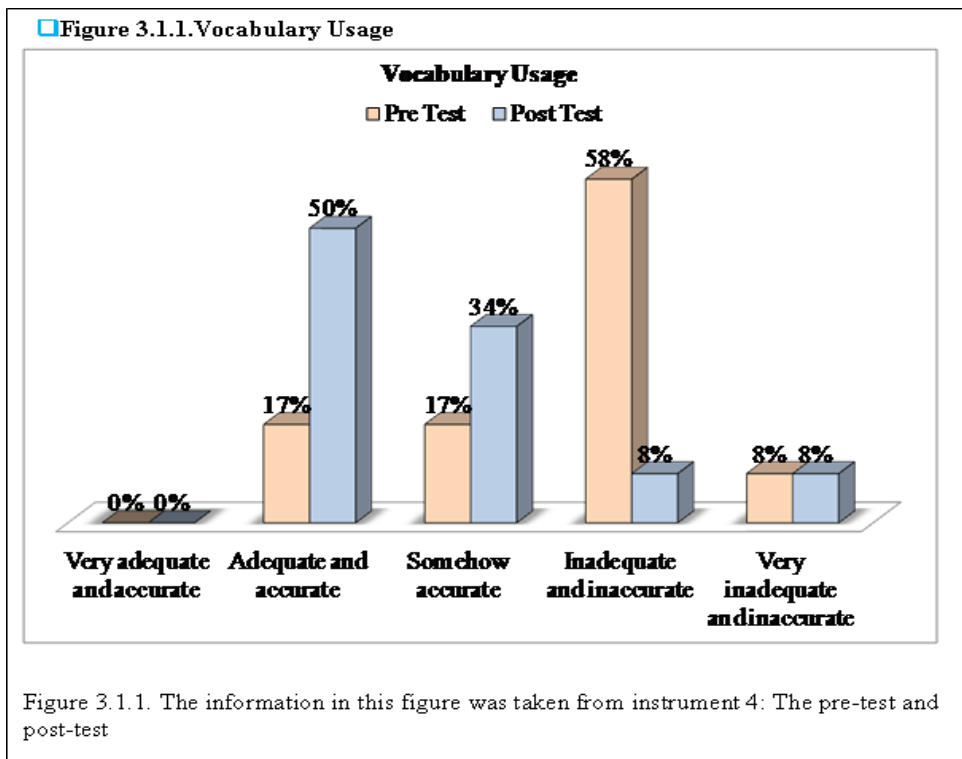
Teachers provided key information about the topic under investigation. They identified some direct benefits of using oral games in the EFL classroom. They believe that those games are appealing for students to learn the foreign language during English classes. The information reveals that motivation and the decrease of anxiety are considered the two main benefits provided by oral games. The next figure displays their answers clearly.



Motivation and low anxiety were recognized as a benefit by 50% of the informants, at the same time, they affirmed that games help them to feel more comfortable when participating in class. Also, a low affective filter and the improvement in pronunciation are relevant benefits based on the teachers' responses. In addition, students' involvement in the learning process is not taken as a remarkable benefit with the implementation of oral games since only 16% of the interviewed teachers mentioned this aspect.—Nevertheless, the information does not specify why the students' involvement is not a relevant factor for them.

The data provided by the teachers reveal that even though there is a majority of teachers who implement games as part of their classroom activities, still some of them choose not to do so. A remarkable 83% of the teachers admitted the use of board games and guessing games to reinforce students' English learning. Though, tell-tale games are not part of teachers' preferences. Most of the informants agreed on the advantage of using games to reinforce the students' speaking skill and to provide them with opportunities to practice the language. Yet, they seem to favor active oral games, such as memory games or tic tac toe, over other activities, like debates.

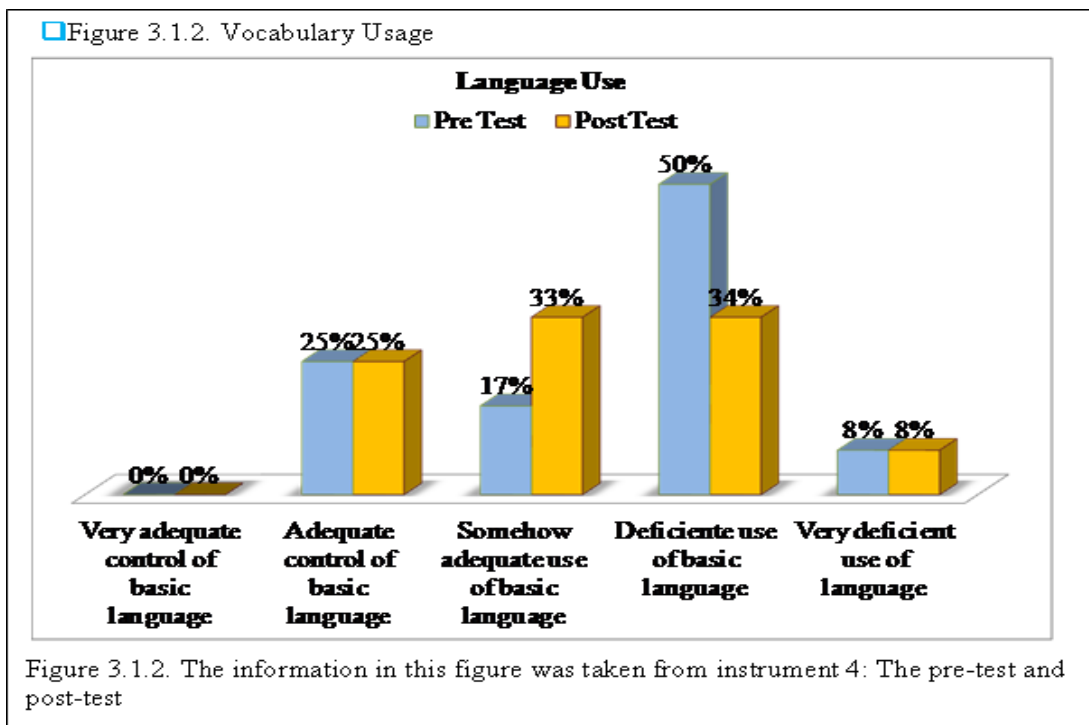
The next graph illustrates a contrastive analysis of the vocabulary management of the students before and after the implementation of the treatment. The data were gathered through the pre and post-test respectively.



The main finding in this analysis is that half of the students (50%) were able to use vocabulary adequately and accurately. Also, the percentage of students who presented somehow adequate use of the vocabulary increased. An important issue is that the percentage of the students who represented very inadequate use of vocabulary kept the same rank in both tests. It is also remarkable to notice the fact that despite the improvements, any of the students reached a very adequate and accurate use of the vocabulary. The information collected from the pre and post-test revealed the students' improvement in vocabulary after the implementation of the GTB games. This category is the one that presents a major fluctuation in the percentages. In regard to language use and communication of ideas there is improvement, but it is not remarkable.

Another aspect analyzed was the degree of the students' language use before and after the GBT games implementation which is represented in the next graph. Again, students' improvement was measured by contrasting their achievement in the pre and posttest.





The graph above demonstrates the degree of the students' language use before and after the GBT games implementation. There is some improvement in the language use from the pretest to the post-test. During the pre-test more than a half of the students showed to be deficient language users, but this percentage diminished during the post-test. Consequently, the percentage of students who managed somewhat adequate control of basic language structures increased. Furthermore, the percentage of the students who showed both, an adequate and a deficient control of basic language, did not increase. It is important to mention that any of the students reached the very adequate use of basic structures.

#### IV Conclusions

This section emphasizes the main conclusions drawn from the implementation of the GBT games (Guessing, Board and Tell-tale. First, a relevant finding is that most of the interviewed teachers are likely to use oral activities, including games to reinforce students' English speaking skill. Second, this study has found that teachers consider that oral games can bring benefits to students such as motivation and the decrease of anxiety. Third, the present study showed students' language improvement after the implementation of GBT (Guessing, Board and Tell-tale) games. Finally, the information gathered from this investigation reveals that the implementation of GBT games helps students to increase their vocabulary use in an average way. As a result, more time is necessary to be devoted to the implementation of the treatment.

#### 4.1 Recommendations

The subsequent ideas are provided for teachers who plan to use GBT in the classroom:

1. Teachers should be very organized when performing oral games to keep students participating actively.
2. Teachers should take into account students' willingness and abilities to participate in order to perform the different activities to avoid students' possible frustration and rejection.
3. The use of GBT games in English classrooms should be implemented frequently in order to reinforce students' language use.

#### Acknowledgements

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## Appendix 1

**Design**

The design consists of the implementation of GBT games (guessing, board, and tell-tale) to enhance students speaking performance. The methodology involves speaking activities implemented in group 8-6 in Pérez Zeledón Night High school. The implementation of this procedure (GBT) took four weeks and was applied to this population with the purpose of improving their English speaking skill. The researchers analyzed the specific problem with a pre-test, proposed a treatment with speaking activities, and evaluate the results through a post-test. The activities involved in this technique are based only on guessing, board and tell-tale.

The following chart shows the schedule for the implementation of the techniques:

Date	Activity
Week 1	1. Apple or Worm? (board game) 2. Catch me! (guessing game)
Week 2	3. Spin the roulette (board game) 4. Go ahead! (guessing game)
Week 3	5. Burn my Ride(board game) 6. Ball around (tell-tale game)
Week 4	7. Tell Me a Story(tell-tale game) 8. Smarty Me (guessing game)

**Description of the activities:****1. Apple or Worm?**

This activity provides the students with the opportunity to express their ideas. The game can be done based on any topic previously studied. Students are asked to answer questions. It is a board game about good and services. The steps to follow are:

- a) The teacher sticks four big test tubes made of paper on the board.
- b) Students are divided into four groups and each group is assigned a test tube.
- c) Each group chooses a leader.
- d) The leader of each group throws the dice and the group that gets the higher number starts.
- e) The teacher asks a question and the group in turn chooses which of the other groups answer the question.
- f) If the group answers correctly, they will receive an apple in their test tube, but if they answer wrong, they will receive a worm.
- g) Then, the teacher asks another question and the group which just answered choose which of the other groups is going to answer.
- h) This process is repeated as desired by the teacher.
- i) The winner is the group that has more apples in the test tube.

**2. Catch Me!**

This game enables the students to develop their listening and speaking skill. Some students recite different riddles, the others guess. This game is played in the next sequence:

- a) The class is divided into two groups.
- b) The teacher gives different riddles to students.
- c) Each group reads the riddles aloud while the others guess in half a minute.
- d) The winner group chooses a punishment for the group that loses.
- e) This process is repeated as desired by the teacher.

**3. Spin the roulette**

This technique encourages students to develop vocabulary actively by either providing an idea of their own or answering the questions on the roulette. The steps are the next:

- a) The class is divided into four groups.
- b) Each group chooses a leader who is in charge of spinning the roulette.
- c) The roulette has either questions about Goods and Services or a word related to the topic.
- d) If they get a question they answer it; if not each member of the group provides a sentence using the word they get in the roulette.

**4. Go ahead!**

This activity emphasizes students' ability to find places and give directions. A map on the board is the means for students to accomplish the task. The steps are:

- a) The class is divided into three groups.
- b) The teacher assigns the name of some places to each group.

- c) Based on the map each group, one by one, explains the direction of one of the places they were assigned.
- d) The other groups guess as fast as possible
- e) The winner is the group that guesses more places.

### 5. Burn my ride

This game helps students to improvise and to use the vocabulary they already learned. The steps are the following:

- a) The class is divided into four groups.
- b) Each one is given a paper car.
- c) A paper speedway is placed over some tables.
- d) The teacher has questions and asks them out loud one by one.
- e) Each group writes their answer in a piece of paper. When all groups have the answer they show it in order to check the answers.
- f) The teacher decides which group, or groups, got the right answer.
- g) The groups that got it right will go forward on the speedway. The ones who got it wrong will also go forward, but will miss a part of the car.
- h) The winner group is the one that gets to the target with most of the car pieces.

### 6. Ball around

This technique's focus is on students' speaking performance when interacting among them. This is a telltale game. The steps to follow up are:

- a) Each student is given a picture.
- b) The teacher throws the ball and the student who catches it starts a story saying a sentence based on the picture.
- c) The teacher picks the ball up every time a student participates and throws it to another student.
- d) This process is repeated several times until the teacher asks one students to give an end to the story.

### 7. Tell me a story

For this activity, it was taken into account the need of development of individual unrehearsed speaking activities in group 8-6. The steps are:

- a) Each student is given a word.
- b) The professor will start the story.
- c) One by one, the students will add more incidents to the story by using the word they were given previously.
- d) There are no limits to the imagination and amount of information each student can add.
- e) At the end, all students will come up with an end for the story.

### **8. Smarty Me**

This game enhances students' oral interaction, which is essential in the speaking learning process. Students have to guess what the presenter is. By developing this activity the listening skill is also improved, since both listening and speaking are involved. The directions for this game are the following:

- a) Students are divided into four groups.
- b) Students are assigned the name of a like or a dislike.
- c) They have three minutes to think about features to describe themselves, based on the given word in front of their classmates. The group that guesses

## Error Correction in the EFL Classroom

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**Resumen:** Cuando los estudiantes comienzan el aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera, se encuentran en un proceso de inter-lenguaje: una etapa en la cual no están usando su lengua materna pero tampoco la forma estándar del lenguaje meta. Es en este intento por usar el lenguaje meta donde aparecen diferentes tipos de errores que pueden ser lexicales, fonéticos o gramaticales, entre otros. Los errores juegan un papel muy importante en el aprendizaje de una lengua, porque estos muestran como el estudiante atraviesa el proceso de adquirir las formas correctas del idioma y así lograr comunicarse. El docente de idioma extranjero enfrenta entonces decisiones tales como: cuáles errores se deben corregir, como debe llevarse a cabo la corrección, cuál es el momento apropiado para dar retroalimentación, y quién debe participar corrigiendo errores. El presente estudio de caso pretende analizar cómo se da la corrección de errores en el aula de lengua extranjera a nivel de enseñanza primaria. Por medio de una guía de observación, se determinaron y compararon las técnicas de corrección utilizadas por docentes novatos y docentes más experimentados para establecer diferencias y similitudes entre ambos tipos de docentes. Se encontró que las técnicas varían según la actividad que se realiza, no obstante la tendencia general de ambos fue proveer la respuesta correcta a los estudiantes como recurso para ahorrar tiempo. Sin embargo, los novatos usaron más variedad de técnicas de corrección que dan oportunidad a los estudiantes de analizar sus errores y autocorregirse.

**Descriptores:** aprendizaje de una lengua, errores, equivocaciones corrección de errores, técnicas.

**Abstract:** When students start learning a foreign language, they find themselves in an 'interlanguage continuum', a stage in which they are using neither their first language nor the 'standard' form of the target language. It is in this attempt to use the target language where lexical, phonetic, or grammatical errors, among others take place. Errors play an important role in language learning because they show how the learner goes through the process of acquiring the correct forms of the language to achieve communication. The EFL teacher, then, faces decisions such as, which learner errors should be addressed, how correction should be carried out, what the appropriate time to give feedback on errors is, and who should participate

in correcting errors. The present case study aimed to analyze how error correction was taking place within the foreign language classroom at primary schools. By means of an observation guide, the techniques used for error correction by novice and experienced teachers were determined, and compared to establish differences and similarities between the two types of teachers. It was found that correction techniques vary according to the activity being practiced, but the general tendency for both types of teachers is to provide the correct answer to students as a means of saving time. Nonetheless, the novice teacher used a wider variety of correction techniques giving students the opportunity to analyze their errors and self-correct.

**Key words:** language learning, error, mistakes, error correction, techniques.

## I Introduction

Learning a foreign language encounters students with a series of complex mental processes in which they attempt to use the standard form of the target language, but they are not always successful. Thus, students will find themselves in an ‘interlanguage continuum,’ a stage in which they use neither their first language nor the ‘standard’ form of the target language. The testing of the target language rules result in lexical, phonetic, or grammatical errors, among others. Different reasons have been proposed to explain this linguistic state, but indistinctively of the cognitive reasons, errors are relevant to language learning because they give insights to teachers of the students’ progress and the weak areas that must be addressed during the lesson in order to achieve successful communication in the target language. Approaching error correction appropriately can serve as an aid for learners to recognize their weaknesses and strengths by means of the feedback they receive.

Given the importance of errors in language learning, it becomes necessary for teachers to draw attention to the error correction that takes place in their classroom. Many questions, then, arise as to what is the best way to give feedback when errors occur. For this reason, the present case study aims to analyze how error correction is taking place within the foreign language classroom at primary public schools. Four English teachers from three different schools were observed to determine the error correction techniques they were using during the lesson. During the research, lessons with different grade levels, ranging from first to sixth grade were recorded. The study focused on the teachers’ approach to error correction, not a specific group of students. A further distinction was made between the teachers observed, 2 novice and 2 experienced teachers took part in the study. The novice teachers have no more than three years working and the experienced teachers have more than 8 years.

More specifically, the case study examined the decisions made by teachers with regard to error correction in primary public schools. Different questions were explored such as:

- Who is participating in correcting errors?
- How is correction carried out in the English class?
- What kind of feedback on errors is the teacher giving?
- Which learner errors are being addressed in the language classroom?



- During which part of the lesson are errors corrected?

The research also compared the techniques used by novice and experienced teachers regarding error correction in the EFL classroom. This objective aimed to answer how the novice and experienced teachers differ in the way they correct errors, and what they have in common.

## II Literature Review

### 2.1 Importance of Error Correction in the Language Classroom

When students start learning a second or foreign language, they enter a series of complex mental processes related to the different tasks they will be expected and required to perform. In 1972, Selinker described an interlanguage continuum where a learner's output is representative of neither the first language nor the "standard" form of the target language. In other words, the learner attempts to use the target language, but there is an inevitable sort of interference from the mother tongue or overgeneralization of the target language rules. Based on Selinker's concept of interlanguage, Barron (2001) noted that the interlanguage is a transitory stage and that it mirrors the learner's understanding of the target language form because it represents the learner's hypothesis about the appropriate norm.

This suggestion of testing hypothesis through an interlanguage continuum gives relevance to the errors that take place when learners attempt to communicate because it allows teachers to identify the inappropriate rules that students have constructed regarding the target language. These errors can be produced in different areas of language such as lexical, phonetic, or grammatical. Of course, not all students' errors are caused because of the influence of their first language or overgeneralization of the target language norms. Sometimes students' failures may be just "slips of the tongue", in which case they are defined as mistakes since students already know the correct rule, but they simply do not perform it well. When learners make mistakes, they are conscious of them because they know the appropriate norm in the target language. Contrary to mistakes, errors take place for different reasons such as lack of knowledge of the correct rule or fossilization of mistakes, among other reasons. Richards (1985) referred to errors as intralingual and developmental. To this regard he explained:

A different class of errors is represented by sentences like *did he comed [and] I can to speak French*. Errors of this nature are frequent, regardless of the learner's language background. [...] Rather than reflecting the learner's inability to separate two languages, intralingual and developmental errors reflect the learner's competence at a particular stage and illustrate some of the general characteristics of language acquisition. (46-47)

On the other hand, Corder (1981) explained the existence of a trial and error approach in which errors evidence that the learner is constantly creating and testing hypothesis about the grammar and the second language in general. If the learner's utterance is accepted without comment or misunderstanding, then he can predict that it is correct, but if communication is not possible or correction takes place, then the utterance is incorrect.

The two points of view about error occurrence in language learning suggest the importance of these, and thus, the necessity of error correction in language teaching. Zhu

(2010) explained that errors are beneficial to teaching because they provide feedback on the materials and techniques that are being employed and they give valuable information to make decisions that can improve the syllabus, content development and lesson planning.

## **2.2 Approach to Error Correction**

Considering the importance of error correction in the process of language teaching and learning, teachers are confronted with decisions as to whom should make corrections in the classroom, and which manner is more suitable to help the learner acquire the correct forms of the target language.

Different studies (Hinkel, 2011; Zhu, 2010; Walz, 1982) have drawn diverse conclusions about the best way to approach error correction. The research has distinguished three different sources capable of giving corrective feedback. These are teacher correction, peer correction and self correction. The studies have tried to define which source is more effective, but Hinkel (2011) stated that there is no guideline to indicate which type is more appropriate for every classroom activity. It will depend more on the context and task being carried out.

Besides this, teachers need to determine the manner in which correction will be given. Several studies (Hinkel, 2011; Varnosfadrani & Basturkmen, 2009) have addressed two different manners of providing feedback, explicit and implicit. Explicit corrective feedback is when the student is given a grammatical explanation or overt error correction. This includes techniques like didactic recasts, explicit correction, explicit correction with metalinguistic explanation, metalinguistic clue, elicitation, and paralinguistic signal. Furthermore, implicit corrective feedback is when the teacher requests clarification of the incorrect utterance. Some the techniques include repetitions, clarification requests, silence, and even facial expressions indicating confusion. We have to remember that the use of techniques will depend on the teacher and on the learning conditions that his students present.

## **III Results and Inventory of Error correction used by the teachers**

The present analysis takes into account three main sections. First, there will be a description of the topics and activities that were being developed by the students in order for the reader to understand the context in which errors occurred. Then, the account of the decisions made by the teachers with regards to error correction will follow. These decisions have to deal with the types of errors teachers corrected, who participated in correcting errors, the way in which they carried out the correction, and the lesson period in which this was done. Finally, the correction techniques applied by the novice and the experience teacher will be compared in order to determine the similarities and differences found among them. In order to keep a record of what was taking place in the classrooms with the different teachers, an observation guide was used as the main instrument. In this way, it was possible to analyze and compare the data collected once all the observations were done (see appendices for more information).

### **3.1 The class**

The observations took place in three different primary schools. Likewise, the teachers were observed while working with different levels or grades. Therefore, the topics and activities developed varied from one class to another.

The topics being developed during the observations were addressed to enhance students' knowledge on hobbies and leisure activities; different ways to express likes and dislikes, description of natural resources, and forms to give opinions about people and places.

Regarding the main activities, some students were required to work in pairs to make up dialogues; others had to make small groups in order to exchange information about likes and dislikes. A group of sixth graders had to describe pictures in oral and written form. Finally, two of the groups observed were orally answering the teacher's questions either individually or as a whole group.

It is important to take into account that as the activities and topics changed from one group to another, the mistakes and errors students had and the correction techniques that teachers made use of differed too.

### **3.2 Which learner errors were addressed in the language classroom?**

During the lessons a considerable amount of errors had to do with pronunciation due to the fact that in most of the lessons, students were developing oral activities. The second most common type of error was related to word order or sentence structure where the learners had to construct sentences to give opinions, or ask for information. Spelling mistakes where students skipped or changed one letter were also found in the written exercises. Finally, some students did not know the required vocabulary so they used Spanish instead.

In some cases, students did not know the rule that they had to apply to use the language appropriately. In other cases, they seemed to have forgotten about such a rule because they quickly recalled it with the help of the teachers. In most cases students reacted positively to correction. There were a few students who kept on making the same error or avoided using the language after being corrected.

Finally, there were some occasions in which the teachers decided not to correct a specific error as they considered that this type of errors did not interfere much with the students' communication or that this went beyond the learner's expected knowledge. In this latter case, the teachers explained that students could later on learn the appropriate rule and correct the error they had committed.

### **3.3 Who was responsible for correcting errors?**

A very important aspect to analyze when talking about errors has to do with the fact that the teacher is not always responsible for carrying out the correction. Students can also participate in this task either in the form of self-correction or peer correction.

After comparing the results, it was seen that most correction came from the teachers' part. However, as the different groups were observed, it was noted that correction on the students' part increased according to the level they were placed in. Thus, the higher the level, the more participation they had correcting themselves or their classmates. Lower

grade students (first and second graders) joined basically in correcting pronunciation mistakes since they are just starting to build their linguistic knowledge.

The language ability that students presented was another relevant feature to consider. Some learners were able to find the errors and corrected themselves or their peers. However, there were other students who could not do any type of correction at all.

### **3.4 How were errors corrected? Which techniques were applied?**

During the lessons observed, the most common technique to correct students was to *provide the correct answer*. This was mostly done on the teachers' part. In this way, the teachers could save time and get students to not only know the appropriate use of the language quickly, but to move on to the next activity.

*Peer correction* was noted as the second most applied technique. However, in most cases, this was done without the teachers' intervention. They did not ask the learners to correct their classmates. Students did it on their own. During pair and group activities, it was possible for the learners to help each other. Then, peer correction was also carried out during the time that some teachers' required their students to participate individually to answer teacher's questions

Third, the novice teachers used strategies such as: discrimination exercises, rephrasing questions, and stressing words in order to help students correct themselves and their peers, especially during individual written work or oral practice.

Fourth, the teachers implemented the use of gestures in order to give students clues about a word they had to use or about the structure they needed to follow. Gestures served to catch students' attention and allowed for more interactive learning.

### **3.4 When did correction take place?**

The decision on when to carry out the correction varied from one teacher to another. Experienced teachers usually corrected their students' errors as soon as they occurred. In a few cases they waited to give correction some time later. Novice teachers, on the other hand, decided to provide general feedback on student's errors and mistakes specially when dealing with students oral presentations in order not to interrupt the flow of the conversation.

In the case of peer correction, this occurred spontaneously. That is, students corrected their classmates as soon as they discovered what was wrong. This was commonly done when dealing with pronunciation mistakes. It was interesting to note that in such cases several students provided the correct pronunciation of the word or words at the same time, in a "chorus" style. This event reveals that, at that point, it might have been a requirement for the group to already manage the correct pronunciation of such words.

Regarding lesson stages, most correction took place during the consolidation since this was when students were required to use the language more actively, putting into practice what they had learned.

### 3.5 Novice teachers vs. experienced teachers

3.5.1 What do the observed teachers have in common with regards to correction techniques?

Both kinds of teachers seemed to prefer *giving the correct answer* as the most appropriate technique. In many cases, they gave the right answer immediately after the mistake was made. They also set pair work activities and motivated students to give support to their peers if needed. That is, all of them promoted peer correction. Teachers provided explanations about spelling, word formation, sentence structure, and pronunciation for the whole group and not only for the person who had made the mistake.

3.5.2 In which ways do corrections techniques differ from one type of teacher to another? The novice teachers used more corrections techniques than the experienced ones. This might indicate that the former might have been exposed to other types of correction techniques more recently, so they were trying to implement these in the classroom.

The novice teachers corrected most of the mistakes they found. The fact that they wanted to correct everything might have worried students. The experienced teacher, on the other hand, did not correct too many mistakes and skipped some errors that he considered irrelevant at the moment.

## IV Conclusions

Analyzing error correction from different perspectives lead to a set of important conclusions:

- Time plays an important role in error correction in the EFL classroom. The fact that the most common technique used by the teachers was to provide the correct answer was closely related to the teachers' desire of saving time.
- Providing students with the correct answer is not always the best choice. As it was observed, learners do not have to do much thinking on why something is written or said in a specific way. This lack of mental effort might cause the learners to quickly forget about the correction they received.
- The use of diverse correction techniques gives students the possibility to achieve more meaningful learning. Students are challenged to do more thinking so that they can finally be able to correct their own mistakes.
- The amount and type of correction techniques applied depend closely on the kind of activity being developed. The more controlled the activity, the more correction students will receive. On the other hand, when students perform less controlled tasks such as dialogues or role-plays, it becomes impossible for teachers to be aware of every error their pupils have.
- Experience becomes valuable when choosing when to correct or to skip errors. As seen before, novice teachers wanted to correct every mistake while the experienced ones decided that it was good to let some errors pass. Only through practice can teachers learn to be flexible, taking into account the students' real

learning needs. Overcorrection might reduce the students' desire to say anything at all.

- Explicit correction is predominant in the EFL classroom. Errors were pointed out and the correct form of the language was given. Implicit correction, on the contrary, was sporadic. Again, time plays a determinant role since it takes longer for students to understand one rule through implicit methods.
- We have to remember that the use of techniques will depend on the teacher and on the learning conditions that his students present. These techniques should aid the teacher to make students correct their errors and achieve good and meaningful use of the language. Thus, there is not an only and magic way to carry out correction in the foreign language classroom.

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**Appendices**

<b>Observation Guide</b>	
School _____	Date: _____
Teacher: _____	Level: _____
Teacher's experience: _____	
Topic being developed: _____	
Observer: _____	

Lesson phase	Learner's error	Teacher's response	Technique

## La acreditación del BEI: Compromiso con el éxito estudiantil

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**Resumen:** Esta ponencia profundiza la forma en que la acreditación impacta a los estudiantes. El proceso de autoevaluación del Bachillerato en la Enseñanza del Inglés (BEI) evidenció algunas fortalezas como la activa participación del sector estudiantil en los procesos de autoevaluación de la Carrera, su compromiso con la carrera, acceso a una comunicación más fluida y constante y la motivación por obtener un título con certificación de calidad. Además, participan activamente en el proceso (mayor integración de la comunidad educativa en actividades pertinentes al BEI), desarrollan una cultura orientada a la calidad, tienen la posibilidad de homologar y procesar el reconocimiento de títulos a nivel internacional, obtienen incentivos en el Servicio Civil (MEP), entre otros aspectos. El sustento de esta investigación proviene de diferentes fuentes, entre estos, los insumos de encuestas y elaboradas con el apoyo del Programa de Gestión Curricular y aplicadas a estudiantes, docentes y administrativos, graduados y empleadores. Además se realizó un exhaustivo análisis de los resultados en talleres con autoridades universitarias, personal docente y administrativo y estudiantes.

**Palabras claves:** SINAES, carrera acreditada, factores de éxito académico, estudiantes

### I. Introducción

El proceso de autoevaluación con fines de Acreditación y Reacreditación llevado a cabo voluntariamente por la carrera de Bachillerato en la Enseñanza del Inglés (BEI) en la Sede Central, *Campus Omar Dengo*, tiene como eje primordial el compromiso con la calidad de la Carrera. Desde esta perspectiva, la Escuela de Literatura y Ciencias del Lenguaje y la División de Educología han asumido el reto de someterse a la autoevaluación y posteriormente a la evaluación externa por parte del Sistema Nacional de la Acreditación de la Educación Superior (SINAES) de todos los componentes de la carrera. Con el respaldo institucional, el BEI asume el compromiso de mejora permanente para asegurar la calidad en todos los aspectos que permean la Carrera. La iniciativa requiere de la elaboración de un Plan de Mejoramiento con acciones concretas tendientes a superar sistemáticamente aquellas debilidades detectadas en los procesos de autoevaluación y a darle sostenibilidad a las fortalezas y concluye con la Acreditación y Reacreditación del BEI. De esta



manera, la carrera asegura la formación de profesionales altamente calificados quienes obtienen un título con certificación de calidad por parte del SINAES, contribuyendo así el desarrollo de la sociedad costarricense.

Los procesos de autoevaluación del BEI han evidenciado fortalezas tales como la identificación y compromiso estudiantil con las iniciativas de autoevaluación de la Carrera, el acceso a una comunicación más fluida y constante en las Unidades Académicas y la motivación mostrada por obtener un título con certificación de calidad. Además, los y las estudiantes participan activamente en las actividades de la carrera, desarrollan una cultura orientada a la calidad, tienen la posibilidad de homologar y procesar el reconocimiento de títulos a nivel internacional, obtienen un puntaje superior a otros profesionales análogos (60 puntos) en el Servicio Civil (MEP), entre otros aspectos.

Es evidente que la acreditación del BEI es y seguirá siendo un factor de cambio tendiente al perfeccionamiento constante de los procesos que se realizan en la carrera. Con la presente ponencia nos proponemos analizar y sistematizar la experiencia de la autoevaluación y acreditación del BEI y su incidencia en uno de los principales aspectos de la carrera: el Componente Estudiantes, tanto los regulares como los egresados.

## II. Marco teórico

### A. Contextualización

Los esfuerzos por evaluar la calidad académica de la educación superior en América Latina surgieron desde hace varias décadas, “Hacia fines de la década del 80 y principios de la del 90, el tema de la calidad de la educación comienza a afirmarse en el escenario y en la agenda de la educación en diversos países de América Latina. En décadas anteriores, los enfoques predominantes en materia de planeamiento y desarrollo de la educación pusieron énfasis en los aspectos cuantitativos y en la vinculación con lo económico y con lo social” (Fernández, p. 1, 2004). En Costa Rica surge la iniciativa de establecer estándares que permitan garantizar la calidad de los programas de estudio a nivel superior. Se promueve así una evaluación continua y cultura de mejoramiento permanente para satisfacer las necesidades y las demandas de la sociedad. Se crea entonces el SINAES mediante Ley 8256 del 02 de mayo de 2002 (Asamblea Legislativa de la República de Costa Rica) y la Universidad Nacional toma la decisión de adherirse a la iniciativa en el año 2000. Actualmente la UNA tiene 11 carreras acreditadas y 15 en proceso de autoevaluación para mejoramiento y acreditación.

En el año 2001, la Escuela de Literatura y Ciencias del Lenguaje (ELCL) acordó iniciar el proceso con miras a la acreditación del BEI (Acta de Asamblea de Unidad Académica, sesión ordinaria N°02-2001). Los académicos del área de inglés deciden someter el BEI al proceso de autoevaluación y como resultado, después de un riguroso proceso de autoanálisis y la visita de evaluadores externos, el mismo es acreditado en mayo 2006 por un período de 4 años. (Oficio SINAES-236-2006). Posteriormente en el año 2011 se logra re acreditar el BEI por un período de 6 años. (Acuerdo del SINAES, Sesión 692, 14 de octubre de 2011) En suma, la acreditación y re acreditación del BEI se logra a partir de un compromiso voluntario cuya finalidad primordial es garantizar al estudiantado y al país un programa de estudio de alta calidad a través de mejoras sistemáticas.

#### B. Evidencias de la calidad del BEI.

El BEI ha evidenciado mejoras sustanciales en sus componentes (recurso humano, currículo, administración, infraestructura, equipamiento, impacto y pertinencia) a partir de los procesos de autoevaluación y acreditación, los cuales han permitido obtener información válida y confiable de las fortalezas y debilidades. Éstas últimas representan oportunidades de superación a partir de un elaborado Compromiso de Mejoramiento, que permite además, darle sostenibilidad a las fortalezas. Citando las palabras de Antúnez (2012, p. 580) “Si nos piden calidad, debemos dar calidad”. Desde esta perspectiva, el BEI ha hecho un esfuerzo por ofrecer al estudiante un programa de excelencia reconocido nacional e internacionalmente.

El principal objetivo del BEI, según se destaca en el Plan de Estudio (2005, p.3) es “contribuir a la transformación de la sociedad costarricense hacia un desarrollo integral, autónomo y sostenible, formando profesionales críticos, independientes, participativos y creativos, con un dominio sólido del conocimiento y su problemática pedagógica, y formar integralmente educadores para la enseñanza del inglés, desde un currículum interdisciplinario que articule la educación con otros campos del conocimiento y fortalezca la identidad profesional de los docentes”. Por lo tanto, un proceso de acreditación nos orienta a la práctica reflexiva y a tomar en cuenta las demandas sociales para diseñar los programas de estudios; de esta manera garantizamos que los estudiantes se formen para enfrentar diferentes realidades educativas. Los procesos de autoevaluación y acreditación han orientado los esfuerzos para formar estudiantes con una visión holística capaces de cambiar las realidades educativas del país.

### III. Marco Metodológico

Para el desarrollo de este trabajo se realizó una investigación sobre el impacto de la acreditación haciendo especial énfasis en los beneficios al sector estudiantil. Además de las fuentes consultadas y citadas, esta investigación se apoya en los insumos obtenidos en el proceso de autoevaluación del BEI para la re acreditación, a saber, el instrumento a graduados de la carrera administrado en el año 2010 y del instrumento de opinión de estudiante regulares de II a IV nivel en agosto del 2009. Los instrumentos se enviaron a través de la plataforma *Lime Survey*; se verificó su participación y aquellos que no completaron las encuestas, se les instó a través de correos y llamadas a contestar el formulario. Participaron 60 graduados y 47 estudiantes regulares de II al IV nivel. Se entrevistó personalmente a 8 empleadores de instituciones públicas y privadas durante el mes de agosto y setiembre de 2009. De esta manera, este trabajo integra la investigación bibliográfica con la investigación de campo como insumo para la construcción del conocimiento e ideas aquí propuestas.

### IV. Desarrollo del tema

La re acreditación del BEI ha sido producto del compromiso conjunto de autoridades institucionales, personal docente y administrativo y la Comisión de Acreditación, quienes se plantearon seriamente la meta de garantizar al estudiantado del más alto nivel. Se desglosan a continuación los principales alcances para este sector.

### **Estudiantes del BEI**

Los procesos de autoevaluación y Acreditación del BEI han permeado positivamente todos los aspectos del BEI y otros programas de estudio. El cuerpo estudiantil del BEI se ha beneficiado directamente de los procesos de autoevaluación y acreditación de diversas formas, para efectos de este trabajo las mismas han sido agrupadas por áreas temáticas.

#### **A. Participación Activa**

Los procesos de autoevaluación fomentan la participación activa y permanente del cuerpo estudiantil en el accionar de la Carrera. El estudiantado hace aportes críticos a la realidad que le circunscribe y está en la capacidad de identificar a las condiciones que debe mejorar para su propio beneficio y el de las generaciones futuras. Para ilustrar, se ha logrado un mayor acercamiento de la comunidad estudiantil a las actividades organizadas para el fomento del quehacer científico, el pensamiento crítico y la formación profesional. Entre estas actividades se destacan los congresos y seminarios (CILAP, FIPED, SEPIE, entre otros), Semana de las Culturas, talleres de la Comisión de Acreditación, giras educativas, y charlas de pasantes y de invitados especializados en áreas específicas. Estos espacios representan excelentes oportunidades para escuchar las voces del estudiantado. Sus aportes han incidido directamente en la toma de decisiones para el mejoramiento del quehacer de la Carrera. En otras palabras, el sentir estudiantil se refleja en las decisiones que se toman con respecto a la formación del personal académico, al diseño de programas de cursos, al uso de las TICs, la apertura de cursos de verano, atención de necesidades de infraestructura, a la obtención de recursos económicos, entre otros. Es de esta forma como la acreditación ha permitido crear una cultura de identificación y compromiso del estudiantado.

#### **B. Motivación**

El aporte del cuerpo estudiantil trasciende el BEI, en virtud de que el mismo ha contribuido a mejorar los otros programas de estudio de las Unidades Académicas responsables de su administración. Como resultado, se logra la motivación del estudiantado que está consciente de la validez de sus aportes en el proceso de mejora permanente. La calidad es parte de su vivencia universitaria, tal y como lo indica Horna “reconocer finalmente que la calidad implica por necesidad dedicación, esfuerzo, sacrificio y constancia; sin embargo la no calidad cuesta más” (2010, p. 1). Por este motivo, el estudiante del BEI se identifica con la Carrera y tiene confianza en el Programa de Estudio.

La motivación estudiantil también se evidencia en el éxito académico, el cual está directamente asociado a la calidad del cuerpo docente; así lo manifiesta el 85% de los graduados y el 95.75% de los estudiantes de II a IV nivel. Los estudiantes también muestran su motivación por los resultados en las pruebas nacionales estandarizadas (TOEIC), que son muy favorables para graduados del BEI, quienes han obtenido un nivel de lengua internacionalmente reconocido.

Otros factores de motivación extrínseca son las acciones de mejoramiento tales como los avances tecnológicos, de infraestructura, la coordinación abierta entre las Unidades Académicas, la organización de actividades estudiantiles, la respuesta a sus necesidades y el orgullo de ser egresado de una Universidad de prestigio con un grado académico reconocido y seguir siendo considerado un actor relevante y esencial para el mejoramiento del BEI, incluso después de graduarse. La demanda del mercado laboral por graduados de programas acreditados constituye otro factor de motivación al estudiantado de la Carrera, según lo certifica la encuesta a empleadores (2009).

A nivel internacional, existen criterios que favorecen a las personas con títulos acreditados por organismos autorizados. En consecuencia, nuestros estudiantes se motivan al saber que la condición de carrera acreditada permite mejores opciones de empleo fuera de nuestras fronteras. Para ilustrar, de acuerdo con la Asociación de Universidades del Sector Privado de Estados Unidos (Guide to Career Education, p.12) el hecho de que una universidad tenga la condición de acreditada con seguridad impactará sus oportunidades laborales después de la graduación, en virtud de que los empleadores valoran un título de un centro de enseñanza acreditado cuando evalúan los atestados y calificaciones de los postulantes a un puesto. Esto adquiere relevancia por ser este un país donde la lengua materna constituye el campo de conocimiento del estudiantado.

Según el SINAES, el proceso de acreditación comienza a generar mejoras desde el inicio del proceso, lo que beneficia a los estudiantes que cursan su formación en ella durante todo el proceso de formación e incluso después de graduarse. Es un hecho que, al salir al mercado laboral, si la carrera obtiene la acreditación oficial del SINAES, sus estudiantes tendrán una ventaja competitiva respecto a los colegas que se gradúan de carreras que no cuentan con este certificado. La Acreditación es parte de una cultura en auge, por que, cada vez son más los empleadores utilizan la acreditación como un elemento de selección del personal. El artículo 4 de la Ley 8798 establece la obligación del Estado y sus instituciones de contratar preferentemente graduados de carreras con acreditación oficial. Artículo 4:

El Estado y sus instituciones procurarán contratar personal graduado de carreras oficialmente acreditadas. Se autoriza al Estado y a sus instituciones para que establezcan, en los concursos de antecedentes, las condiciones necesarias para diferenciar entre los graduados de carreras oficialmente acreditadas, en los casos en que poseer grado académico y título profesional sea requisito de contratación (2010, p. 1).

Para Baudrit (2010) una carrera acreditada conlleva múltiples beneficios para el estudiantado desde varios escenarios. La igualdad de trato ante la Ley obliga a tratar como iguales a quienes objetivamente se encuentren en las mismas condiciones. En caso contrario obliga a dar trato desigual a quienes no se encuentran en la misma condición. La Ley confiere a la acreditación oficial el efecto de constituirse en condición jurídica diferenciable. Para los estudiantes, agiliza inserción profesional para quienes invierten en educación superior de calidad; para las instituciones educativas, incentiva en la comunidad universitaria el fortalecimiento de una cultura de calidad, evaluación y acreditación; para el

estado e instituciones, les posibilita una mejor selección y contratación de personal al ponderar un elemento objetivo de idoneidad en la formación profesional.

### **C. Características de los graduados**

Los procesos de Autoevaluación y Acreditación proporcionan grandes beneficios que impactan igualmente a los graduados del BEI. La calidad de los graduados del BEI responde a las necesidades del mercado laboral de la sociedad costarricense, así lo manifiestan los empleadores en la entrevista realizada en el 2009. Los empleadores consideran que los mismos poseen las siguientes características:

- Excelente manejo del idioma tanto en forma oral como escrita
- Excelente manejo y conocimiento de tendencias de enseñanza y aprendizaje.
- Capacidad de trabajo en equipo.
- Manejo adecuado de la dinámica del aula (disciplina).
- Desarrollo profesional permanente en lengua y pedagogía.
- Técnicas de motivación a los estudiantes de colegio para aprender inglés.
- Buena metodología.
- Uso adecuado de recursos audiovisuales, grabadora, televisión, afiches, entre otros.

La comunidad estudiantil goza de una garantía de recibir una formación profesional de alta calidad. Los estudiantes se aseguran de un futuro profesional idóneo, en virtud de que desarrollan habilidades que le permitirá demostrar sus competencias profesionales en el uso de la pedagogía y el manejo del idioma para lograr su proyecto de vida.

Otra evidencia de la calidad profesional de los graduados del BEI se desprende del resultado del diagnóstico aplicado a tres mil doscientos docentes de inglés en todo el país, quienes lograron obtener las calificaciones más altas fueron los provenientes de universidades públicas y nuestros graduados obtuvieron el segundo lugar (MEP, 2007). En síntesis, el Bachillerato en la Enseñanza del Inglés ha logrado ofrecer al estudiantado una formación integral sólida que le permitirá desempeñarse en forma idónea como profesional y vivir responsablemente en una cultura sostenible, haciendo así su aporte a la sociedad costarricense.

### **D. Docentes comprometidos con la Carrera**

Uno de los aspectos medulares de los procesos de autoevaluación y acreditación es el fortalecimiento sistemático del equipo de docentes responsables de la Carrera, lo cual constituye un beneficio efectivo para el estudiantado. Algunas de las principales acciones tendientes al mejoramiento de los docentes son la búsqueda de la formación permanente y sostenida a partir de iniciativas del mismo cuerpo de docentes y de la percepción del estudiantado. Esta formación conlleva a diferentes capacitaciones en aquellas áreas que impactan directamente a los estudiantes. En este sentido, se ha conformado 2 comisiones (Comisión de Formación de Docentes y Comisión de Investigación y Producción Académica), las cuales organizan, promueven y programan diversas actividades de capacitación de manera permanente. Para ilustrar, el equipo de docentes ha participado en capacitaciones con especialistas nacionales e internacionales en torno a técnicas

pedagógicas, investigación, proyectos y manejo de las TICs. Así se motiva al académico, tal y como lo afirma Morin (2003, ps 44-45) “Para el pensamiento, la inteligencia humana plantea interrogaciones y se plantea problemas, encuentra soluciones, inventa, es capaz de crear. La mente humana se abre al mundo. La apertura al mundo se revela por la curiosidad, la interrogación, la exploración, la búsqueda, la pasión de conocer.”

El equipo de docentes del BEI se caracteriza por tener un interés legítimo en las necesidades e intereses de los y las estudiantes, que se identifican con su labor y aman lo que hacen. Como lo expresan Chaves y Gutiérrez (2008, p. 40), el educador comprometido es aquel que “promociona el aprendizaje de manera creativa, permite espacios para la expresión en todos los ámbitos, contribuye a cambiar o transformar los mundos de los aprendientes, promueve el aprendizaje significativo, emplea diferentes tratamientos pedagógicos según las demandas de los aprendientes, promueve la reflexión de las experiencias de vida.”

Desde esta perspectiva, ambas Unidades Académicas, además de los esfuerzos de capacitación, han realizado un esfuerzo por establecer mecanismos de coordinación vertical y horizontal entre el equipo de docentes. Estos espacios han permitido logros como el rediseño de Plan de Estudio, incorporación de nuevas técnicas de enseñanza y evaluación, actualización permanente de fuentes y recursos bibliográficos, uso de las tecnologías en el aula, diseño de materiales, entre otros.

A nivel institucional se han realizado también importantes esfuerzos para consolidar un equipo e docentes del más alto nivel, esfuerzos tales como un elaborado y minucioso plan de capacitación docente a partir de las debilidades detectadas en los instrumentos de percepción estudiantil hacia los docentes. Conjuntamente la Universidad Nacional incentiva la capacitación permanente con becas de posgrado, ayudas económicas, visitas de pasantes, entre otros. Además se han dado iniciativas para aprovechar los recursos tecnológicos que inciden positivamente en la promoción del aprendizaje. Como resultado se ha logrado consolidar un grupo de docentes con una formación sólida, motivados por aprender y promover el aprendizaje en las aulas.

### **Conclusión**

En suma, la acreditación del BEI es responsable de una serie de acciones de mejoramiento que han beneficiado a los y las estudiantes de diversas maneras, acciones que trascienden el quehacer de las Unidades Académicas responsables de la Carrera. El desarrollo de una cultura dirigida a la calidad ha permitido promover una gestión orientada a las necesidades e intereses del estudiantado, que es, al fin y al cabo, el principal beneficiario. De esta manera se logra la implementación de procesos continuos de calidad tales como: (a) calidad en la excelencia docente y administrativa del plan de estudio; (b) calidad en los procesos administrativos, y (c) la planificación de acciones correctivas durante el proceso, tal y como lo describe el Dr. Figueroa de la Universidad Norbert Wiener citado por Horna (2010) “reconocer finalmente que la calidad implica por necesidad dedicación, esfuerzo, sacrificio y constancia; sin embargo la no calidad cuesta más.” Los procesos de Autoevaluación y Acreditación de las Carreras se realizan por una Comisión de académicos en colaboración con el Programa de Evaluación Curricular, las autoridades universitarias,

los/las docentes, el personal administrativo, el estudiantado, graduados(as) y empleadores(as) de la carrera y de estos procesos se obtienen grandes beneficios en todos los componentes de la Carrera.

Se ha enfatizado en esta ponencia el componente Estudiantil en virtud de que este constituye el eje primordial que cimienta el Bachillerato en la Enseñanza del Inglés. Todo esfuerzo dirigido a mejorar la calidad de la carrera prorrumpa de la idea de beneficiar directamente al estudiantado. Bajo esta perspectiva, el BEI se sometió al estricto proceso que conlleva acreditar una carrera y que, constituye la oportunidad perfecta para autoevaluar el programa y todos sus componentes. La garantía de calidad ofrecida por la Carrera acreditada por el SINAES incide positivamente en todos los actores de la carrera y privilegia de muchas formas al estudiantado. La carrera que logra acreditarse adquiere un compromiso de mantener la calidad certificada y de someterse a evaluaciones periódicas por parte de evaluadores externos, bajo riesgo de perder dicha condición.

En síntesis, el Bachillerato en la Enseñanza del Inglés (BEI), consciente de su responsabilidad para con el país y la sociedad costarricense, ha adoptado un compromiso con la calidad a través del fortalecimiento permanente y sistemático de todos los elementos que permean la Carrera. Tal y como lo expresa Knoll (2007, p. 41), “La calidad de la educación superior quiere lograr ser útil a la sociedad para la vida futura. Quiere servir a los niños en las escuelas para los cuales estamos formando maestros. Quiere servir a las personas que nos rodean y con las cuales tendrán que ver luego los estudiantes de hoy durante su vida profesional. Nuestra ética profesional consiste en hacer lo mejor posible lo que pueda servir a los demás. Por ello nos tenemos que preocupar por el desarrollo de la calidad, aunque no hubiese sistemas de desarrollo de la calidad.”

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## New Ways to Teach Literacy to Costa Rican Beginner EFL Learners

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**Resumen:** Enseñar el proceso alfabetización a estudiantes principiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera no es una tarea fácil para los docentes de inglés puesto que la mayoría de estudiantes costarricenses no han tenido la preparación idónea en este campo. Por tal razón, algunos estudiantes universitarios con un nivel principiante de inglés usualmente presentan serias dificultades a la hora de entender la lectura y la escritura en este idioma. Para mejorar los problemas antes mencionados, esta investigación presenta cinco enfoques útiles para enseñar la alfabetización a los estudiantes principiantes de inglés, los cuales son recomendados por diferentes autores como: Alvermann (2002), Brown (2000), Bailey & Fosheim (1983), Marzano and Paynter (1984), Scollon (1985) and Taylor & Draper (1989) utilizando el enfoque de investigación cualitativo. El objetivo principal de este trabajo es ayudar a resolver el problema que tienen los estudiantes universitarios costarricenses con un nivel básico de inglés a la hora de entender el proceso de alfabetización en su segundo idioma y sugerir nuevas formas de enseñar la alfabetización. La metodología utilizada en esta investigación se basó en la inclusión de los cinco enfoques antes mencionados en un grupo de inglés integrado I de la UNA y al final del curso los estudiantes completaron un cuestionario relacionado con la aplicación de estas técnicas para comprobar si ayudaron a los estudiantes a mejorar las limitaciones mostradas en este campo. Finalmente, la última parte del trabajo presentará algunos resultados recomendaciones y hallazgos que puedan ayudar a estudiantes y profesores a mejorar en el proceso de aprendizaje y enseñanza de este campo en particular.

**Palabras claves:** alfabetización, estudiantes con nivel principiante de inglés, profesores de inglés y enfoques para la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de la alfabetización

**Abstract:** Teaching literacy to beginner EFL students is not an easy task for EFL teachers since most Costa Rican learners have not had the required preparation in this field. For this reason, some EFL university beginner students usually face serious difficulties understanding reading and writing. To improve the aforementioned problems, this paper presents five useful approaches to teach literacy to EFL beginning students recommended by different authors like Alvermann (2002), Brown (2000), Bailey & Fosheim (1983), Marzano and Paynter

(1984), Scollon (1985) and Taylor & Draper (1989) using qualitative research. The main goal of this work is to contribute to solve the problem that Costa Rican beginning learners have understanding these skills in their L2 and to suggest new ways to teach literacy. The methodology used in this research based on the inclusion of the five approaches mentioned in one group of Ingles Integrado I at UNA and at the end of the course students completed a survey related to the application of these techniques to find out if they helped them to improve their limitations in this field. Finally, the last part of this work will present some results, recommendations and findings that can help professors and learners to improve in the teaching and learning process of this particular field.

**Key words:** literacy, EFL beginner learners, EFL teachers ,approaches- teaching and learning literacy

## 1 Introduction

Learning a second language is not an easy thing. It really takes time, effort; not everyone is able to carry out this process without facing constant difficulties. In English there are several areas that are troublesome for foreign language learners. For example, grammar, pronunciation, stress, vocabulary, communication, writing and reading. This paper will give emphasis to the problems that many EFL students face in reading and writing. The reason why this work will emphasize the limitations that some beginner university students have in their L2 literacy is because not too much attention has been given to this field and this population needs help. Usually, foreign language professors concentrate on other areas rather than helping learners with weaknesses in literacy.

Additionally, this research attempts to propose an alternative to solve the difficulties that some Costa Rican university students have in the English reading and writing basic tasks. This situation has been affecting the performance of the aforementioned learners in the English Integrado courses at UNA in the last years. Besides, this situation has also had a negative influence on students' language learning since most of them are not able to do the reading and writing exercises in satisfactory way. For instance, some students are not even able to write questions. They also have problems understanding vocabulary and gram and some others are not even able to write a short paragraph properly at the end of their first English course. To help this kind of learners this research will try to answer the following research questions: What teaching approaches can be used to help these students to improve their limitations in literacy? How can professors link reading and writing process to make it easier for learners?

Unfortunately, there is not too much work done in this field since most researchers have focused on teaching literacy skills to children in their L1. For this reason, this research presents five different approaches suggested by different ESL experts with the goal of making the process of teaching literacy less complicated, more motivating and meaningful for the Costa Rican university beginning learners. These approaches were implemented in a group of Ingles Integrado I at UNA during sixteen weeks to see if they help learners improve their problems in reading and writing. Then, ten students with low performance in reading and writing according to the course diagnostic test were surveyed at the end of the

semester to find out if the activities used in class helped pupils to enhance their literacy skills.

## **2 Five approaches to teach literacy to beginning EFL learners**

### **2.1 What is literacy?**

Before starting to describe the approaches to teach literacy to E.S.L students it is important to define literacy first. There is a lot of variation to define literacy. For example, Sticht suggests that “literacy is the ability of individuals to perform some reading tasks imposed by an external agent between the reader and a goal the reader wishes to obtain (Sticht, 1975, p. 15). Then, Venesky, Kaestle, and Sum define literacy considering social and cultural parameters as “a continuum of skills that are acquired both in and outside of formal schooling and that relate directly to the ability [of individuals] to function within society” (As cited in Williams and Capizzi Snipper, 1990, p. 5). Lastly, Thomas defines literacy as “the ability to read and write” (As cited in Taylor and Draper, 1989, p. 3).

### **2.2 Understanding Reading and Writing**

To understand the relationship between reading and writing in bilingualism it is required to examine the mechanisms of literacy in a way that they show how people are able to read and write competently in any language. To illustrate this, it is necessary to take a look at the ways that people learn to read and write.

First, we have to know that people learn to read and write basically using bottom-up and top-down processes. Brown (2001) defines bottom-up as a skill based process and top-down as strategy based approaches (p.298). According to Williams and Capizzi Snipper (1990) most students learn to read using a bottom-up approach like phonics instruction (skills-based approach). In addition, some reading performance studies show that in the first two years of instruction students who learned to read using phonics instruction tend to do better than students who learned to read through a top-down whole language approach. After the first two years the difference started to disappear until both groups of students reach the same level. However, students experience some difficulties in writing. For this reason, many teachers have recognized the importance of integrating different approaches so that students can learn to read and write in an integrated way. Through this paper some strategies and methods will be described to help teachers enhance their knowledge regarding teaching literacy to second language learners. (p.7)

### **2.3 Becoming Literate in a Second Language: Models and Approaches**

#### **2.3.1 Comprehensive Approach**

According to Williams and Capizzi Snipper, “the most important element in teaching literacy is transferring skills from their native language to English” (Williams and Capizzi Snipper, 1990, p. 103). In addition, both authors recommend the use of a comprehensive approach with literate students. This approach consists of selecting meaningful literature

texts from the student's culture, histories, biographies or student generated materials. Teachers should read the text to the students and assign exercises for the students to improve vocabulary such as completion, use of synonyms, paraphrasing the text and discussion activities. Instructors can also ask students to extract adjectives, talk about them, find other similar adjectives and write new sentences using them.

In addition, Williams and Capizzi Snipper (1990) suggest that the comprehensive approach requires the use of dialogues, plays and reading techniques. For example, after studying a text, students can write, create short plays and dialogues. In this method students develop language skills and they can start working with textbooks as a way of learning more advanced English. To get good results it is important that teachers focus their lessons on language skills rather than content. ( p.104)

Another useful way to understand literacy for adult intermediate or advanced learners is by contrasting L1 with the L2. Teachers can do this by using a text where students can identify grammar patterns from English and contrast them with the equivalent patterns of their L1. In this way, learners can understand the use of vocabulary, grammar patterns and structures in the L2. Knowledge of these areas is good for students because it allows them to identify and apply what they know in reading and writing activities.

### 2.3.2 The Whole Language Approach

According to Marzano and Paynter (1994) the whole language approach is based on the assumption that the introduction to reading must be meaningful and it should be developed from real communicative situations from the learners' lives. (p.16) This means that learning in the whole language approach is not just learning to read words, it is to understand the meaning of a text from real context.

According to Hamayan and Pflieger, the approach is guided by the following principles:

- “ a) Introduction to literacy (both reading and writing) should be meaningful.
- b) The link between oral language and print is easier to make when awareness of it emerges naturally, rather than when that link is explicitly taught.
- c) Affect plays an invaluable role in reading and writing. A child who enjoys reading is motivated to read, will read more, and by doing so, will be a better reader” (As cited in Olson, Torrance and Hildyard, 1985, p.418). Besides, Hughes suggests that the whole language approach has to cover “the learner's past experiences, expectations, and language intuitions as the basis for learning written symbols and developing reading comprehension”. (As cited in Marzano and Paynter, 1994, p.16). Hughes affirms that learning how to read in a second language starts with the learner's past experience which gradually includes learning of discrete language components such as:
  - Past experience, language intuitions, expectations
  - Selective aspects of print (reading)
  - Meaning
  - Sound and pronunciation (when necessary)

This model basically implies that the learner develops an interactive relationship with the text to understand it and become able to predict and anticipate meaning. Marzano

and Paynter (1994) suggests that in order that the whole approach model works, teachers need to know the students cultural background to use meaningful texts in class, so that they develop enthusiasm for reading and writing activities. It is also important that teachers provide a stimulating teaching environment using a good variety of resources and materials that motivate students interest for improving their writing and speaking skills. Some suggested activities are writing journals or stories and reading texts from topics that catch students' attention. (p .17)

### 2.3.3 Participatory Approaches

These approaches are learner centered and the goal is to encourage students to learn individually or in small groups. Alvermann (2002) states that the role of participatory approaches is to support learners' academic literacy development through the incorporation of classroom structures that promote peer interaction (e.g., peer led literature discussions or reading/writing workshops) and interaction. Alverman affirms that the main point of this approach is what it is known as "metacognitive conversation, which is an ongoing interactive discussion between teachers and students about personal reading goals, problem-solving strategies for making sense of text and the resources available for building knowledge beyond the text" (p. 202).

In the participatory approaches texts have an important role in students' learning. In transmission lessons texts are seen as teachers (dispensers of knowledge), so learners use them as tools for learning and constructing new knowledge. The participatory approaches can be used differently since they depend on the students' background and the way each teacher uses them. Alverman (2002) reflects that the results are pretty good because students can make connections with real situations and through peer and individual work they are able to discover the meaning of reading and writing. (p.202)

### 2.3.4 Skills-Based Approach

It is also known as the phonics approach. It was developed as result of a discrete view of reading. The skills approach assumes that "the readers first focus on translating letters, then letter patterns and then words, and so on" (Marzano and Paynter, 1994, p.10). So, basically as words are recognized the meaning of phrases and sentences is constructed. This means that meaning in reading is gradually built from the bottom-up process. Therefore, the reader starts with nothing and keeps adding pieces until he or she constructs the whole process. Second language learners have to master different skills like recognizing words, figuring out the meaning of some words from context, understanding words by using word parts, recognizing sentence patterns, and asking and answering questions.

The phonics approach has better results with children, but it could be adapted to adolescents and young adults especially in activities where they are required to carry out some skills from the target language such as skimming, scanning, brainstorming and free writing. After this stage, learners will acquire specific and deeper skills such as paraphrasing, contrasting and comparing information among others in a gradual way.

In my opinion, this approach could be used with second language beginner learners because they need to go through a literacy learning process. To succeed instructors have to design exercises and activities where learners apply skills in a gradual process. For example, in writing learners can start writing a paragraph in a free way without applying specific techniques just what they know. Marzano and Paynter (1994) state that the purpose of the skills-based method is that learners “develop specific literacy skills in a systematic fashion” (p. 12). This approach is a very good alternative for L2 classes because there are many institutions that follow a curriculum in a systematic way. To obtain good results it is important to take into consideration the students’ skills, background knowledge and level. Activities should be meaningful, catchy and appropriate to pupils’ needs.

### 2.3.5 Language Experience Approach

The language experience approach is a component of the whole language approach used to teach reading and writing. Generally, the approach follows the steps described by Strickland (1969). “Every student brings language to the class, so he or she can listen and talk” (As cited in Bailey and Fosheim, 1983, p. 101). The language approach to reading and writing begins with this language and utilizes it as the material for writing. First, learners are encouraged to speak about their interests with their classmates and then write about what they talked about in a free way. For reading this is very important because students can use their L1 vocabulary and structures to understand texts in the L2 and do reading comprehension exercises. For teachers, the students’ conversations are very rewarding because they learn from the students’ preferences, so they can see what kind of readings related to those interests and experiences could be used in class. In this way, students develop a lot of motivation for doing reading and writing activities.

A preferred topic in Costa Rican teenagers is sports, so the instructor can take advantage of students’ background knowledge giving them the opportunity of sharing their opinions and knowledge about the topic, and later the professor can ask learners to write a short essay about any sport issue. Furthermore, the instructor can also use readings about sports, so that the students can practice their reading skills through different exercises.

### 2.3.6 Use of Technology and Authentic Materials to teach Literacy

In fact, the use of technology and authentic materials are good tools to improve students’ literacy. For example, internet is a very good source to enlarge students’ knowledge because students can find a lot of articles, texts, and academic sources that are very useful to improve their literacy skills especially in English. Richards and Renandya (2002) mention that technology creates the optimal conditions to learn writing because it provides all sources for developing written communication (p. 69). For teachers, this is very important because they can find different kinds of exercises that are useful to enhance learners’ literacy skills. Also, newspapers’ and magazines’ articles are very useful to motivate students to read and write. In addition, videos and computer programs can also be used to teach literacy. Richards and Renandya (2002) states that videos motivate the learners’ interests providing realistic listening practice which encourages language use



(p.364). For instance, you can play a video in class and later ask students to write a short essay about an issue that took place in the video. Computer software programs are also good to test students' knowledge on vocabulary, spelling and reading skills, and the good thing is that learners can see their mistakes individually and learn the correct way immediately. This alleviates the instructor work because in big classes it is difficult to pay attention to the performance of every single student and give the needed feedback for all their problems. In fact, authentic materials and technology can make the learning of literacy skills in English much easier, effective and motivating.

### **3. The Study**

After finding some approaches to help the students who present difficulties in writing and reading, ten students of one group of Ingles Integrado I were chosen to be surveyed at the end of the course before the final examinations week. These students were selected based on the results they got on the placement test that was administered the first week of class. So, the students selected were the students who showed more difficulties in reading and writing out of thirty students. These subjects study majors like topography, business administration, art and Social and Economy Planning. The idea of this study was to use the approaches recommended in this research in the group selected to see if they were helpful for the learners who had weaknesses in the literacy field.

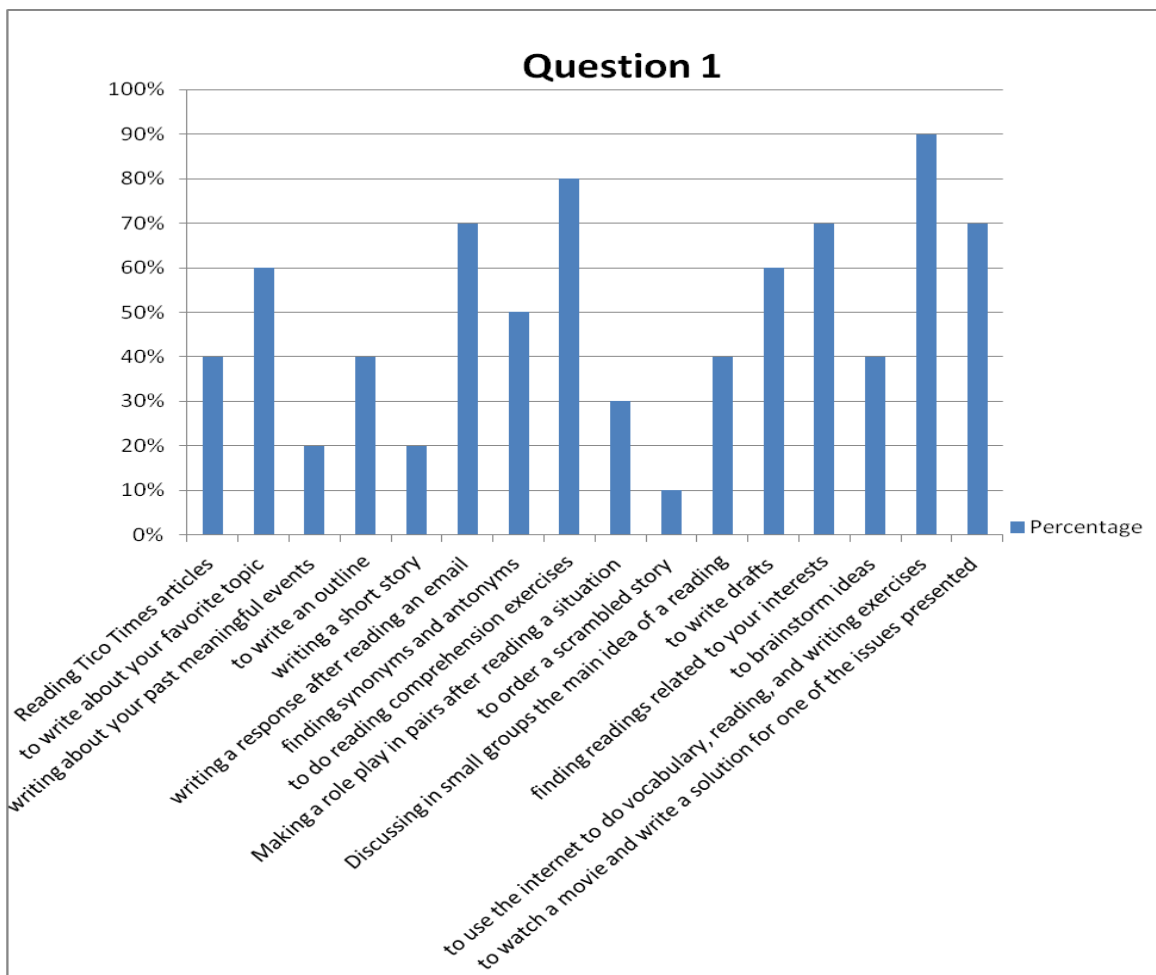
The survey addressed three different questions about the methods and activities that helped the learners to improve their knowledge in reading and writing based on their needs and interests. It also gives the chance to students to explain their answers and to suggest new activities that will help them to enhance their level of literacy in English.

### **3.1 Results of the Study**

#### **3.1.1 Question 1**

1. Which of the following activities used in the course were useful for you to improve reading and writing skills? Mark them with a check mark.

In this question, the students were given sixteen different activities used throughout the course to teach literacy to the whole class. These techniques were part of the of five approaches suggested in this work. The idea was that each of the learners selected marked the ones that had been useful for them. Interestingly, they marked most of the activities which means that were very helpful to enhance their literacy skills in the English class. In the following graph are the results according to the students' criteria. For clarification, 10% means that only one of the ten students selected that activity as useful, 60% means that 6 out of ten learners chose that activity as useful and so on.

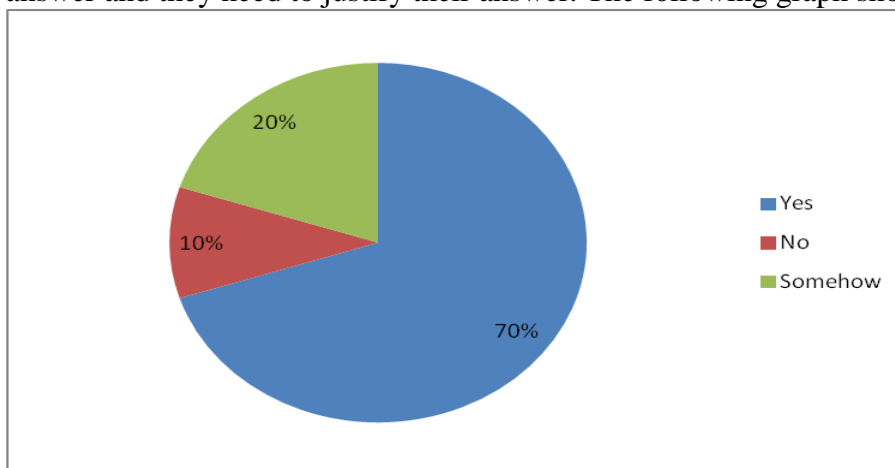


As we see in the graph students showed a higher level of preference for eight of the sixteen activities used in the course. The ones that the subjects surveyed considered more useful were writing about your favorite topic and to write drafts with 60%; writing a response after reading an email, finding readings related to your interests and to watch a movie and write a solution for one of the issues presented with 70%; to do reading comprehension exercises with 80% and to use the internet to do vocabulary, reading, and writing exercises with 90%. On the other hand, students did not find helpful ordering a scramble story with 10%; writing about your past meaningful events and writing a short story with 20%. The reasons may lead to this kind of answers are that students are not culturally familiar working with short stories. In other cultures, this kind of activities are highly recommended, but in the Costa Rican culture learners are not used to do kind of exercises and for this reason pupils do not show preference for these writing activities.

This matches perfectly with Brown (2001) who states that writing is a culturally specific learned behavior; this means that we learn to write if we are part of a literate society and if someone teaches us. (p.334)

### 3.1.2 Question 2

Did you improve your level of literacy (reading and writing skills) at the end of the course? This is a very specific question to see the overall opinion of the learners and to verify if the five approaches implemented throughout the semester were useful for the students who had limitations in literacy. The students have to choose an affirmative, negative or intermediate answer and they need to justify their answer. The following graph shows the results



The graph indicates that 70% of the individuals surveyed believed that the implementation of the five approaches to teach literacy to them were useful. Only one of the ten students answered negatively. The justification that this student gave was that the techniques given were too complex and time consuming and difficult to understand for him/her. Then, two students answered that somehow; one of them did not justify the answer and the other one mentioned that could not tell yes or no because she/he was not sure of passing the course. Nevertheless, one interesting finding was that 8 out of 10 students got a higher percentage of their grade in reading and writing and in the diagnostic test they did better in listening and speaking which was the opposite. This shows that the high majority of the students improved their level of literacy and that was the goal of doing this research. In contrast, this research also demonstrates that some students may not have given an affirmative answer to this question because they did not know if they were going to pass the course. This means that for them learning and improving their foreign language level was not important, what they really wanted was to pass the course no matter if they learned something or not. This typically happens with this population since they take the English Integrado courses because they are a major requirement, so they do not want to learn English

### 3.1.3 Question 3

What other strategies and activities do you recommend to improve your level of literacy in English?

Well in this question two students answered that with the activities and methods used during the course were enough, so they did not make any suggestions, other four of them did not suggest anything. Then, one person suggested to write in peers, other recommended to give them paragraphs with mistakes so that they can correct them and to

bring them short tales in English to read and to use pictures to teach vocabulary. Other student did not understand the question and wrote to use to games to help them to speak. It seems that this question was kind of complex for the students since they are not majored in English and for most of them this was their first English course in the university.

#### 4 Conclusions

These five approaches to teach literacy were helpful to those students with limitations in English. Most of the learners surveyed supported the methodology used during the course and 60% of the surveyed students passed the course and 80% of them did better in literacy comparing their performance with the one on the diagnostic test. It also seems that the best students learned even more than the students surveyed since they showed a lot of progress in these areas. However, the goal of this study was to see if the methodology used could help those students who had problems understanding English literacy and the results supported that since 80% percent of the students surveyed improved a lot in this field. So, in a future a similar study could analyzed the progress of those students who performed better. So, foreign language teachers are encouraged to use the five approaches mentioned in their lessons.

According to the authors of the books that were searched, the usefulness and the effectiveness of these approaches depend on many factors like students' background knowledge, level, limitations, culture, first language, motivation, teacher's methodology and beliefs. After conducting the study, cultural background, motivation and teacher's methodology influenced the learners' performance in a positive or a negative way. Personally, more analysis needs to be done on the students' motivation since most of them have no interest in learning in English.

Some students are more interested in passing the course than in learning English. To solve this problem EFL professors need to make more use of the technological tools to teach reading and writing since most of the students enjoy these kind of activities and this motivates them to study and use English.

Professors need to find ways to integrate reading and writing because in the Integrado courses these skills are taught separately and this is not helping students to show progress in these fields especially in writing.

It is important to discover the students' preferences so that you can adapt your teaching strategies to what students likes as the whole language approach states, so it is important to get to know your students better by giving them the chance to express their preferences, goals and expectations.

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M.A Jorge Luis Espinoza

Mr. Espinoza holds a Master's degree in TESOL from Indiana University of Pennsylvania in the USA. He also completed his B.A in TEFL and the licenciante program in Applied Linguistics at Universidad Nacional main campus. He also participated as an exchange student at East Carolina University in the USA. He has taught for nine years and since 2006 he has been teaching English at UNA main campus. He has also done research in fields like TEFL, language assessment, applied linguistics and culture. He has presented and attended to conferences in Costa Rica and abroad. He also worked as a teacher trainer for the CONARE-MEP program.

**Appendices**

**QUESTIONNAIRE**  
**By M.A Jorge Luis Espinoza**

1. Which of the following activities used in the course were useful for you to improve reading and writing skills? Mark them with a check mark.

- \_\_\_ Reading Tico Times articles (CA) \_\_\_ to write about your favorite topic (LEA)
- \_\_\_ writing about your past meaningful events (WLA) \_\_\_ writing a short story (WLA)
- \_\_\_ to do reading comprehension exercises (SBA) \_\_\_ to write an outline (SBA)
- \_\_\_ writing a response after reading an email (CA) \_\_\_ finding synonyms and antonyms (CA)
- \_\_\_ Making a role play in pairs after reading a situation (PA) \_\_\_ to order a scrambled story (WLA)
- \_\_\_ Discussing in small groups the main idea of a reading(PA) \_\_\_ to write drafts (SBA)
- \_\_\_ finding readings related to your interests (LEA) \_\_\_ to brainstorm ideas (SBA)
- \_\_\_ to use the internet to do vocabulary, reading, and writing exercises (TAM)
- \_\_\_ to watch a movie and write a solution for one of the issues presented (TAM)

2. Did you improve your level of literacy (reading and writing) at the end of the course?

YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_ Somehow \_\_\_\_\_

Explain your answer. \_\_\_\_\_

3. What other strategies and activities do you recommend to improve your level of literacy in English?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

## A Task-based Framework for Enhancing the Five Linguistic Skills

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**Resumen:** Este estudio aborda la implementación de materiales diseñados bajo los principios del método comunicativo en el contexto del aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras. Se pretende generar un espacio de análisis sobre la importancia de la implementación de estos materiales en el aula, exponiendo las percepciones tanto de instructores como de estudiantes. Nunan afirma que este tipo de trabajos son esenciales para el aprendizaje de un idioma. El agrega que "una pieza de trabajo en el aula que implica el aprendizaje, comprensión, manipulación, producción e interacción con el idioma meta, mientras que su atención está centrada principalmente en el significado más que en forma" es de vital importancia (10). Además, Li y Ying establecen que estas tareas "tienen un resultado comunicativo claramente definido" (93). Las tareas comunicativas deben tener bases claras para que los estudiantes logren los objetivos planteados y puedan resolver problemas significativamente. De este modo, los estudiantes no solo mejoran su capacidad para usar el idioma meta con éxito, sino que también aumentan su motivación. Huang aboga para que las "actividades innovadoras tales como intercambio de información, simulaciones y juegos involucren a los estudiantes y mantengan su motivación" (30). Por lo tanto, los docentes deben utilizar materiales que fomentan el uso y dominio del idioma, y por ende sus habilidades lingüísticas. En contextos de aprendizaje de lengua extranjera, los estudiantes necesitan estar expuestos a una amplia gama de tareas que garanticen comunicación asertiva y eficaz en el mundo multicultural y multilingüe del que hoy formamos parte.

**Palabras clave:** Enseñanza basada en tareas, tareas comunicativas, habilidades lingüísticas, enseñanza y materiales de aprendizaje, enseñanza comunicativa

**Abstract:** This study addresses the relevance that communicative language teaching materials following a task-based approach have for foreign language learning. Its aim is to provide information about the relevance of implementing task-based instruction materials in order to improve students' language production and contribute with an analysis of instructors' and learners' perceptions toward the implementation of these materials to enhance the linguistic skills. Nunan states that a task is "a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than on form" (10). Furthermore, Li and Ying go on to claim that they "have a clearly defined communicative outcome" (93). Communicative tasks should engage learners in the achievement of a goal,

which can be solving problems or negotiating meaning. By actively participating in the learning process, not only can students improve their ability to use the target language successfully but also they can increase their motivation towards language learning. Huang asserts that in CLT classrooms, “innovative activities such as information gap, role-plays, and games aim to engage learners and sustain learner motivation” (30). Therefore, teachers must use materials that promote the use and mastery of the language. Finally, it is vital to highlight that in foreign language contexts, students need to be exposed to a wide range of tasks that ensure assertive and effective communication to cope with the multicultural and multilingual world in which we live nowadays.

**Keywords:** TBI (Task-Based instruction), communicative tasks, linguistic skills, teaching and learning materials, CLT (Communicative Language Teaching).

## 1 Introduction

Teaching materials following a task-based instruction are a significant tool language teachers should use to enhance the learners’ language development due to the fact that TBI materials help students grasp English as a second or foreign language. It is pertinent that instructors offer students resources that expose them to communicative tasks for them to produce language effectively. Nowadays, language teaching is being quite influenced by communicative language teaching; it gives students the possibility to improve the language skills through the implementation of high-elaborated and meaningful teaching and learning resources. However, it is pertinent that language instructors be acquainted with the kind of tasks they employ since tasks they are responsible for getting effective language outcomes from the learners. When teachers know clearly what pupils really need to learn and achieve, considering the development of language skills, the hard task of making them produce language effectively becomes easier. Nevertheless, it is significant that instructors provide learners enough and meaningful materials that allow them to cope with real life situations outside the classrooms.

### 1.1 Research Questions

1. Are task-based instruction materials significant for enhancing students’ language production?
2. To which extent has task-based instruction materials been implemented in the EFL classroom?
3. What materials can be recommended to enhance the development of the five language skills?

### 1.2 Hypothesis

Task-based instruction materials contribute to enhancing the development of the five linguistic skills.



### **1.3 General objective**

To provide an analysis of the relevance of implementing task-based instruction materials where English as a foreign language is taught

### **1.4 Specific objectives**

1. To determine the significance of implementing TBI materials in the language classroom
2. To identify the role of TBI materials in the language classroom
3. To suggest a set of task-based materials for the development of the five linguistic skills

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Task-based Methodology**

Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) or Task-based Instruction (TBI) is a language teaching method which came into vogue in the 1980's as part of Communicative Language Teaching methodology.

TBLT advocates the use of tasks as a catalyst for authentic language use in real life situations which encourage the development of communicative skills. The rationale of TBLT is purposeful and emphasizes functional language competence rather than pure linguistic competence, which means that "the focus is away from learning language items in a non-contextualized vacuum to using language as a vehicle for authentic, real-world needs" (Task-based Learning 22). This implies that the main focus is on content, not on form. Therefore, attention shifts from grammatical correctness to meaning and content in the successful completion of tasks.

Founded on the interactive nature of language, the principal objectives of TBLT are closely related to the development of communicative proficiency. The three more prominent aims are the build-up of native-like competence in the second language, complexity or restructuring, and fluency. Native-like competence refers to the learner's ability to use the new language just like a native speaker of that language would in a communicative situation, which entails the mastery of such aspects as pronunciation and intonation, vocabulary, grammar, etc. Complexity or restructuring means that the learner should progress from simpler to more complex levels of proficiency in the second language. In other words, the learner's interlanguage should turn more native-like as the speaker becomes more proficient in the new language. The third major goal of TBLT is fluency, which Stannard advocates as "the language user's ability to communicate in real time to produce and perceive language at relatively normal rates, similar to the one's own native-language performance rates" (8).

Another important aspect about TBLT methodology is that it enables the teacher to make use of many different activities in which he or she acts as the facilitator of the different classroom situations that engage learners in real and authentic use of the target language. In support of this view, Aliakbari and Jamalvandi state that "TBLT develops communicative language teaching by providing a much greater range of classroom activities, and by providing much greater overall guidance for the teacher" (18). Huang

advocates that in CLT classrooms, “innovative activities such as information gap, role-plays, and games aim to engage learners and sustain learner motivation” (30).

## **2.2 Definition of Communicative Tasks**

David Nunan (2004) defines communicative tasks as “a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than on form” (10). They have three distinguishing characteristics: 1) they highlight the similarity that tasks should bear with real-life situations; 2) they should trigger natural use of the language for communicative purposes; and 3) they all draw attention to meaning rather than form.

Li points out that a task “has a clearly defined communicative outcome” (93). That is, students must have a purpose in order to make sense of the task that they will perform. Thus, they should engage learners in the achievement of a goal, which can be solving a problem or negotiating meaning.

## **2.3 The Task Cycle**

A task is made up of three stages: the pre-task, the task cycle, and the language focus. In the pre-task phase, Willis and Willis suggest that the teacher (facilitator) “explores the topic with the group and highlights useful words and phrases” (23). This can be done by using pictures, video segments, recordings, and others which introduce the theme and necessary the vocabulary. Siros describes the task cycle as follows:

The task cycle consists of the task(s) plus planning and report phases in which students present spoken or written reports of the work done in the task(s). During the task phase, students work in pairs or groups and use whatever linguistic resources they possess to achieve the goals of the task. Then, to avoid the risk of developing fluency at the expense of accuracy, they work with the teacher to improve their language while planning their reports of the task. (51)

The last phase, language focus, provides an opportunity for teachers and students to draw attention to specific language features. The students identify and analyze the grammar points that arouse spontaneously during the completion of the task. This can be done by means of many activities like error correction, peer correction, and even with readings. In fact, Green describes the advantages of using different readings in this stage: “learners can be encouraged to explore texts (either those previewed at an earlier stage, or new ones for enrichment of the topic) to raise their awareness of features of the grammatical, lexical and discourse systems in the texts” (309). The aim of this phase is somehow to compensate for the shift to content over form that TBLT supports.

## **2.4 Task-based Teaching Materials**

In a task-based language learning framework, the exposure to the language to be practiced and learned (input) should occur in a natural context. This means that the materials used “are not prepared especially for the learning classroom, but are selected and adapted from authentic sources” (Task-Based Learning 22). Such premise underlies another relevant characteristic of TBLT, the somewhat unpredictability of language input.

The materials used to teach language classes within the TBLT framework should be as authentic as possible and reflect real-life situations. Richards 2001, quoted in “Principles of Communicative Language Teaching and Task-Based Instruction,” defines authentic materials as “the use in teaching of texts, photographs, video selections, and other teaching resources that were not specially prepared for pedagogical purposes” (13). Some examples of authentic materials are videos, brochures, conversations, reading extracts, real telephone conversations and others. Such materials are consistent with TBLT philosophy because they contain samples of language used in real life.

### **3 Relevance of Task-Based Language Teaching Materials**

Teaching materials that follow a task-based instruction play a significant role in language teaching and learning since it gives students the opportunity to grow linguistically through the implementation of activities that actively involve them in the process. Teachers need to make sure that pupils are been provided with tasks that allow them to produce language effectively. In order to achieve this, language instructors should have clear the purpose of the tasks they give students to carry out. Our key role is to equip and prepare students to cope with situations they can encounter in real life. Because of that reason, we must implement meaningful and purposeful activities that motivate pupils to speak the target language. Breen explains that a task is “any structured language learning endeavor which has a particular objective, appropriate content, a specified working procedure and a range of outcomes from those who undertake the task”. He mentions that a task facilitates language learning with the implementation of such tasks as solving problems, simulate, or make decisions (as mentioned in Nunan 3). When language teachers follow task-based language teaching, they have to follow certain principles that accompany this effective approach such as experiential learning and students’ centeredness. Nunan states that “a task-based approach aims at providing opportunities for learners to experiment with and explore both spoken and written language through learning activities that are designed to engage learners in authentic, practical and functional use of language for meaningful purposes. This author makes clear that the role of a task is to simulate real-life situations to improve their language competence by challenging them to complete meaningful tasks making learning the main actors in the process of learning the target language (14).

#### **3.1 Implementation of Task-Based Instruction Materials in Language Classrooms**

As explained before, the aim of this project is to provide an explanation of the implementation of materials that follow a task-based approach for enhancing students’ language development and an analysis of teachers’ and students’ perceptions toward the use of these materials in the language classroom. In order to

get key data, seven university teachers and ten students answered a questionnaire (teachers) and a survey (students).

### 3.2 Teachers' Perceptions

In order to analyze teachers' perceptions about task-based language learning materials, it is necessary to verify their knowledge of what task-based instruction really is. According to the answers provided, teachers showed that they have a clear understanding of the main objective of task-based methodology. When asked to define task-based language teaching, some of the responses were:

"Teaching based on tasks that focus on certain activities."

"A useful method to develop different topics by means of tasks."

"It is teaching by asking students to work on specific tasks."

As it can be noted, in all three responses above, the teachers employed the word "task," which is the building block of task-based methodology. The definitions that they provided are therefore closely related to the underlying principles of task-based instruction asserted in the literature review of this study.

A similar set of responses was obtained when the teachers were asked about the usefulness of task-based methodology in the classroom. They manifested that this teaching method is of outmost importance in the language classroom. These are some responses:

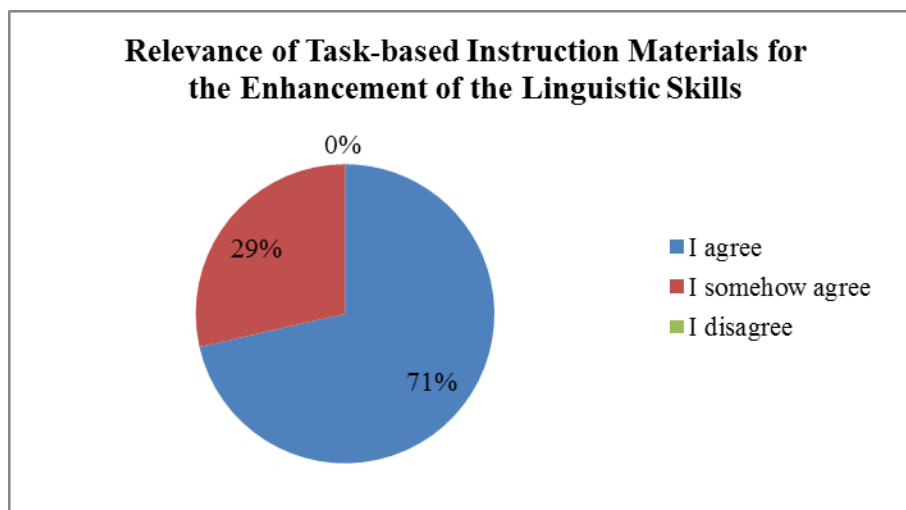
"...It helps students use the language in reality-close situations."

"You can teach in an interactive way."

"...It provides stepping stones for fulfilling a task."

"...Classes become more meaningful and the students acquire the necessary tools for real situations."

These results reveal that teachers are aware of the importance and usefulness of implementing task-based methodology in the classroom, which in turn reaffirms the urge for use of materials that adopt such methodology. Moreover, these results highly correlate with those obtained concerning the role that task-based materials has played in the promotion of students' language development. The majority of the instructors questioned agree that such materials have been relevant for the enhancement of the linguistic skills.



**Figure 1. Task-based language learning materials greatly contribute to the enhancement of the five language skills.**

**Source: questionnaire #1, August 2012**

### 3.3 Students' Perceptions

Students from different educational contexts and backgrounds were asked to complete a survey in order to get information about the activities that teachers develop in the classroom. Besides, they gave their opinion about the use of materials that help them grasp English as foreign language effectively.

According to the data gathered, most teachers use such activities as listening to songs, podcasts, lectures, and videos in order to develop the listening skills; they implement reading activities like reading to articles, books, and ads; they include such speaking activities as role-plays and oral presentation, and finally they provide students with activities like writing paragraphs, essays, letters, and blogs in order to enhance the writing skill. It is evident that instructors use a wide range of activities and exercises in order to make students produce language.

However, when students were asked what they were asked to do after listening to a song, reading an article, or writing a letter, they exposed that they do not do anything. That is, they just listen to the song or write the letter but with any purpose. Moreover, students stated that they do not follow a process in order to achieve the task. Language teachers, in this case, focus on the product rather than on the process. An important datum to consider in this discussion is that students are aware of the importance of been provided with meaningful activities in order for them to produce effective language. When participants were asked about what they think about implementing language materials that give them the opportunity to participate in the classroom actively, and allow them to start from the simplest to the more complex in order to carry out a meaningful task at the end, they made clear that they need to be given tasks that give them the opportunity to learn and speak the target language successfully.

### 3.4 Development of the Five Linguistic Skills

This project contributes to giving instructors the opportunity to know more about how task-based language teaching materials contribute to students' language development. A set of this kind of material is provided with the purpose of encouraging language teachers to implement TBLT materials in their classrooms. Each material has a clear objective and a set of instructions for its use. Teachers can use them the way they are designed or they can also adapt or supplement them in order to satisfy their needs according to their particular teaching contexts.

#### 3.4.1 Listening and Reading

Usually compared to reading, listening has long been considered a passive skill by many teachers. However, listening can actually be taught as a process that integrates the other linguistic skills in an engaging and motivating fashion. For this purpose, teachers and material developers should always keep in mind the nature of the purpose for listening and ask themselves: Is it listening for main ideas? Is it listening for specific details? Or is it listening to get new information for later use in a different situation? Once the listening purpose has been clearly stated, the success of listening instruction becomes a delightful reality in the classroom.

The nature of listening is active since we constantly interact with others or even with ourselves as we receive different listening input in our daily lives. McDonough and Shaw consider the listener "a processor of language" (120) since listening involves macro and micro skills which aid comprehension. The tasks and exercises that base upon this foundation are those which are likely to generate better results in the listening class. There is a sample listening material with some illustrative activities in Appendix 3.

As for reading, SLA research has shown that reading is also an active process. When successful readers lay their eyes on a text, they usually apply a number of strategies that help them interact with it. They pause once in a while and make inferences or predict what is going to happen next. Also, they analyze the information and make connections with their previous knowledge in order to comprehend the text better. Research has also shed light on interesting approaches to teach reading, assuming that its primary purpose is to provide new and useful information.

**-Purpose:** Any reading activity needs to have a purpose, which has to be clear and evident to the students. Artificial texts; that is, texts emphasizing the study of particular language features, have to be avoided because they fail to include a real and meaningful purpose for students.

**-Bottom-up and top-down strategies:** It has been claimed that a combination of both types of strategies makes reading an interactive and fruitful experience. Reading activities, thus, have to engage the learner not only in analyzing discrete language units such as letters and words but also in interpreting meaning.

**-Schemata Activation:** The theory of schemata states that the information of the world that we progressively acquire through experience is organized into interrelated patterns in our brains so that every time we learn something new, this is processed and stored in relation to the pre-established patterns that we have. The implications of the theory of

schema for reading lie in the assumption that in order to understand a text, the reader's schemata must be activated first. This is why the selection of the topic is extremely important. If students have poor or no knowledge of the subject in the reading text, their schemata will not be activated, and thus the reading will have little relevance for learners. Appendix 4 has a sample material for reading that illustrates some of the different activities that can be developed in order to address reading interactively.

### **3.4.2 Speaking and Writing**

When teaching speaking, it is extremely important to teach students how to pronounce the words correctly. Language understanding depends on good pronunciation and if we want our pupils to succeed in language use, we need to give them activities that address pronunciation. The exercises need to have a purpose; we have to create meaningful activities to make learning more interesting. Teachers need to bring to the lesson activities that involve students in the process. We cannot ask them to talk about something at once. We have to provide them with activities that encourage them to participate and feel ready for effective communication. Speaking is desire- and purpose-driven. It may involve expressing ideas and opinions, expressing a wish or a desire to do something, negotiating and solving a particular problem, or establishing and maintaining social relationships and friendships. (McDonough, Jo and Christopher Shaw 134). Teachers need to expose our students to well-supported language materials for them to accomplish the target objectives.

Reading and writing are two linguistic skills that are closely related and that cannot be separated. Teachers, sometimes ask our students to read and then react to it in written form. In this case, we are considering both skills, but we need to take into account certain principles to design meaningful and useful activities that involve learners creatively. Nowadays, some teachers still see reading as a passive skill even though now it is regarded as a receptive one. They just expose learners to a text only to complete written exercises like fill-in-the-blanks. We should give pupils the opportunity to interact with a text; we must let them bring their experiences to the text for them to make it meaningful. When pupils find a reason for reading a text, they will enjoy and learn from the text easily. Reading opens a door for vocabulary acquisition and grammatical structure. This skill is quite important as the others, but it is a complement that helps pupils develop their language learning process appropriately. We can look for interactive ways to provide pupils with authentic and meaningful reading activities.

Writing is another linguistic skill that must be developed in the English lesson actively. There are several activities we can use in our classrooms to expose learners to this amazing skill. Writing is a process that needs time; we cannot expect pupils to write about a topic right after we gave a brief explanation about what we want them to do. Teachers need to be careful and provide the learners with the corresponding tools for them to write a high-quality piece of writing at the end. It is pertinent to give students time, and allow them to undergo the process of planning and edit their pieces of writing. We need to focus on the process rather than on the product due to the fact that what matters is that students' progress in language development. The activity suggested for this skill is found in Appendix 5. The material includes clear objectives, purpose, and instructions. The main task is to ask

students to create a poster about endangered species that represent information they have learned through the development of the pre-task activities. At the end, they have to explain what they did and explain the main reasons why some species are disappearing.

### **3.4.3 Culture**

Teaching culture within the target contents is an important task an instructor should take into consideration. Culture, as defined by different authors and experts is the way of life of a people. This means that such aspects as practices, beliefs, perspectives, products, persons, among others combined as a whole make the culture of a specific region be differentiated. This way of living identifies a culture around the world. It is extremely relevant to make students aware of the fact that teaching cultural aspects of different places allows us to have a clearer perspective toward other ways of living. But, why is it so important to teach culture? Well, because we have to prepare students for life. Pupils need to be trained to different situations in the classrooms for them to become not only competent in language use but also in cultural issues.

In order to make students aware of the fact that there are different cultures around the world, we must provide them with enough tools when teaching. This means that we should incorporate, as much as we can, cultural issues for student to become familiar with what they can encounter outside the class. Teaching not only requires mastery of content knowledge and pedagogical skills, it goes beyond. Students need to be tolerant and realize that it is important to have culture diversity and learn from the groups that belong to different backgrounds. It is difficult for some educators to find adequate materials for teaching culture. Some samples are included in Appendix 6 and 7. These materials address activities that promote culture understanding and knowledge.

## **4 Conclusions**

The following conclusions can be drawn from this study:

1. Task-based materials do enhance language skills development in meaningful ways.
2. Task-based materials and methodology need to be encouraged in the language classroom due to the reason that they play a determining role in the students' achievement of proficiency in the target language.
3. Task-based instruction materials promote language communication since students become the main actors in the language classrooms.
4. Language teachers regard task-based methodology as a necessary factor contributing to the development of language proficiency.
5. Students consider that materials that follow a task-based instruction allow them to improve their linguistic skills.

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## The Impact of Teacher Training on the Assessment of Listening Skills

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**Resumen:** El presente estudio explora la correlación entre capacitación docente y las prácticas de evaluación auditiva de profesores de del Ministerio de Educación Pública de Costa Rica. Para ello, se diseñó un taller sobre teorías de la evaluación auditiva y los lineamientos de evaluación del MEP. El taller fue dirigido a profesores ubicados en la banda B1 según el Marco Común Europeo (CEF), y que no habían recibido capacitación en metodología de la evaluación durante su tiempo de servicio. Los participantes diseñaron exámenes de comprensión auditiva los cuales fueron analizados a la luz de la teoría en evaluación y los lineamientos del MEP. Estos fueron contrastados con exámenes elaborados por profesores que no recibieron capacitación en evaluación. Los resultados indican que las prácticas de evaluación auditiva se pueden mejorar si se ofrecen talleres de capacitación que integren teoría evaluativa del MEP con la de la literatura actual en esta área de estudio.

**Palabras Clave:** Evaluación de lenguaje, valuación auditiva, destrezas auditivas, MEP, capacitación docente

**Abstract:** This study explores the correlation between teacher training and the listening assessment practices of MEP (Ministerio de Educación Pública) teachers of Costa Rica. To this end, a workshop that analyzed MEP assessment guidelines and theory on listening assessment was offered to MEP in-service teachers who had not received previous while-in-service training on assessment methodology, and who were ranked B1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEF). Workshop attendees created listening tests that were analyzed for their compliance with both theoretical principles on listening assessment and MEP guidelines, which were contrasted with tests created by teachers who received no training. Results indicate that testing practices can be improved if teachers are provided with training that unifies assessment criteria deriving from both MEP and current listening assessment theory.

**Key Words:** Language assessment, listening assessment, listening skills, MEP, teacher training.

## **I Introduction**

Over the past decades, the assessment of listening skills in ESL and EFL learning has become an area of concern in both research and teaching. Such concern stems, by and large, from the fact that listening assessment has proven to be both a difficult area of language teaching and a neglected field worldwide (Mendelson, 1994; Vandergrift, 1997; Osada, 2004; Gamboa and Sevilla, 2012). As for the context of the Costa Rican public education system, the Consejo Nacional de Rectores (CONARE) along with four State Universities (i.e.; Universidad de Costa Rica, Universidad Estatal a Distancia, Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica, and Universidad Nacional), have joined efforts to provide training on language assessment to MEP in-service teachers ranked C1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEF). Arguably, because such training is offered only to teachers ranked C1, there is a large layer of educators that is not being trained and yet, is conducting listening assessment in their institutions. To make things worse, this group of teachers needs to assess listening without having been given any guidelines by the MEP (Gamboa and Sevilla, 2012).

Thus, the study herein arouses, on the one hand, from the need to fill the gap between listening assessment as a neglected language area, MEP's overt lack of specific listening testing guidelines, and the actual test-design practices on the part of in-service teachers. On the other hand, it stems from the need for further teacher training on the effective application of assessment principles as concluded by Gamboa and Sevilla (2012). The results of this study indicate that listening assessment practices of EFL teachers can be improved significantly if training that unifies both assessment theory and institutional guidelines on assessment is provided. Likewise, these results suggest that further training is needed so that all existing gaps between theory and practice can finally be closed. Arguably, in an age of globalization where English skills are paramount for effective multicultural communication, and where active listening skills have become vital in language learning, research on listening assessment proves not only relevant but also crucial as a way to provide insights on how to conduct better teaching in the context of English as a Foreign Language.

## **II Review of the Literature**

### **2.1 A Brief History of Listening Assessment**

The history of listening assessment can be traced back to the development of two currents of language teaching approaches that saw light during the second half of the twentieth century; that is, the audiolingual method and the communicative approaches to language teaching. Thus, Buck (2001) described three approaches to the assessment of listening. The first such approach was developed during the 1950s as the audiolingual method came into existence. In this approach, assert Coombe et al. (2007), listening was broken into elements in order to be assessed. The rationale to such an approach derives from the beliefs that "it was important to be able to isolate one element of language from a continuous stream of speech and that spoken language was believed to be the same as written language [...]" (p. 91). The second approach, called the integrative approach, came into existence in the

1970s. Coombe et al. argue that tests in this approach sought to assess the learner's capacity to use many language bits at the same time. The whole of a language was seen as being greater than the sum of its parts. The last approach to listening assessment proposed by Buck is to be found within the communicative approach to language teaching developed during the 70s when "the status of listening comprehension begun to change from being incidental and peripheral to a status of central importance" (Osada, 2004, p. 55). According to this approach, "the listener must be able to comprehend the message and then use it in context" (Coombe et al. 2001, p. 91). Nonetheless, these changes in philosophy regarding listening assessment in the past decades have brought about serious dilemmas to teachers and researchers; and not only that, but evidence exists that listening itself has been neglected in many English programs (Mendelson, 1994; Osada, 2004; Vandergrift, 1997). In the case of Costa Rica's public education system, the issue is especially challenging because teachers often find themselves confronting discrepancies between what the theory says they should do in terms of assessment and what the MEP requests. These contradictions are found, for the most part, when it comes down to task design. For instance, according to theory (e.g., Coombe et al., 2007), when designing a multiple choice tasks to assess listening, it is suggested that two distractors and a correct answer be included; while the MEP requests three distractors and one correct answer. The scenario worsens things further because the MEP dictates such guidelines for general assessment, not for listening; and yet English teachers need to comply with them as if assessing language entailed the same procedures as assessing other subjects.

The unavailability of guidelines for listening assessment in Costa Rican schools poses another challenge for teachers. Gamboa and Sevilla (2012) claim that "So far, there are parameters for designing written tests in general, but there are no such parameters specifically for designing listening tests" (p. 3). This implies that teachers need to follow directions as stemming from a word-of-mouth tradition that is passed down from one regional branch to the other, and from school to school, which results in teachers creating tests in different ways, thus undermining language learning and teaching.

## **2.2 The Role of Validity, Reliability, and Washback in Language Assessment**

Recent literature on language assessment has devised eight basic principles (cornerstones) of language assessment (i.e., usefulness, validity, reliability, practicality, washback, authenticity, transparency, and security). However, in recent years, there has been an increasing interest in the importance of reliability, validity, and beneficial backwash. A brief description of each of these three major principles is presented below.

Reliability means how reliable a test is; that is, how consistent the scores of a test are over time, or its ability to obtain the same—or at least similar—score from the same student if the test is given by a different tester and at a different time. When it comes to testing reliability, there are two key variables that need to be distinguished: *intra-rater reliability* and *inter-rater reliability* (Brown, 2005). Because the nature of language testing suggests the need to minimize rater's subjectivity while scoring, it is important to understand the purpose of these two variables. Intra-rater reliability, on the one hand, refers to a testing practice where only one rater is involved in the scoring process; usually, the

teacher. Inter-rater reliability, on the other, involves more than one rater. The latter is particularly difficult to achieve since the worldviews of many raters come into play and thus, disagreements about what score to give in a test may emerge between these raters. Brown believes that one of the best ways to solve the issue is by using detailed and well-defined rating criteria and to have several training sessions where the examiners learn to apply the rating criteria as objectively and accurately as possible (2005). Alderson, however, warns that this may be achieved only if the teaching setting allows for such take of action and there is enough willpower to do so (1995).

Another element that has been paid a lot of attention within the scope of language assessment is that of validity. Test validity deals with the extent to which a test measures what it or purports to measure (Coombe et al., 2007). The test validity principle is comprised of several sub layers that need to be considered while conducting assessment. The first such layer is *content validity*, which is about whether the test includes a representative sample of the content that it purports to measure (Brown, 2005). This principle is often violated by many testers and curricular authorities as well, often without considering the implications behind it. One typical consequence of this is that students score low in the tests because they are assessed a different skill than the one studied in class. Similarly, cases exist where the teacher uses testing methods in the class that do not match the ones used in the test. Another layer is *criterion-related validity*, in which the test designer compares his/her test with a well-known test, like the TOEFL or the TWE, and sees if the one s/he designed is close in quality to it. This can be useful also to confirm that his/her test is measuring the same constructs as the test used as reference (e.g., listening, writing, speaking, etc.). *Concurrent validity* is another important construct in testing validity. It basically follows the same principle of criterion-related validity, but administering both, the test created by the teacher and the test used as a reference at the same time. Finally, *predictive validity* has to do with the predictability value that a test may have in determining the test taker's success in a given communicative scenario. For instance, it is assumed that if a student scores high in the TOEFL test, s/he will perform well in an American university. In other words, a test must serve as a predictor of the success of the students. All these types of validity must be taken into consideration while interpreting the scores of a test.

There are, however, some problems when dealing with validity. Probably the most typical one comes into play when testers or curricular authorities decide to administer standardized tests such as the TOEFL, the TOEIC, or the TWE for testing the skills of a particular group of students. Brown (2005) advises that, if the tester wants to use a standardized test for a particular course, under particular circumstances, and for a particular group of students, adaptations need to be made so that validity principles are not violated. However, the same as for reliability, this requires a lot of effort and willpower, which might not always be a condition in most public schools of Costa Rica.

As for beneficial backwash, this component has been given significant acknowledgement in the past years within the field of language testing. In general, it is seen as “the impact a test may have on learners and teachers, on educational systems, and on society at large” (Hughes, 2003 p. 53). This is gaining popularity among researchers and

curricular authorities for, as discussed in testing literature research, tests scores may influence the decision making procedures of a particular institution. Brown (2005) provides a practical and useful example of this new phenomenon:

Consider the following scenario: you are working in an institution that gets more funding if the number of students reaching a certain benchmark (i.e., standard) on the standardized test at the end of the year increases. As a result, at the end of the year, your director will be keeping tabs on how many of your students make the benchmark for funding. Do you think that will affect your teaching? [...] (p. 242).

The answer to the question he poses at the end of the quote above is evidently yes. There will clearly be concern on improving students' grades as a way to continue increasing the institution's funding at the end of every year. This effect is, "roughly speaking, [about] the degree to which a test affects the curriculum that is related to it" (Brown, 2005, p. 243).

As stated elsewhere in this section, these three language assessment cornerstones have been granted great importance in the past years and should, therefore, be made available to every language teacher within and outside the context of Costa Rica's public education system.

### **2.3 Principles of Listening Assessment**

This section presents relevant listening assessment theory as discussed by Gamboa and Sevilla (2012).

#### *2.3.1 Approaches of listening assessment*

Buck (2001) presents three approaches to the assessment of listening skills. The first approach is the discrete-point approach which "[breaks] listening into component elements and assesses them separately" (Coombe C. et al., 2007, p.91). The second approach is the integrative approach. It is best explained by Oller (1979), "whereas discrete items attempt to test knowledge of language one bit at a time, integrative tests attempt to assess a learner's capacity to use many bits at the same time" (p.37). Common question types were dictation and cloze. Here, whole language is better than the sum of its parts. The last approach is the communicative approach. Its rationale poses that the listener must be able to comprehend the message and then use it in context. It follows that question formats should be authentic in nature.

#### *2.3.2 Types of listening*

Coombe et al. (2007) describe two types of listening: general and academic listening. According to them, the following micro-skills are part of general listening: clustering; recognizing redundancy; comprehending reduced forms; comprehend hesitations, pauses, false starts, and corrections; understanding colloquial language; processing prosodic features; and understanding and using rules of conversational interaction. Academic listening, on the other hand, includes identifying the purpose and scope of a lecture, the topic, and its logical development; understanding the relationship among discourse units (main versus supporting details); recognizing lexical terms related to the topic; recognizing markers of cohesion (first, next, in conclusion, etc.) and intonation in a lecture, detecting

the speaker's attitude toward the subject; and recognizing digressions (turning aside from the main subject) and non-verbal cues of emphasis.

#### **2.4 Considerations in designing listening tasks**

There are a number of considerations that teachers need to take into account when designing listening tasks. Before attempting to design a listening test, teachers should consult the course objectives and assessment specifications/guidelines. Also, tasks should reflect those that occur in real-life situations, and the language used should be natural. In addition, the students should be able to use background knowledge.

The following list of considerations is described by Coombe et al. (2007):

##### *2.4.1 Content*

Specifications will provide information regarding test content; text types (i.e., narrative, descriptive, etc.); speech types to be used (i.e., phrases, single utterances, two-person dialogues, multi-participant dialogue, monologues); mode of input (audio, video, live reader), varieties of English; scripted or unscripted input; and length of input (in time or number of exchanges).

##### *2.4.2 Background knowledge*

Testers can control background knowledge by writing tasks that exploit specific course materials by providing students with the requisite background knowledge during testing via advanced organizers or practice prompts. In addition, the primary focus of items should generally be on meaning rather than on form.

##### *2.4.3 Texts*

Unavailability of suitable texts is the most pressing issue because creating scripts is not an easy task. Assessment writers should make an inventory of the topics in a course and collect appropriate material in advance. Unfortunately, teachers very often take reading texts and transform them into listening scripts—unauthentic due to lack of redundant features. Instead, teachers should: look for texts and infuse oral characteristics. Use an oral marker at the beginning: “Today I am going to...”, use less complex structures; insert *um*, *err*, *ah*. use *and*, *but*, *or so* instead of *although*, *whereas*; read it aloud to make sure it sounds natural, make a script or recording, and include pauses, redundancy, false starts, ungrammaticality, hesitations, etc.

##### *2.4.4 Vocabulary*

Students must know 90-95 percent of the words to understand the text/script (Nation, 1990). When writing a listening test, teachers should include vocabulary from their own word lists into listening scripts whenever possible for lexical overlap can affect difficulty. Teachers must be aware that words used in the passage as well as in the questions and response options when used in the correct answer key, make the question or answer easier; whereas when used as distractors, the questions or answers become more difficult. Unknown words should never be used as the correct answer.

#### *2.4.5 Test structure*

Tests should start with easy questions to minimize lower students' test anxiety. They must also test a wide range of skills. Items should be ordered as they are heard. Items should be spaced out. No content from the first 15 to 20 seconds should be tested. And easy as well as challenging items such as paraphrased content and differencing tasks should be included.

#### *2.4.6 Formats*

Students should never be exposed to new formats in testing situations. Formats such as multiple choice questions and true or false are used because they are reliable and easy to mark and analyze. Memory plays an important part in listening comprehension tests. More options add to the memory load and affect the difficulty of the task and question.

#### *2.4.7 Item writing*

Items should be separated sufficiently in the test so that students have time to respond to one item without missing the next. Each new section should be framed with an advanced organizer to help develop the context and activate student's background knowledge.

#### *2.4.8 Timing*

Timing will be determined by how many times the students listen to the text. For achievement tests test takers should be given the chance to listen to the text twice, but when assessing the main idea the listening passage should be played once (Buck, 2001). Finally, students need be given time to pre-read questions.

#### *2.4.9 Skill contamination*

Skill contamination refers to the idea that test-takers must use other language skills to answer listening items. Now it is viewed as skill integration.

## **II Methodology**

### **2.1 Research Hypothesis**

Upon examining current theory on language assessment and listening assessment, it could be asserted that more effective listening assessment practices may be achieved on the part of in-service teachers from the West area of Costa Rica ranked B1 according to CEF if they are provided with training on listening assessment that draws upon both theory and MEP's testing guidelines.

### **2.2 Research Design**

The goal of this study was to examine the incidence of teacher training on listening assessment that draws upon both theory and MEP's guidelines on the listening assessment practices of in-service teachers. The study is quantitative, and it is correlational because it



examined the relation between two variables, namely teacher training on listening assessment and the tests created after teachers underwent the training by comparing them to tests created by teachers ranked the same level, from the same area, but who did not take any listening assessment training. Participants in this study were MEP teachers who work in Western Costa Rican high schools and were ranked B1 according to the CEF. The participants were divided into two groups, control and experimental. The experimental group was given training on listening assessment via the workshop, while the control group did not receive any training. None of them had received prior while-in-service training on listening assessment methodology.

### **2.3 Procedure**

An eight-hour workshop on listening assessment was designed for the teachers participating in the study, and it was divided into two sessions. In the first session, theory and MEP's assessment guidelines were discussed. Here, participants were presented current testing principles in an interactive fashion; that is, principles were discussed by the researchers but, at the same time, participants shared testing experiences as a way to achieve a more solid understanding of the theory. As for the MEP's assessment guidelines, these were presented in a lecture fashion. In the second session, teachers were asked to create listening tests following the theory discussed in the first session, and it followed three stages. In the first stage, participants put theory studied into practice by creating listening tests individually. Such tests included a minimum of three tasks, as indicated in the MEP's assessment guidelines. During the second stage, participants shared their tests with a peer-reviser in order to receive and provide recommendations for further improvement. This was a crucial step since it allowed the test designer to identify weaknesses in his/her test, as it allowed the reviser to become more critical of the tests s/he checks. In the last stage, a plenary session was held where some participants shared their tests with the rest of the audience.

After tests had been evaluated in the plenary session, they were analyzed using a checklist adapted from Gamboa and Sevilla (2012) to determine the degree of compliance with both MEP's assessment guidelines and the theory on listening assessment. Since Gamboa and Sevilla (2012) analyzed tests created by teachers who had not received any while-in-service training on listening assessment, the results of the analysis in the present study were correlated with those of the earlier.

### **2.4 Instrument**

The instrument used to assess the teacher-created tests was a checklist previously adapted by Gamboa and Sevilla (2012). In total, the checklist included eleven criteria that sought to assess the degree of compliance of the tests with the theoretical principles discussed in the workshop (see Gamboa and Sevilla for expansion on assessment principles). These criteria included: test format, test heading, general test objective, general instructions, credits, balance of item difficulty, specific instructions, listening test techniques, scoring key, face validity, and beneficial backwash.

## 2.5 Data Analysis and Discussion

### 2.5.1 Tests Created by Teachers by the Control Group

Throughout this section the results obtained from evaluating the tests created by teachers who did not take any while in-service training on listening assessment will be discussed.

The two criteria where the greatest degree of achievement was found were test format and test heading. Because compliance with this requirement was below 50%, the tests could be said to be unreliable in both their format and heading.

Low degree of achievement was found in the second group of criteria comprised by test general instructions, balance of item difficulty and specific instructions with an average compliance close to 30%. This means that the tests created by teachers who have not received training on listening assessment are not reliable with regards to either test general instructions, balance of item difficulty not specific instructions.

A third group of criteria was identified which scored even lower in the degree of compliance with test requirements. Credits and listening test techniques complied an average of 11, 6% with these requirements. Such low degree of compliance makes this two the next to the last lowest criteria in the group highly undermining the reliability of the tests evaluated.

The group of criteria whose degree of compliance with test requirements was the lowest includes general test objectives, scoring key and face validity, their compliance being 0% for the earlier two and 6.25% for the latter. Such low compliance represents null validity regarding these three criteria for the tests analyzed.

**Table 1: Degree of Compliance with Test Requirements for Tests Created by the Control Group**

CRITERIA	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9	RAW SCORE	MEAN
Test Format	100	87,5	87,5	62,5	75	62,5	87,5	87,5	50	700	43,75
Test Heading	100	91,7	83,3	83,3	83,3	83,3	66,7	66,7	66,7	725	45,31
General Test Objectives	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
General Instructions	100	100	66,7	66,7	33,3	0	66,7	66,7	66,7	566,6	35,41
Credits	100	0	0	0	0	100	0	0	0	200	12,5
Balance of Item Difficulty	0	100	100	100	0	100	100	0	0	500	31,25
Specific Instructions	75	50	75	50	100	50	25	50	50	525	32,81
Listening Test Techniques	71,4	57,1	0	0	14,3	0	0	0	28,6	171,4	10,71
Scoring Key	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Face Validity	0	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	6,25
Beneficial Backwash	100	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	200	12,5

### 2.5.2 Tests Created by Teachers by the Experimental Group

This section details the results obtained from examining the tests created by teachers after undergoing while in-service training on listening assessment via the checklist adapted from Gamboa and Sevilla (2012).

The two criteria where the greatest degree of achievement was found were face validity and beneficial backwash. Because in fact, all tests fully complied with this requirement, they are highly reliable in both their layout and as a source of feedback for future decision making on the part of curricular authorities.

The second group of criteria where a high degree of achievement was found pertains to test format and test heading, and balance of item difficulty. Roughly speaking, the three criteria depict a degree of compliance of over 80%, which means that, after undergoing the treatment, the participants were able to comply with test and test heading required by the MEP and by assessment theory to a satisfactory degree.

General and specific instructions and listening test techniques showed compliance close to 50% with assessment requirements. Being these three sensitive components of assessment instruments, this represents a must-improve area since, as discussed in current assessment theory, this abides serious implications for the test taker.

Regarding general test objectives, results depict very low compliance with assessment requirements. This means that, despite having received training, they did not fully internalize the importance of including a general test objective in the evaluation instrument.

The last two criteria, scoring key and credits, ranked zero percent degree of compliance with assessment principles. In the case of the former, the reasons for the no compliance may have to do with the nature of the workshop and the time constrictions that the participants faced when designing the tests. As for the latter, the reasons were that they did not need to give credits because no copyrighted resources were used. Table one below depicts the individual results for all the tests and the criteria analyzed.

**Table 2: Degree of Compliance with Test Requirements for Tests Created by the Experimental Group**

CRITERIA	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9	T10	T11	T12	T13	T14	T15	T16	RAW SCORE	MEAN
Test Format	100	87,5	87,5	87,5	75	75	75	100	100	75	87,5	75	87,5	87,5	87,5	87,5	1375	85,9375
Test Heading	83,3	66,66	91,6	83,33	91,6	83,33	83,33	83,3	91,6	83,33	91,6	75	100	91,6	100	83,33	1382,91	86,43187
General Test Objectives	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	0	50	0	150	9,375
General Instructions	0	0	83,3	0	0	50%	66,66	66,6	83,33	66,66	100	83,3	83,3	83,3	83,3	83,33	883,58	55,2237
Credits	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Balance of Item Difficulty	100	100	100	100	0	100	100	100	100	100	100	0	100	100	100	100	1400	87,5
Specific Instructions	0	50	50	50	50	50	50	25	75	75	100	75	75	50	75	50	900	56,25
Listening Test Techniques	57,4	55,14	71,4	71,4	42,8	57,14	57,14	71,4	71,4	42,8	85,7	57,14	85,7	100	85,7	85,7	1097,964	68,6227
Scoring Key	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Face Validity	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	1600	100
Beneficial Backwash	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	1600	100

### III Conclusions and Recommendations for Further Research

The paper herein explored the correlation between teacher training on listening assessment and their listening assessment practices after they undergo training. The conclusions are presented as derived from the analysis of the tests via the checklist to assess the teacher-created tests. Taken together, the findings of the study suggest the following:

Firstly, that significant improvement can be seen in tests created by teachers who received training on listening assessment methodology whose average compliance with test requirements was 59% per criterion which poses a dramatic contrast with the 20,95% compliance per criterion with test requirements of tests created by teachers who have not received while in-service training on listening assessment. Conclusively, dramatic improvements are evident in the criteria of beneficial backwash, face validity, test format, test heading, and listening test techniques. Arguably, although this was a small study that looked at tests created by nine teachers who have not undergone while in-service training on listening assessment, which makes up for 20% of the teachers ranked B1 in the West Area, and tests created by 16 teachers who took while in-service training on listening assessment representing 37% of the target teacher group; results support the idea that better listening test-design practices could be achieved by simply providing teachers with some training on listening assessment. Certainly, this gives insights regarding how desirable teaching practices can be severely undermined by the fact that listening and listening assessment have been a neglected area in language teaching for years.

Secondly, findings suggest that despite the significant impact made in the test-design practices of MEP teachers, there are areas that need to be reinforced. Such areas include the writing of general instructions, specific instructions, the inclusion of general test objectives, and the improvement of listening test techniques.

Thirdly, results imply that more evidence is needed in order to measure the impact of teacher-training on the inclusion of the scoring key and the corresponding credits in listening tests. This is so because of time constraints experienced in the workshop that was part of the present study, and because teachers did not need to provide any credits during the design of their tests in the workshop. Therefore, the researchers suggest that compliance with these requirements should be further examined in future research.

Future research should be oriented towards examining four important areas. First, the listening passage should be studied as a way to obtain a fuller panorama of the assessment practices of MEP teachers of the West area. Second, future research should deal with time constrictions experienced in this study and thus, be able to provide teachers with more listening material to choose from before they design their tests. This would allow them to select materials that meet the principle that listening tasks should resemble those of real life. Third, future studies must look at the impact of peer-editing sessions in the improvement of listening tests designed by MEP teachers ranked B1. Finally, similar studies must be conducted with populations ranked in other levels to explore the correlation between language proficiency and listening test design practices.

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## **I. Appendices**

### **Appendix # 1: Workshop Syllabus**

**Ministerio de Educación Pública  
Dirección Regional de Occidente  
Departamento de Inglés**

#### **General Workshop Information**

**Workshop Title:** Assessment of Listening Skills for Primary and Secondary Education

**Duration of the workshop:** Six hours

**Participants' Proficiency Level:** B1, according to the Common European Framework of Reference

**Instructors:**

Professor Roy Gamboa Mena, M.Ed. (UCR)

Professor Henry Sevilla Morales, Lic. (UCR & UNED)

This is an in-service training initiative partnered by la Oficina de la Supervisión de Inglés de la Regional de Occidente del MEP

**Workshop description:**

This is a theoretical-practical workshop addressed at teachers of English from the West area of the country whose proficiency level is ranked B1, according to the Common European Framework of Referenced for Languages. The workshop explores both current theory on listening assessment and MEP's guidelines for general assessment; and it is divided into two sessions. In the first session, listening assessment principles and MEP's assessment guidelines will be discussed; and in the second, teachers will design listening tests based on the theory presented throughout the workshop. The workshop leads MEP in-service teachers to conduct better listening assessment practices within the context of public education.

**Workshop objectives:**

**General objective:**

The goal of this workshop on the assessment of listening is to provide MEP teachers ranked B1 with: a) hands-on knowledge of the theoretical principles that inform the construction of listening tests and b) a focused overview of MEP guidelines for the design of listening assessment.

**Specific objectives:**

- 1 to review general assessment theories and principles
- 2 to examine listening comprehension assessment theories
- 3 to discuss the principles of listening test task creation
- 4 to analyze MEP listening assessment guidelines
- 5 to create tests as a way to put listening assessment theory into practice

**Workshop methodology:**

In this workshop, participants are expected to develop effective listening assessment practices upon exploring listening assessment theory and MEP's guidelines on assessment. Regarding assessment theory, the participants will be presented current testing principles in an interactive fashion. That is, such principles will be discussed by the presenters but, at the same time, a more solid understanding of them will be achieved through the participants' sharing of testing experiences. As for the MEP's assessment guidelines, these will be done in a lecture fashion.

Regarding the test design session, it will be carried out following three stages. In the first stage, participants will put theory studied into practice by creating listening tests individually. Such tests will include a minimum of three tasks, as indicated in the MEP's assessment guidelines. During the second stage, they will share their tests with a peer-reviser in order to get and give recommendations for further improvement. This is a crucial step since it will allow the test designer to pinpoint weaknesses in his/her test, as it will allow the reviser to become more critical of the test's s/he checks. In the last stage, a type of plenary session will be held where some participants will share their tests with the rest of the audience and, together, they will be analyzed in order to enrich them further.

**Workshop contents:**

- 1- General Assessment theories
- 2- Types of tests
- 3- Assessment cornerstones / principles
- 4- Developing assessment
- 5- Listening comprehension assessment theories
  - General considerations in listening assessment
  - Models of listening
  - Types of listening
- 6- Considerations in designing listening tasks
  - Content
  - Background knowledge
  - Texts
  - Vocabulary
  - Test structure
  - Formats
  - Item writing
  - Timing:
  - Skill contamination

## 7- Listening tests methods

- Phonemic discrimination
- Paraphrase recognition
- Multiple choice questions
- True or false
- Short answer questions
- Cloze
- Dictation
- Information transfer tasks
- Note-taking

## 8- MEP and test Items

- Construction of Objective Items
- Construction of Production Items

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**Appendix # 2: Listening Test Checklist**

**LISTENING TEST CHECKLIST**

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**Participant's name whose test was assessed:**

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**Objective**

To assess MEP teacher-created listening tests for their compliance with theoretical principles of assessment and MEP's assessment guidelines and regulations.

**General instructions**

1. Assess the listening test by using this checklist.
2. Read the criterion on the left column and write a check mark in the right column to express your assessment.
3. Use the following strategies to scaffold your feedback for items marked PARTLY or NO: explanations and / or examples from the theory and MEP's guidelines and regulations.

<b>LISTENING TEST CHECKLIST</b>							
<b>CRITERIA</b>	<b>TASK ACHIEVEMENT DEGREE</b>			<b>CRITERIA</b>	<b>TASK ACHIEVEMENT DEGREE</b>		
	<b>YES</b>	<b>PARTLY</b>	<b>NO</b>		<b>YES</b>	<b>PARTLY</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Test Format</b>				<b>Test Heading</b>			
1. Has the layout of the test been well set?				<b>Are the following elements included?</b> 1. the name of the educational institution			
2. Is it suitably and professionally arranged?				2. the school term and year			
3. Are top, bottom, left and right margins set in 2.5 cm.?				3. the type of test (midterm or final)			
4. Is the typeface style and font size big enough as to enable students to read smoothly and understand well the data included in the test?				4. data of listening to be tested			
5. Are diagrams, pictures, and other test elements well organized?				5. the total points and percentage of the test			
6. Is spacing between lines adequately set so that the test appears uncluttered?				6. the school or high school level			
7. Are all pages numbered to maintain readers well oriented on the right sequence of the test?				7. a line for the rater's name or the rater's name			
8. Are the photocopies clear enough for students to be able to do the exercises?				8. a line to write the date on which the test will be Administered or the date is already included			
				9. the allotted time for the achievement test			
				10. spaces to set the points, grade and percentage Obtained			
				11. a line for the testee to write his/her name			
				12. a line for parents to sign the test, if required			

# LISTENING TEST CHECKLIST

CRITERIA	TASK ACHIEVEMENT DEGREE		
	YES	PARTLY	NO
I Congreso Internacional de Lingüística Aplicada CONLA UNA   2013			
<b>General Test Objective(s)</b>			
1. Is there an evaluation objective(s) to establish what the testees should be able to demonstrate in regards to their language development?			
2. Is the objective(s) stated clearly, precisely and concisely?			
<b>General Instructions</b>			
1. Is the language focus on what the test takers should do rather than on what they should not do?			
2. Are instructions organized numerically or alphabetically in a proper way?			
3. Are appropriate action verbs used to introduce each set of instructions?			
4. Are explanations and/or examples specific, short and clear?			
5. Is important information highlighted whenever required?			
6. Is language adjusted appropriately to meet the students' English level?			

**LISTENING TEST CHECKLIST**

CRITERIA	TASK ACHIEVEMENT DEGREE			COMMENTS Feedback based on theory and MEP's guidelines and regulations
	YES	PARTLY	NO	
<b>Credits</b> Are copyright laws followed by giving credit to the authors of intellectual works such as stories, poems, illustrations, maps, and others?				
<b>Balance of Item Difficulty</b> Is the test arranged from the easiest to the most difficult tasks?				
<b>Specific Instructions</b> 1. Are explanations specific, short and clear?				
2. Is there sufficient context for the test task to be accomplished well?				
3. Is the language adjusted appropriately to meet the students' English level?				
4. Is the total number of points and individual value of each correct item included?				

**LISTENING TEST CHECKLIST**

CRITERIA	TASK ACHIEVEMENT DEGREE			COMMENTS Feedback based on theory and MEP's guidelines and regulations
	YES	PARTLY	NO	
<p><b>Scoring Key</b></p> <p>Is there a scoring key specifying the acceptable answers to all listening test items?</p>				
<p><b>Face Validity</b></p> <p>Do the test content and tasks meet the objectives intended by the test designer?</p>				
<p><b>Beneficial backwash to</b></p> <p>1. Do the test content and techniques correspond with the objectives of the curriculum for which this achievement test is intended, so that its eventual administration may have a positive impact on testee?</p>				

<b>Listening Test Techniques</b>				
1. Are there appropriate test techniques to elicit those behaviours that reflect more reliably the students' specific listening abilities?				
2. Is there a minimum of three different exercises to evaluate specific listening skills?				
3. Are the questions ordered as they are heard in the passage?				
4. Are the questions spaced out in the passage?				
5. Each new section is framed with an advanced organizer to help activate the testee's schemata?				
6. Do the test tasks reflect real-life situations?				
7. Are the items placed sufficiently far apart so testees have enough time to answer one item without missing the next?				

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## Promoting Reading Strategies in Counseling Students

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**Resumen:** Aprender a leer en un idioma extranjero requiere de entender las ideas y conceptos que se transmiten a través de lo escrito. Lectores requieren de hacer conexiones entre el mensaje y el conocimiento previo, relacionado al tema que se desarrolla, con el fin de lograr comprender lo que se lee. El siguiente estudio es llevado a cabo con estudiantes universitarios cursando la carrera de Orientación y llevando el curso de Inglés Instrumental I en la Universidad Nacional (UNA), Sede Región Brunca. Dado que el énfasis de estos estudiantes no es inglés, y que éste es el primero de dos cursos de comprensión de lectura que deben llevar, se ha notado que la principal estrategia aplicada por los estudiantes en este curso es la traducción. Por lo tanto, es importante que los estudiantes pongan en práctica otras estrategias que pueden ayudarlos cuando leen en la lengua extranjera. La siguiente investigación de acción tiene como objetivo exponer a los estudiantes a diversas estrategias que sean útiles para lograr la comprensión de lectura. Esto significa que además de escanear textos y contestar preguntas de información específica, los estudiantes principalmente analizarán, comentarán y/o reflexionarán acerca del mensaje que se está transmitiendo con respecto al conocimiento que hayan adquirido en su área de estudio. El estudio revela que implementar estrategias de comprensión de lectura involucra a los estudiantes en el texto, alejándolos de la dependencia por la traducción, para enfocarse más en el mensaje que le es transmitido a través del texto.

**Palabras clave:** Estrategias de lectura, comprensión de lectura, técnicas, modelos de lectura, etapas de lectura.

**Abstract:**

Learning to read in a foreign language requires students to understand the ideas and concepts that are transmitted through a piece of writing. Readers are required to make connections between the message and background knowledge related to the topic being discussed in order to reach understanding of what is read. The following research is carried out with university students majoring in Counseling and taking an English course designed to provide tools for students to access information in the foreign language related to their field of study. Since the student's major does not emphasize English, and this is the first of two reading comprehension courses that they must take, it has been noticed that the main strategy applied by students in this course is translation. Thus, it is important to have students put into practice other strategies that could aid them when reading in the foreign language. The following action research aims to expose students to other strategies that can be useful for achieving reading comprehension by analyzing, commenting, and/or reacting to the message being transmitted



according to the knowledge they have acquired in their field of study as background knowledge. The study reveal that implementing reading comprehension strategies involves student with the text, drifting them away from translation methods, and focusing more on the message being transmitted through the text.

**Keywords:** Reading strategies, reading comprehension, techniques, models of reading, reading stages.

## I Introduction

The following action research aims to aid university students in the development of their reading skills by promoting the use of reading strategies. These are students that are majoring in Counseling, but they are currently taking the course Instrumental Use of English I at Universidad Nacional (UNA), Sede Región Brunca. This course's general objective is to apply different techniques in order to locate and comprehend general and specific ideas in texts written in English in an effective and rapid form. The course is designed to provide reading tools that will aid students in accessing documents in English that are related to their field of study. The reading skills acquired through the course will serve as an aid for students to investigate and access material found in the foreign language.

The bibliography that is recommended in the course syllabus makes use of procedures and materials which emphasize translation from the foreign language (English) to the native language (Spanish). That is, the methodology the course's book uses is mostly the grammar-translation method, so students are confronted with exercises that require them to decode texts into their native language in order to achieve reading comprehension at an intermediate-low level according to the ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages)<sup>13</sup>. Although the purpose of the course is to enable students with reading comprehension skills, the techniques and materials used guide them to depend mostly on translation.

When referring to reading comprehension, it is not only a matter of scanning a text for answering questions with specific information. Students should go beyond this in order to analyze, comment, and/or react to what has been read. This action research aims to suggest which reading strategies can aid counseling students when reading texts in a foreign language, what activities can reduce student's dependence on the dictionary to translate, and what techniques can teachers implement to guide students in the comprehension of a text

<sup>13</sup>According to ACTFL (2012) at intermediate low sublevel when students read they can, "[...] understand some information from the simplest connected texts dealing with a limited number of personal and social needs, although there may be frequent misunderstandings. Readers at this level will be challenged to derive meaning from connected texts of any length." (p. 23)

American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages. (2012). *ACFL Proficiency Guidelines*. Retrieved November 11, 2012, [http://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/public/ACTFLProficiencyGuidelines2012\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/public/ACTFLProficiencyGuidelines2012_FINAL.pdf)

## II Literature Review

### 2.1 Implications for Teaching Reading in the Foreign Language Classroom

Learning to read in a foreign language is not only a matter of assimilating grammar rules and memorizing some vocabulary words. This is only a small part of what developing this skill implies. It is necessary to understand the ideas and concepts that are transmitted through the piece of writing one is reading. According to Day and Bamford (1998), reading is “the construction of meaning from a printed or written message” (p. 12). This construction requires the reader to make connections between the message and background knowledge in order to reach understanding of what is read. This process takes place whether the purpose of reading is academic or nonacademic. The focus, then, should be on meaning and not only on the form or structure of the words that make up the text. Thus, the reader will have to use different kinds of clues like linguistic knowledge, structure of texts, subject of the reading, and background knowledge.

To this regard, Barnett stated, “The level of reader comprehension of the text is determined by how well the reader variables (interest level in the text, purpose for reading the text, knowledge of the topic, foreign language abilities, awareness of the reading process, and level of willingness to take risks) interact with the text variables (text type, structure, syntax, and vocabulary)”. These two variables work together to create meaning. Reading in a foreign language goes beyond knowing grammatical and lexical features of that language. Teachers need to take into account personal and linguistic characteristics when teaching students to read in a foreign language.

The primary objective of teaching reading is to achieve reading comprehension to find the meaning of what the author has presented in the text. However, comprehension is not just about recalling and stating ideas that are directly presented in the reading. Mohamad (1999) explained three main levels of comprehension. First, literal comprehension involves surface meanings, that is, comprehension of ideas explicitly stated in the text. Then, for interpretive or referential comprehension the reader goes beyond what is said and reads for deeper meanings by being critical and analytical about the text in order to find the relationships among ideas. Finally, critical reading is when ideas and information are evaluated. The final level of comprehension can only take place when the other two stages have been settled.

Common models that view the reading process from different angles are the bottom-up, top-down and interactive models. These models make assumptions about the manner in which a reader can process a text to achieve comprehension. The bottom-up and the top-down models contrast each other's, and the interactive model integrates both processes. The bottom-up model assumes that reading is a decoding process where the reader must decode letters and words moving up to phrases and clauses to achieve comprehension. In the top-down model, learners' background knowledge is essential because readers' expectations can guide the reading process based on inference for latter verification as the text is read. Grabe (2009) argued that with the bottom-up model the reader's background knowledge does not interfere in this process and thus this extreme view cannot be accurate; and the top-down model does not clear what a reader can learn from a text if the starting point is expectations about the information that will follow. So,

the interactive model combines useful elements of previous models to develop effective and efficient reading skills in students.

Teachers can divide a lesson where the skill focused is reading into three different stages which are pre-reading, while reading and post reading. Each one has a specific purpose that the students must face in the reading process. Vyas & Patel (2009) described each of the three stages. First, for the pre-reading stage, teachers should start with thought-provoking questions that will induce students to the ideas developed in the text. This can be done by eliciting or providing appropriate background knowledge to make predictions. Next, the while reading stage includes two different moments. The first moment is skimming to introduce students to the organization of the text, and scanning for specific information. The second moment is a problem-solving process of lexical and syntactic content, discourse, and sociocultural issues to overcome comprehension difficulties. The third stage, post-reading, consolidates students' language skill by engaging them in communicative group activities that encourage them to use their analytical, critical and thinking skills.

## 2.2 Reading Strategies

Students should apply reading strategies in order to become more skillful in understanding the text. Urquhart and Weir (1998) described some basic characteristics of strategies. They claimed that strategies are problem solving, goal oriented, purposeful, adapted consciously, and directly teachable. They also involve efficiency and selection. In this case, readers select and use specific strategies in order to approach the text and efficiently solve different tasks related to it depending on a specific purpose or goal to serve. Since the use of strategies is a conscious process applied by readers, it can be taught in class through different activities promoted by the teacher. To select a strategy, the reader uses and selects it depending on the type of text that is being read, the purpose of reading, among others.

Since the 1970s, researchers have become interested in identifying the reading strategies used by people that make them successful readers. Barnett (1988) lists the following six and a brief description of each is added:

- *Using titles and illustrations to understand a passage:* Readers can use written or visual cues to make predictions regarding the content of the reading. To apply this strategy, students pay attention to titles, main headings, pictures, graphs, and any other visual clue.
- *Skimming:* This strategy helps readers get the gist of the text as quickly as possible.
- *Scanning:* It consists of reading quickly to locate specific information within the text.
- *Guessing word meanings:* Use words surrounding an unknown word in order to determine its meaning.
- *Taking risks:* The reader consciously decides to guess at meanings of words in a given text, even though his or her predictions may not always be right.

Aside from the strategies just mentioned, Grabe (2009) adds other reading comprehension strategies. These strategies help students in achieving reading comprehension:

- *Activating prior knowledge*: It is done by making connections between new knowledge and what is known about the topic in the text encountered. With background knowledge the student can make predictions about the information that will be found in the text.
- *Monitoring Comprehension*: Readers self-monitor themselves and check for their understanding of the written passage. This is done by means of metacognition and can be considered an umbrella for many more strategies that consist of being aware of one's own understanding process.
- *Using Text Structure Awareness*: It includes identifying and attending to different discourse-signaling systems such as headings and subheadings, transition forms and signal words, patterns in text organization, among others to achieve understanding of the text.
- *Using graphic organizers*: It facilitates text-structure awareness and main idea recognition by placing the information in instruments like Venn diagrams, matrices or flow charts.
- *Inferencing*: It consists of giving a logical guess based on the facts or evidence presented using prior knowledge to help read between the lines. Like monitoring comprehension, it can be considered part of a metacognitive process that involves many other specific strategies.
- *Mental Translation*: It requires students to think aloud while they are reading.

All these reading strategies can help achieve comprehension and with explicit instruction students can learn to apply them and become strategic readers, but these strategies have to be accompanied with grammar knowledge of the language and vocabulary knowledge, in an interactive approach to teaching reading. To guide students in the development of the reading skill, all these elements must be integrated and recycled. In formal instruction of strategies, teachers must be constant in providing students with opportunities to practice the strategies once and again. Grabe (2009) referred to this by stating, "Every strategy, once introduced and practiced, must be recycled consistently and often, usually in combination with other strategies as part of pre-, during-, and postreading activities." (p. 218) Consistency is the only way that students can become strategic readers because through time they use strategies regularly and automatically when reading.

### **III Reflecting on Teaching Practice**

#### **3.1 Discussion of Findings and Action Plan**

Through journal entries that described and analyzed the teaching and learning process taking place in a classroom of counseling students receiving their first course of Instrumental Use of English, it was noted that the main strategy applied by students was

translation. They depended mostly on the dictionary in order to achieve reading comprehension. This happened because the majority of students that were taking this course were beginners whose only formal English instruction had been in high school. The students did not have extensive linguistic and vocabulary background knowledge of the language. Even worse, they had not received any English courses since their high school graduation, approximately three to four years ago. There were five students in the group who had not received English lessons for more than five years because they had graduated from high school prior to the rest of the group and for personal reasons had not enrolled immediately in the university.

Besides the journals, a content analysis of the textbook used in the course<sup>14</sup> was made revealing that the exercises placed a lot of emphasis on grammatical knowledge. The bibliography recommended in the course syllabus includes exercises which emphasizes translation from the foreign language (English) to the native language (Spanish). The methodology used is mostly the Grammar Translation Method. Students are taught to decode texts into their native language in order to achieve “reading comprehension” by recognizing grammar structures, and identifying vocabulary. Even though knowing about the language constitutes a helpful tool, using it to translate is time consuming and not always effective in reading comprehension, especially when students did not translate correctly.

This situation triggered the initiative of implementing reading comprehension strategies that could aid counseling students when reading in the foreign language. The research findings generated the idea of exposing students to other strategies that could be very useful for achieving reading comprehension based on the characteristics these students presented. The specific strategies chosen to explicitly teach and emphasis throughout the course were memorizing, guessing, and making predictions.

Learning vocabulary is not always easy. This is especially the case in this course because the textbook presented students with an extremely long list of high frequency vocabulary. The high frequency vocabulary was composed of words like prepositions, connectors, models or pronouns that appeared constantly in all text. It has been estimated that this vocabulary constitutes approximately 60% of any text<sup>15</sup>. This vocabulary is presented by using the translation strategy. Since the words are not presented in context, students needed to practice different memory strategies that could be useful for learning the new concepts. Memory strategies have as a principle meaning, so the vocabulary to be learned needs to be significant for the student. The specific memory strategies that were used included representing sounds in memory and grouping.

Guessing is a compensation strategy that allows learners to use the language despite their large gap in knowledge regarding the target language (Oxford, 1990). This

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<sup>14</sup> Soto Montero, A. F. (2000). *Prácticas de Comprensión de Lectura en Inglés I*. Heredia, Costa Rica: EUNA.

<sup>15</sup> Data according to the teacher’s manual for the course textbook (Flores, A. y Chacón, X. (1999). *Guía Teórica. Comprensión de lectura en Inglés I*. Heredia: EUNA.)

was the case of most students that received the course because they had an insufficient repertoire of grammar, and especially, of vocabulary. Given the linguistic background knowledge of the group inferencing by using the clues that a reading provides would help close the gap. The clues can either be linguistic or nonlinguistic, that is, the immediate context that is provided by the text, or the student's own life experiences. Guessing intelligently when reading helps learners get past the belief that they have to recognize and understand every single word before they can comprehend the overall meaning, which is a common idea in the group. The steps taken to teach guessing were global comprehension, using questions before or during reading, immediate feedback regarding their responses, and discuss the source of guesses.

As a third strategy, readers were asked to use titles and illustrations to understand a passage. They used written or visual cues to figure out and make predictions regarding the content of the reading. For this strategy, students paid attention to titles, main headings, pictures, graphs, and any other visual clue. The activity was introduced during the pre-reading stage and verified during the post-reading stage to discuss how accurate their predictions were.

### **3.2 Reflecting on the Action Plan**

The action plan was designed for a group of 35 students that attended English class once a week. The plan lasted a month and two weeks. Besides the activities planned to explicitly teach reading strategies, the students were constantly guided in the use of the strategies in the different texts they were assigned in class and for homework. Six different activities were designed to put into practice memory, guessing and prediction strategies. The six activities were called Rhymes, Categories, Guessing with Pictures, Crystal Ball, Protest and Anticipation Guide (see appendix for a description of the action plan activities). Two activities for each of the three strategies chosen were designed.

#### *3.2.1 Memory Strategies*

The activities Rhymes and Categories introduced memory strategies to expose students to a different form of learning vocabulary, other than translation. The material for the course presents frequently used vocabulary in the form of a list where the items are translated from English to Spanish with no context to aid students in memorizing them. Although students say the translation strategy feels 'safe and familiar', they expressed that it was difficult to learn such a long list of words with no context. Therefore, students reacted positively to the experience of learning vocabulary differently. The activity did not require them to translate and they expressed that it placed vocabulary in a context or in chunks, making it easier to memorize.

The activity Rhymes, seemed to present students with some difficulty because they have not had much access throughout the course to the pronunciation of the words; therefore, students tend to pronounce words the way they are spelled. This caused difficulty in finding words that rhymed. They needed help in finding rhyming words and it was necessary to provide a list of rhyming words. Due to the nature of the course, it is

necessary to find another memory strategy instead of this one. Students said that it would not be possible for them to apply this strategy on their own.

Contrary to the first activity, Categories seemed much more useful and practical to the students. They expressed liking that the strategy reduce the amount of words they must learn by placing these into categories, making it easier for the brain to recall them when they were reading. Students did not have trouble performing this activity. They were very creative making up categories. Some divided the pronouns and adjectives (personal, objective, possessive, and reflexive) into male, female, one person or many people. They were also very creative with the verbs; some categorized them according to actions they performed in a library or in school. Students considered this a very practical way to study the vocabulary and that they could adopt it to their own needs whenever necessary.

### *3.2.2 Guessing Strategies*

The activities that were designed to teach students about guessing strategies were Guessing with Pictures and Protest. The activities induced students to inference ideas about the text they and initiate conversation in the group about the message the text was giving. There was a lot of participation and students had to relate the ideas provided by the author with their own background knowledge. Having students check their work with other classmates induced them to metacognitive processing of the text whenever they found differences and tried to analyze what the correct answer is and why.

Students expressed that the Guessing with Pictures activity makes them think and to really focus on meaning in order to put the text back together. The activity had them use context in order to find meaning in the text. They had to use first the linguistic and then the nonlinguistic context. When students got together to check their answers and they found differences, they discussed about the linguistic and nonlinguistic clues that they used, thus students were faced with a metacognitive strategy where they had to discuss and think about their own cognitive process.

Likewise, Protest guided students toward comprehension of the text. Once students shared their citations based on the story read, their classmates were able to correct those expressions that were not possible because it was not related to the original story and explain why it was incorrect. At the end of this activity, it is possible to determine which students really understood the text.

### *3.2.3 Prediction Strategies*

Prediction strategies usually take place at the beginning stage of reading. The students first reaction to a text in a foreign language was to reach for the dictionary. The teaching of the prediction strategy first faced them with the idea that the reading skill does not begin with decoding the written message. They were able to practice using another approach like activating background knowledge to make predictions that will facilitate understanding during the reading stage. The two activities that introduced students to this strategy were Crystal Ball and Anticipation Guide.

As the name of the activity Crystal Ball suggests, it is designed to help students develop their prediction skills. Since students are the first that ask questions for this

activity, I found that they focus their questions more on linguistic aspects, more specifically, vocabulary. Their lack of vocabulary poses as a disadvantage to understand the message being transmitted. However, once the roles were changed and the students had to answer questions focused on comprehension, they had to respond based on what they remembered. Since students were not allowed to see the text, they could not rely on translation to answer. Instead, they had to really make use of what was understood. At the end of the activity, when students had to make predictions they could rely on their background knowledge and their comprehension of the reading. This type of activity is very important because with consistent use, students will depend less on the dictionary.

Prediction strategies seemed to give students a relieve from having to always give the correct answer. It gives them the opportunity to express their ideas. Anticipation guide is an activity that works best with a controversial topic. The topic used with students was about spanking, and as soon as the topic was presented, students were very open to share their ideas about it. When discussing the strategy they expressed that since the topic had sounded interesting, when they began reading they were not as concerned about the linguistic structure of the text, but rather the message.

Incorporating comprehension strategies into reading classes can make the class more interesting. Students are eager to participate and give their opinions. But this must go hand in hand with the linguistic aspect for English learning. With these strategies, a student expressed that she has become aware that the linguistic part of the course is only a complement to achieve the main objective which is understanding the message that another person is trying to explain.

#### **IV Conclusions**

The incorporation of the reading strategies into the course set forth ideas for language teachers to take into account when developing the reading skill:

- Students' first tendency when trying to learn vocabulary, or understand a reading is to translate. This happens especially with beginner students. Thus, it is necessary to expose them to different strategies so that they can see that translation is not the only way to confront a text in a foreign language.
- It is important to expose students to a wide variety of activities in order to respond to different learning styles. Some students are good at and enjoy playing with language; others are good at expressing themselves through drawings. Varying the type of activity gives them the opportunity to express themselves in different ways.
- Although the focus of the course Instrumental Use of English is reading, students participate and enjoy activities where they have to integrate other skills. They do this based on what they have learned in the course or previous knowledge they have about the language. The course does not always have to be limited to the reading skill. This sort of activity also brings their attention to the message, more than the linguistic form.



- When guiding students in the development of their prediction or guessing skills, it is very useful to have them give reasons for their predictions. This is done by having them discuss the clues they found in the linguistic and nonlinguistic context provided. This is especially important for those students that have trouble noticing the clues given in a context. They have the opportunity to learn from their classmates.
- Most of the reading comprehension exercises in the bibliography suggested for the course have students simply look for information given in a reading. It is also crucial for students to infer information from texts. Activities where students have to infer information is a good way to teach them to guess because when a guess is given, it is based on previous information.
- Having students express their opinions about a topic arouses their interest in a reading. This happens especially when there are contradicting opinions about the topic. Thus, when students begin reading about a certain topic, they are not just reading to answer comprehension questions, they are reading to learn about something. This is a very important aspect to keep in mind in a reading comprehension course. Students have to find the skill useful. Interest and the desire to learn something are real reading purposes.

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Ms. Gamboa holds a Master's degree in Educational Administration from Universidad Nacional in Costa Rica. She also completed her B.A. in English Teaching and the licenciante program in Pedagogy also at Universidad Nacional. She has taught for 11 years and since 2004 she has been working as an English professor at Universidad Nacional, Perez Zeledón campus. She has done research in pedagogy, education administration, and English teaching. She also worked as a teacher for an English conversational program at Universidad Nacional and as a preschool teacher for the Costa Rican Ministry of Education.

## **Appendix**

### Action Plan Activities

#### **1- Rhymes**

It consists of placing the high frequency vocabulary in a rhyme to help remember its meaning. It can be a nonsense rhyme.

Time allotted: 30 minutes

Description of instruments: Students use the list of high frequency vocabulary. They can pick any word from the list to perform the activity.

Implementation:

- Students form groups of three and choose a word from the high frequency vocabulary list studied throughout the course and find another rhyming word.
- Students make up rhymes with the chosen words.
- Students illustrate each rhyme.
- Each group shares its work with the rest of the class.

#### **2- Categories**

Students reduce the number of discrete elements by grouping high frequency vocabulary into meaningful units. Students can make up as many categories as they wish (type of words, words indicating a place, among others).

Time allotted: 30 minutes

Description of instruments: Students use the list of high frequency vocabulary. They come up with their own classification system.

Implementation:

- Students look at high frequency vocabulary from the list previously given to them. They must think of a way to classify some of these words.
- Students label the groups and classify as many words as they want to.
- Share the categories with the rest of the class.

#### **3- Guessing with pictures**

Students match the pictures from a cartoon with its caption to reconstruct the cartoon strip. Its purpose is to have students work on their guessing skills by using text structure and content clues.

Time allotted: 1 hour and 30 minutes

Description of instrument: A comic strip is used. The captions are deleted from the original strip. Students receive the captions on a separate sheet of paper. These captions have been scrambled, thus they do not appear in the same order as in the original strip.

Also, the message in each caption has been divided in order to make a matching game for students which consist on finding the other half of the sentence to complete the idea. To facilitate this, the captions have been given a format of a matching activity with two columns: one with the beginning of the sentence and the other with the ending.

Implementation:

- Students work in groups while trying to put the caption back together again by playing a matching game.
- After the captions have been put back together correctly, they must match the caption with the picture it belongs with.
- Students compare their comic strip with another group to check their work.

#### **4- Crystal Ball**

This activity allows students to work on their prediction skills by trying to guess the outcome of a reading.

Time allotted: 30 minutes

Description of instruments: An article

Implementation:

- Students silently read a specified portion of a text (such as a paragraph) at the same time that the teacher does too.
- First, the teacher covers the text. Students ask as many questions as they wish to the teacher.
- Then, students cover the text and answer the teacher's questions about the portion of the reading being analyzed.
- This is repeated several times with different portions of the reading.
- At a predetermined time, the teacher stops the reciprocal questioning routine and will ask students to make predictions about the outcome of the reading. Their predictions are written on the board.
- Both students and teacher silently read the ending of the reading.
- Discuss the outcomes of the text and compare the predictions with the real ending.

#### **5- Protest**

This activity serves as practice for students to make guesses from context. They practice guessing by inferring what different characters might have said according to the ideas developed in a text.

Time allotted: 1 hour

Description of instruments: A newspaper article with different characters involved in an event described, and a worksheet with enough writing space that contains the name of the characters that participated in the event described in the newspaper article is needed.

Implementation:

- Students pick a partner and read the newspaper article.
- Fill out the worksheet by write what each character could have said.
- Discuss the answers given with the whole group, giving reasons for the statement that they made up.

### **6- Anticipation guide**

This activity is designed to activate a reader's thoughts and opinions about concepts to be discussed in a subsequent reading. Students make predictions about concepts to be found in the text materials. After reading they can confirm or disprove their predictions.

Time allotted: 1 hour

Description of instruments: A reading with a contradictory topic is picked in order to arise student's interest and generate discussion on the topic.

Implementation:

- Identify the major concepts to be learned in the text.
- Determine how the main concepts support or challenge students' knowledge.
- Create 3 statements that support or challenge students' beliefs and experiences about the topic under study.
- Write the statements on the board for students to read.
- Students think about the statements and check those with which they agree. (This can be done individually or in groups.)
- Discuss each statement briefly, write down how many students agree or disagree with each statement.
- Have students read the text. They must keep in mind their opinions and what the text has to say about each statement.
- Discuss what was learned

## Writing in the Classroom: What do We Eat That With?

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**Resumen:** La escritura es una habilidad importante que ha sido desatendida de alguna forma en la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera en la educación secundaria. Consecuentemente, el desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa en los estudiantes ha sido obstaculizado a través de los años. Por lo tanto, como respuesta a esta situación particular, esta ponencia presenta los resultados de un estudio llevado a cabo con cuatro grupos de décimo nivel en cuatro diferentes colegios públicos en Pérez Zeledón. El propósito de este estudio es descubrir los posibles efectos que la actual enseñanza y evaluación de la escritura tiene en el desempeño comunicativo de estos estudiantes. Un tipo híbrido de investigación va a ser utilizado para recolectar la información para responder a la interrogante de si la escritura se está enseñando como un proceso conducente al desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa en esta habilidad específica. Luego, el análisis de la información recopilada va a ser la base para dar sugerencias y recomendaciones para el mejoramiento de la enseñanza y la evaluación de la escritura tales como: la implementación de evaluación continua para orientar la escritura a su proceso y no su producto y la incorporación de actividades y estrategias más contextualizadas para enseñar la escritura con propósitos comunicativos y facilitar la expresión de ideas. La información será recolectada por medio del uso de instrumentos tales como cuestionarios para los estudiantes y los profesores, observación no-participativa basada en una lista de cotejo, y la recolección de muestras de escritos de los estudiantes in colegios académicos públicos. Una vez llevado a cabo el análisis de los instrumentos, la información obtenida permitirá la revisión meticulosa de cada uno de los instrumentos para establecer conclusiones y recomendaciones.

**Palabras clave:** Proceso de escritura, escritura, evaluación continua, habilidad comunicativa, retroalimentación correctiva

**Abstract:** Writing is an important skill that has been somehow neglected in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language in secondary education. As a result, students' development of communicative competence has been hampered over the year. Therefore, as a response to this specific issue, this lecture reports on the results of a research study carried out with four groups of tenth graders in four different high schools in Pérez Zeledón. The purpose of this study is to discover the possible effects that current teaching of writing and its evaluation have on the

communicative performance of those students. A hybrid type of research is going to be used to collect the data to answer the question of whether or not writing is being taught as a process leading to the development of communicative ability in this specific skill. After that, the analysis of the data gathered is going to be the basis for providing suggestions and recommendations for the improvement of the teaching and evaluation of writing, such as the implementation of assessment to orient writing to its process and not to its product and the incorporation of more in-context activities and strategies to teach writing for communicative purposes and to ease the expression of meaning. The data will be collected under the use of data collection instruments such as questionnaires for students and in-service teachers, nonparticipant observation based on a tally-sheet, and collection of writing samples from the students in public high schools. Once the analysis of instruments is conducted, the data gathered will allow the researcher to check each piece of information in depth to come up with a set of conclusions and recommendations.

**Key words:** Writing process, writing, writing assessment, evaluation, communicative ability, corrective feedback

## I Introduction

For many years now, English as a Foreign Language has been part of the curriculum for elementary and high schools in Costa Rica's Public Education System (PES). In response to the relevance that the government has attributed to English in the twenty-first century, the Ministry of Public Education has adopted the Communicative Approach as the guiding method for implementing the English programs in both public elementary and high schools in order to develop the students' capacity to express themselves appropriately in that foreign language.

To achieve this goal, English instructors nationwide are required to incorporate the formal, functional, and cultural components of the Communicative approach in order to enable students to understand and produce accurate oral and written messages. Nevertheless, those English teachers that are responsible for developing the program in the fourth cycle (10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades) face a serious predicament. On the one hand, they must teach their students to communicate effectively by developing all the language skills comprised in the Communicative Approach, as established in the PES syllabus. On the other hand, those same teachers must prepare their pupils to pass the Bachillerato English examination that is exclusively based on reading comprehension and vocabulary. Because of this dilemma, much of the effort teachers make in the fourth cycle is oriented towards developing their students' reading skill, while other skills, such as writing, are left aside.

The problem approached in this study is important because it will allow the researchers to discern important aspects of tenth graders' ability to write, in connection to the model of process writing for teaching and learning English in the PES. The study will also set the basis for establishing a course of action for using grammar as a more effective tool for developing the learners' writing communicative ability in the near future.

Additionally, this study may also serve to develop further studies to promote a better application of the communicative syllabus proposed by the Ministry of Public Education.

## II Literature Review

Writing is not an easy task, even for native speakers of a language. Nunan (1999) affirmed that:

In terms of skills, producing a coherent, fluent, extended piece of writing is probably the most difficult thing there is to do in language. It is something most native speakers never master. For second language learners the challenges are enormous, particularly for those who go on to a university and study in a language that is not their own. (p. 271)

Thus, it is important to set the foundations that are going to guide a writing methodology that is focused on the process as well as the product.

### 2.1 Methods for Teaching Writing

Writing focus has moved from the “exclusive emphasis on the products of writing to emphasis on the process of writing and interactive learning between teachers and students with a focus on meaning” (O’Malley & Valdez, 1996, pp. 138-139). From this perspective, the process of writing takes more importance than the product as was the case in traditional views of writing instruction. As a process, writing may involve guiding the learner through a number of steps, as O’Malley and Valdez (1996) proposed. They include:

(1) prewriting, or motivation, discussion, and concept development; (2) writing, which takes place in classrooms or at home so students can rely on both teachers and other students for feedback and support; and (3) postwriting, in which students share their writings with others, read aloud what they have written, or exchange writing with other students. (p. 139)

This theory is expanded by Raimes (as cited in Omaggio, 2001) who summarized six approaches to writing, including *The Process Approach* that “emphasizes the writing process over product, with adequate time provided to develop a piece of writing, a recognition of the recursiveness of the process, and the encouragement of exploration of topics through writing” (p. 324). Therefore, instructors should approach writing as a process which students may implement combining work in and outside the classroom.

Additionally, Jan Frodesen (2001) suggested a series of activities for incorporating grammar into writing instruction. These activities are advantageous because they help learners express meaning. The author states that, “learners can benefit from activities that help them understand how grammatical choices contribute to shaping meaning and put these insights into practice” (p. 237). However, Frodesen cautioned that the teacher needs to pay attention to learner variables such as age, proficiency level, educational background, abilities, and learning style, as well as to situational variables such as formal written and spoken discourse, specific objectives of a writing class, and kinds of writing. The variables mentioned are those that teachers need to be aware of and reflect on in making decisions about the role of grammar in teaching communicative

writing (pp. 235-237). Taking those variables into consideration, the instructors can incorporate grammar into writing instruction through activities that include text analysis, guided writing activities, text conversion, guided paraphrase, text elicitation, dictation, text completion, error diagnosis and correction, and editing strategies and techniques in this way, the learner will achieve significant gains in their communicative ability because grammatical accuracy will become an essential component of their written communication.

It is thus clear that grammar needs to be an important part of writing instruction for the latter to be accurate and appropriate. However, teaching grammar should not follow the traditional role but help the learner express his/her ideas in writing. As Jan Frodesen (2001) put it, “the teaching of [grammar] should mean: helping writers develop their knowledge of linguistic resources and grammatical systems to convey ideas meaningfully and appropriately to intended readers” (p. 233). For this reason, students must learn principles of grammar in context even though a focus on grammar appears to be necessary to some extent in second and foreign language learning. Jan Frodesen also explained that, “second language writers need attention to form in developing writing proficiency and that attention to form is not just about error but about resources for communicative goals” (p. 246). Consequently, teachers have to adjust their teaching style to favor the teaching and evaluation of grammar for the development of communicative competence, thus, following the communicative language teaching trends. The educational system in Costa Rica, especially in the area of EFL, has to promote innovative methods to make students more motivated and proficient in the use of the English language.

## **2.2 Error Correction**

Another aspect involved in teaching composition, together with its grammar component, is the treatment of errors. One can agree that errors in general ought to be corrected and, especially those that obscure meaning and communication, deserve special attention. In correcting errors, both explicit and implicit feedback is required. Explicit feedback should be given where correction is intended to point out what is done well and what needs to be improved, while implicit feedback ought to be provided to the learner by giving them hints to trigger self-correction (by means of correction symbols). More precisely, the learner must reflect on and review grammar textbooks or dictionaries to figure out how to say things correctly. Additionally, feedback can be provided by means of clarifications, requests, and reformulations. In any of the cases, feedback must be a significant part of instruction to avoid fossilization; namely, “the relative permanent incorporation of incoherent linguistic forms into a person’s second language competence” (Brown, 2007, p. 270). However, there must be a balance in providing feedback because depending on the way it is formulated, feedback may have a negative effect on the learners and may refrain them from making the extra effort required.

With no doubt, error correction in writing is important for students to learn the language accurately. In the process of learning a second language, learners make hypotheses, as they add to their linguistic knowledge: its structure and meaning. Sang-



Keun Shin (2008) showed this in a study this scholar developed in relation to this issue. This researcher affirmed:

Grammar correction is one of the few ways we can help L2 writers with language issues. Theoretically speaking, while producing papers, they are forced to pay attention to the forms with which their intended meaning is expressed and thus make a great number of hypotheses about the structure and the meaning of L2 (Swain 1985). Grammar correction represents one of the most crucial forms of feedback for the verification of these hypotheses. (p. 364)

This evidences that learners need to receive feedback on their use of the language so that they can continue to advance in their interlanguage development. Some arguments against this idea, nonetheless, state that even after a grammatical feature has been corrected, students may fail to use it accurately in their own writing. However, this does not mean that error correction is useless.

In this regard, Shin (2008) stated that, “we need to remember that second language acquisition is sustained deep learning (Schumann 1997), and it is characterized as sustained because of the extended period of time that is required to achieve it” (p. 364). He also established that further work is needed to understand the value of error correction in L2 composition classrooms. Notwithstanding the above, there are many different ways in which corrective feedback can become effective.

Douglas Brown (2007) recommended that teachers keep a balance between the type of feedback they give their students. They should allow learners to communicate, overlooking some errors, but pointing to some crucial errors to call attention to them, and at the same time, avoiding discouraging the learner from attempting to speak at all (274). The author makes this recommendation specifically for speaking, but it also applies to writing. Instructors must make careful decisions about when to be selective and correct the errors that really cause a breakdown in communication. Sometimes, errors that are not that serious can be overlooked, allowing the learner to complete the communicative task he/she is performing.

This typology is also useful to recognize the type of CF teachers use to promote learning that can be turned into acquisition. For instance, in a study by John Bitchener and Ute Knoch (2009), results pointed to a positive effect of focused corrective feedback on written accuracy when given on one or two linguistic error categories at a time rather than feedback on too comprehensive a range of features (210). These aspects are important for the implications they have on both the teaching of grammar and writing.

Another type of feedback in writing that is closely related to assessment is conferencing. Michael O'malley and Lorraine Valdez (1996) described it as a procedure in which, “teachers meet with students individually and ask questions about the processes they use in writing” (139). This questioning is associated with all the stages of Process Writing and can provide varied opportunities for assessment (139). This type of feedback is beneficial for students to develop their written communicative performance since it forces them to reflect on the process of writing.

### 2.3 Evaluation and Assessment Methods in Writing

The evaluation and assessment of writing have also evolved under the influence of the communicative approach to teaching English. For example, if a writing exercise is largely mechanical and can therefore be done without necessarily understanding the context, it will not serve to test the learner's grammatical knowledge. Therefore, exercises must provide the learner with an understanding of the context and the meaning that is being conveyed. Discrete-point exercises must change to a more communicative and integrated context-dependent practice where students have to make sense of what they are writing in order to be able to use the grammatical structures for expressing ideas clearly and meaningfully.

One way to do this is by constructing tests that really evaluate the learner's communicative ability. In order to assess communicative language ability, some criteria must be followed. In this regard, Brown (1994) stated:

A communicative test has to test for grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and illocutionary competence as well as strategic competence. It has to be pragmatic in that it requires the learner to use language naturally for genuine communication and to relate to thoughts and feelings, in short, to put authentic language to use within a context. It should be direct... And it should test the learner in a variety of language functions. (p. 265)

It is evident, thus, that tests must include many areas of language and must have a more integrative nature. Teachers have to leave behind the discrete point type of test that measures only isolated knowledge placed in no context and, in many cases, based exclusively on multiple-choice questions.

On the other hand, to promote authentic writing-assessment requires following some guidelines for constructing writing tasks and prompts, and examples of different kinds of scoring criteria. "The prompt consists of the question or statement students will address in their writing and the conditions under which they will write" (O'Malley & Valdez, 1996, p. 139). The scoring criteria refer to the types of scoring used to assign a grade to the writing. They should "always be defined before the exercises and assessment procedures are developed" (p. 142).

In the classroom, teachers can implement both formal and informal assessment to help learners become responsible for their own growth. With this idea in mind, they can implement writing logs, self-assessment and peer-assessment sheets according to the specific task, conferencing, peer and self-editing exercises and more.

Scoring can be holistic, in which a variety of criteria are used to produce a single score, or it can be analytic, in which components are scored separately. If the teaching of writing has changed to a more communicative perspective, the evaluation and assessment must change accordingly.

In the same way, writing has to move from an emphasis on the product to an emphasis on the process of writing, following the prewriting, while-writing, and postwriting phases. At the same time, activities for incorporating grammar into writing help learners communicate their ideas, making grammatical accuracy an essential component of written communication.

Another important point to remember is corrective feedback. CF should be done carefully in order to prevent fossilization or students' demotivation. CF is used for learners to learn the language accurately and advance in their interlanguage development. It can range from form-focused CF to conferencing in the writing class. Finally, the evaluation of writing should be done based on the steps students follow, including prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and proofreading and by means of assessment instruments with formal and informal foci.

### III Findings

#### 3.1 Questionnaire for teachers<sup>16</sup>

One of the most significant findings from this instrument is that, even though teachers provided learners with some time for planning before writing, this time was not sufficient for adequate preparation. They implemented a little planning, drafting or writing, but they skipped revising, editing and proofreading, and feedback was provided in a general fashion, not providing individual feedback. Through this, it became evident that writing instruction did not follow a structured set of procedures to guide the learner in the expression of ideas through writing as the writing process demands.

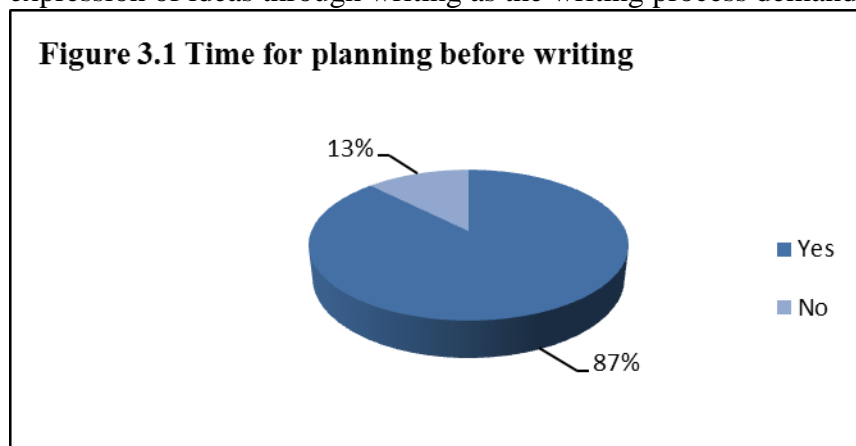


Figure 3.1. This information was gathered from the questionnaire for teachers.

Another significant finding was that more than half of the teachers responded that they do not ask their students to rewrite their paragraphs after they receive feedback. This is shown in the figure 3.2 below.

<sup>16</sup> See appendix 2

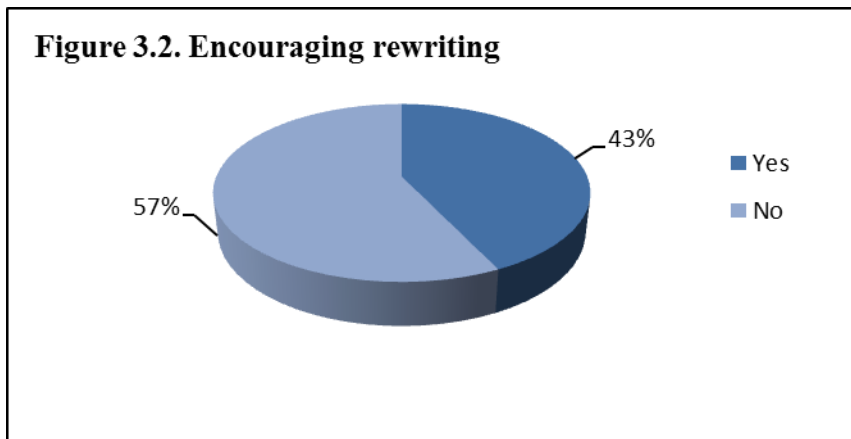


Figure 3.2. This information was gathered from the questionnaire for teachers

### 3.2 Questionnaire for students

Proofreading is very useful when writing because it helps the writer find mistakes and improve his/her writing. According to this graph, only 13% of the learners do not check their paragraphs after writing them while 87% of them implement proofreading.

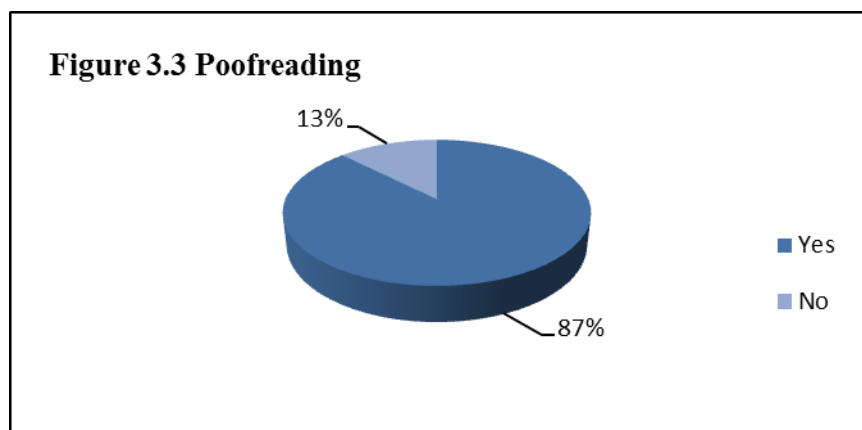


Figure 3.3 This information was gathered from the questionnaire for students.

Even though students expressed in the questionnaire that they use proofreading, as is shown in the figure above, proofreading was not performed when the writing test was applied because they committed many spelling mistakes that could have been corrected if proofreading had been applied.

## 3.4 Observations

### 3.4.1 Type and quality of feedback (error correction)

Concerning error correction, the only type of feedback provided was explicit feedback. In the observations, the teachers only corrected mispronounced words by modeling the right pronunciation of the word for students to repeat. When students gave an oral presentation about what they wrote, their mistakes were given to them on the board as a general error analysis. The feedback given to the learners was also explicit.

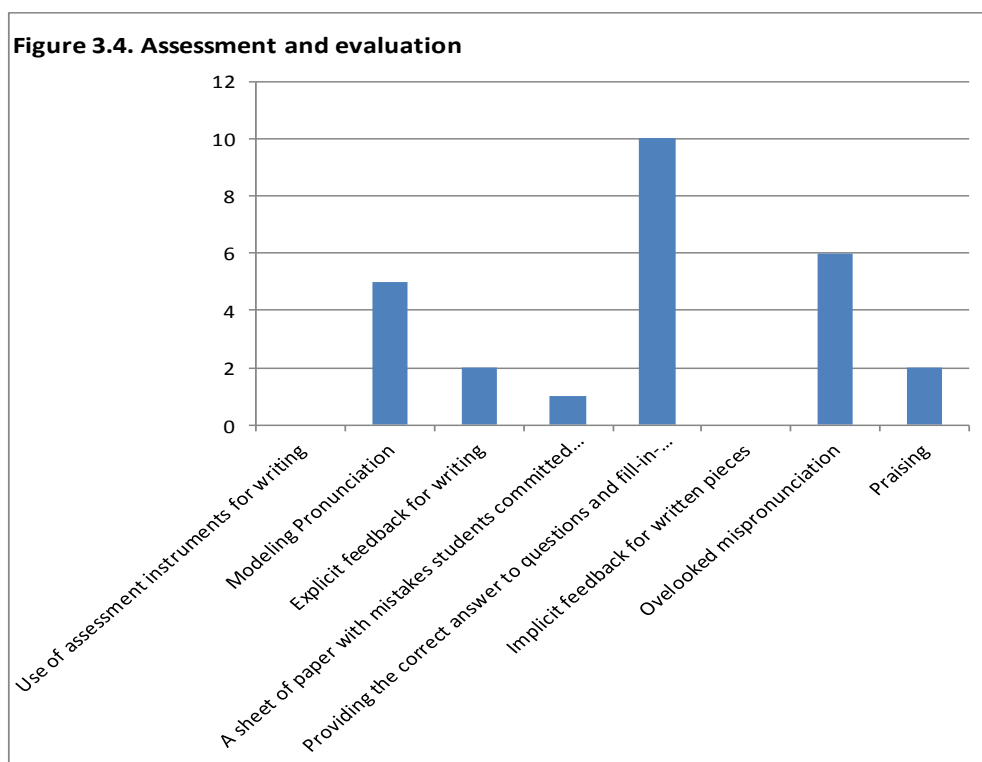


Figure 3.4 This information was collected from the observations.

As can be noted in the figure 3.2 above, the type of feedback teachers used evidenced the use of just explicit feedback for the writing part as well as for the grammatical part of the instruction taking place in the classroom. Students were always given the corrections and could not develop true communicative ability since their critical thinking was not reinforced. Some students corrected their writing pieces, but this is not proof that they understood the mistakes they committed.

### 3.5 Level of achievement in writing in the target population

#### 3.5.1 Most Common Types of Grammatical errors

On the writing tests applied by the researchers, there were several types of errors that students commonly made. The most common included lack of coherence and unity, use

of L1 or creative constructions, incorrect spelling, wrong use of quantifiers, wrong use of articles and awkward constructions. However, there were also cases in which students were either totally unable to express ideas or expressed them by means of disconnected sentences.

A summary of the most common types of errors is shown in the table below, which is divided into three columns. The first identifies the most outstanding type of errors made by the learners in the writing test. The second column presents the number of students that made that particular kind of error, and the third column shows the percentage that represents the presence of each error among the total number of students that comprised the sample.

**Table 1. Summary of Types of Errors made by Students in the Sample**

Type of error	No. of students per error	Average in total sample
Awkward constructions	20	46,5%
Wrong use of articles	3	7%
Wrong use of quantifiers	8	19%
Incorrect spelling	29	67%
Use of L1 or creative constructions	35	81%
Lack of coherence and unity	34	79%
Total inability to express ideas or ideas expressed in isolated sentences	9	21%

Table 1. This resulted from the writing test.

The information above made evident that the learners have a lot of difficulties expressing their ideas in writing. Thirty-five out of the total sample of 43 (81%) lacked the vocabulary that would allow them to describe their likes and dislikes about Costa Rican and American food. For this reason, they resorted to using words in Spanish or even to making up words and expressions to compensate for their lack of vocabulary.

### **3.6 Level of achievement according to ACTFL writing guidelines**

This writing test was applied to one of the four groups of tenth graders the researcher observed in the four public high schools in Pérez Zeledón. This exam consisted of writing

a short descriptive paragraph related to the learners' likes and dislikes about Costa Rican and American food. The participants were given sixty minutes to complete the examination. From the sixty minutes, students were given ten minutes to plan their writing, forty minutes to write the text, and ten more minutes to edit what they had written. A total of fifty-one learners took the test. From them, eight compositions were ruled out since the learners wrote a note telling they had taken extracurricular courses or had lived and studied in U.S.A or Canada. At the end, forty-three compositions were read and assigned to a level based on an instrument that was developed using the ACTFL proficiency guidelines for writing.

Some tests were ruled out because the researcher made sure to ask the participants to write down a note on top of the test if they had had any extracurricular English courses or if they had lived in any English Speaking country. This was done to avoid the misinterpretation of results due to the fact that the test was intended to determine the writing proficiency level of students after four years of English instruction in high school alone.

According to the National Syllabus for English teaching in Public high schools, learners in tenth grade should master a wide range of competencies, which are portrayed in the syllabus in a can-do chart (Programa de Estudio, 2005, p. 58). These competencies were assessed based on the ACTFL guidelines (Breiner-Sanders, K. E., Swender, E., & Terry, R. M., 2001, p. 4). The writing test applied to establish the level of proficiency of tenth graders was precisely evaluated with a more specific scoring guide constructed based on those guidelines. The instrument includes three broad categories: Advanced, intermediate, and novice, each one of which was subdivided into high, mid, and low levels of proficiency.

The tests were scored based on the scale<sup>17</sup>, and the results are shown in the exhibit below:

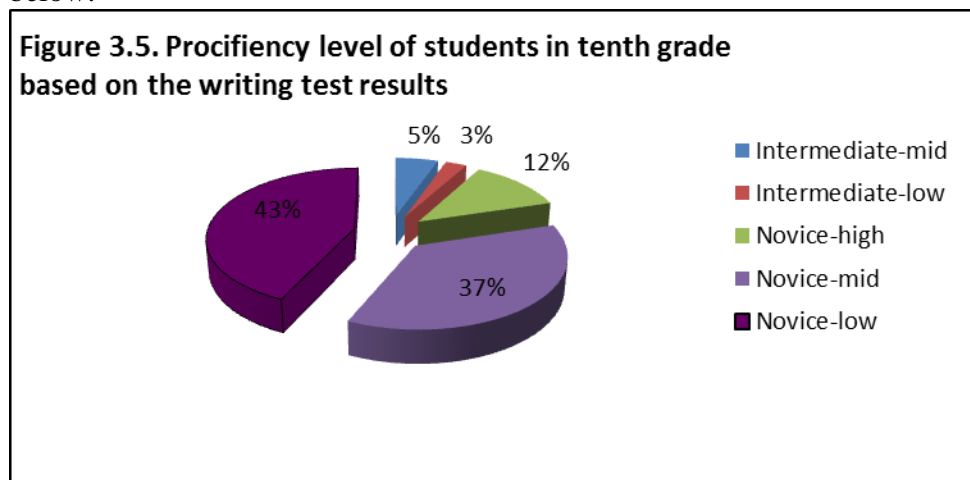


Figure 3.5. This information was the analysis of the results of the writing test.

<sup>17</sup> See appendix 5

The most evident result is that the writing proficiency level of 92% of the students is at the novice level. Among those, the highest percentage, 44%, qualify as novice-low; 36% as novice-mid, and 12% as novice-high. This means that those that show the best performance among this 92% of the students are only able to meet limited basic practical writing needs to express themselves in writing about their likes and dislikes of Costa Rican and North American food. Also outstanding from the information, is the fact that only 8% of the students achieved an intermediate level. This basically means that they are capable of writing short simple texts loosely connected based on personal preferences; however, even though they can, they do so making numerous errors of the types pointed out in table number one like awkward constructions, use of L1 or creative constructions, etcetera.

#### **IV Conclusions**

After carrying out a thorough analysis of the data collected, the researchers arrived at the following conclusions:

Even though the syllabus designed for students in the fourth cycle sets the parameters for teachers to implement the CLT<sup>18</sup> in the classroom, this approach is not fully implemented by the teachers observed. The steps to teach writing in a communicative way are not thoroughly developed the way they have to in order to promote the development of communicative writing ability on learners.

Despite the fact that the syllabus provided by the Ministry of Public Education establishes that the teacher has to guide the writing process to aid the students to express their ideas about the topic and give practice into the different mechanisms that allow learners to produce coherent paragraphs or short compositions; and that these processes must be guided in three sequential types of activities; namely, pre-writing, writing, and post writing activities that permit pupils to use prior knowledge and relate it to the writing task, writing instruction is given a superficial emphasis because it has very little space in the English curriculum in the PES. Some of the basic steps in the writing process were skipped or not given enough emphasis to develop the writing ability in students. It is evident that the writing process is not developed the way it is proposed in the syllabus.

Moreover, the syllabus provided by the MEP does include a clear proficiency level as a reference for both teachers and students to know the desired outcome of instruction at the end of the school year.

Another conclusion is that both teacher and students consider corrective feedback as a key element in the learning process, but the time devoted to writing instruction and the focus of the writing class are not enough for learners to develop communicative ability in writing because the corrective feedback was minimal and explicitly given for students to make amendments. This evidences that the main focus of writing is still the product when CLT promotes a focus on the process.

The only type of corrective feedback provided by teachers was explicit feedback either by corrections on the students' paragraphs or by general error corrections on the

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<sup>18</sup> Communicative Language Teaching



board. Nonetheless, this type of feedback was not significant because it did not help learners to do well on other types of writing inasmuch as they were still not able to put their thought in writing, revise them, and edit them as a result of a process.

As to the development of critical thinking, it is clear that the explicit corrections do not allow pupils to learn to monitor their language in writing since they are not given a chance to do so. Hence, the use of explicit feedback alone in writing does not build students' communicative ability.

Based on the result of the writing test, it is evident that the majority of the mistakes committed by the learners had to do with grammar, such as lack of coherence and unity, use of the L1 or creative constructions, incorrect spelling, wrong use of quantifiers, wrong use of articles, and awkward constructions. However, there were also cases in which students were either totally unable to express ideas, or they expressed them by means of disconnected sentences. This shows that grammar is not given the necessary place in instruction because students cannot express their ideas even at the most basic level; that is, sentence construction where a complete thought is expressed. These students have a lot of difficulties putting their ideas in writing.

Also, of more concern is the fact that none of the students who took the writing test was able to develop a coherent and unified piece of writing by focusing on the topic sentence or controlling idea of the piece of writing and by developing supporting details coherently put together to develop the topic sentence. This shows that writing instruction in the high schools observed does not follow the basic steps that are required for process writing to take place. The procedures that apprentices used are a reflection of the type of writing they do in the classroom where the first draft is completed and presented as the final product, without carrying out any careful prewriting activity, drafting or revision of the task. They did so regardless of the specific instructions given to them on the test. Thus, most learners are incapable of producing a coherent and unified piece of writing.

It is also clear that the tenth graders have not achieved the proficiency level that the syllabus unclearly suggests they must have. Students' level is far below the expected one. In fact, most of the learners who took the writing tests achieved a novice-low proficiency level and none of them was able to write a coherent piece of writing. What is more, the ones who did better on the test were only able to meet limited basic practical needs to express themselves in writing in the task that was set out on the test. This shows that the means to reach the goal of communicative ability in writing do not lead to the results expected of the teaching of English in tenth grade.

#### **4.1 Recommendations**

It is essential that the MEP's authorities give some training to teachers on the application of the Communicative Approach and on the teaching of grammar for communicative purposes. In this way teachers will be able to design activities that are more appealing so that learners' motivation can increase, favoring language learning.

Equally important is the fact that teachers should also receive some training on the assessment of the different skills that are taught in PES. It is quite important for

teacher to understand that they must be able to introduce more integrated methodologies into their teaching to help learners reach high proficiency levels in all language skills.

It is also imperative to help students become aware of their own learning process through self and peer assessment in the classroom. In this way instructors and learners can monitor the progress they make in regard to the attainment of the goals set in the national syllabus.

Another recommendation for MEP's authorities is to set clear and attainable proficiency levels to be reached at the end of every school year. This will ease the roles of both teachers and learners since they will clearly know what is expected of them.

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### Appendix 1

Universidad Nacional Sede Regional Brunca

#### Cuestionario para Estudiantes

Diseñado por Diego Garro y Juan Manuel Méndez.

Institución: \_\_\_\_\_ Sexo: \_\_\_\_\_

Las siguientes preguntas pretenden recolectar información sobre el proceso de escritura en inglés en el aula. Muy amablemente, encierre **Si** o **No** de acuerdo con lo que normalmente ocurre en el aula. La información que usted nos brinde será usada confidencialmente y solo para los propósitos de la investigación.

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| 1. ¿Sabe usted cuáles son las partes del párrafo?                                       | Si/No |
| 2. ¿Le da el profesor tiempo para prepararse antes de escribir algo en inglés?          | Si/No |
| 3. ¿Se le solicita que organice las ideas de alguna forma específica antes de escribir? | Si/No |
| 4. ¿Se le pide que trabaje individualmente para generar ideas?                          | Si/No |
| 5. ¿Se le pide que trabaje en grupos para generar ideas?                                | Si/No |
| 6. ¿Se le da suficiente tiempo para escribir?   | Si/No |
| 7. ¿Escribe usted solo en la clase?   | Si/No |
| 8. ¿Escribe usted con frecuencia en la clase de inglés?                                 | Si/No |
| 9. ¿Le revisa el profesor todo lo que usted escribe en clase?                           | Si/No |

10. ¿Le revisa algún compañero(a) lo que usted escribe? Si/No

11. ¿Auto-revisa usted lo que ha escrito cuando termina de escribir? Si/No

12. ¿Recibe usted ideas para mejorar lo que escribe? Si/No

13. ¿Le dan sus compañeros ideas para mejorar lo que usted escribe? Si/No

14. ¿Son las correcciones solo dadas con marcas o tachones sobre lo que usted escribe? Si/No

15. ¿Usa el profesor escalas o listas de control para corregir lo que usted escribe? Si/No

16. ¿Toma el profesor tiempo para explicarle las correcciones que le hace a lo que usted escribe?

Si/No

17. ¿Rescribe usted lo que había escrito después de haber entendido las correcciones del profesor?

Si/No

## Appendix 2

### Closed Questionnaire for teachers

Universidad Nacional

Sede Regional Brunca

Designed by Diego Garro Bustamante and Juan Manuel Méndez.

Institution: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: \_\_\_\_\_

Years of experience: \_\_\_\_\_

The following questions are intended to gather information on the writing process in the classroom. Kindly, answer the questions according to your experience and to the methodology that you implement in your context. The information you provide will be confidentially handled and used only for research purposes.

1. Do you teach the parts of a paragraph before you ask students to write? Yes/No
2. Do you give your students time to prepare before they write something in English?  
Yes/No
3. Do you encourage learners to organize ideas in a specific way before writing?  
Yes/No
4. Do you ask students to gather ideas before they write by (Check all that you use):  
Discussion \_\_\_\_\_ Individual work \_\_\_\_\_ Outlining \_\_\_\_\_ Peer work \_\_\_\_\_  
Clustering (Diagrams/ word maps/ idea maps) \_\_\_\_\_ Previous research \_\_\_\_\_
5. How much time do you give learners to write? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Do you ask students to write in \_\_\_\_\_ (Check all that you use)?  
Class \_\_\_\_\_ At home \_\_\_\_\_
7. How often do you ask your students to write in the English class? Explain if necessary.

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8. What strategies do you implement to provide feedback to your students once they have finished writing?

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9. Do you talk with your students about the errors they commit in their writing?

Yes/No

10. Do you have your learners rewrite their writing pieces after giving them feedback?

Yes/No

**Appendix 3**

**Observation Tally sheet**

High school : \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ #of lessons: \_\_\_\_\_

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Writing Process stages	Time	Type	Tallies of the actual application per lesson
<b>1. Planning</b>			
<b>2. Drafting/writing</b>			
<b>3. Revising</b>			
<b>4. Editing and proofreading</b>			
<b>5. Feedback</b>			
Comments:			

Designed by Diego Garro Bustamante.





**Appendix 5**

**Assessment Scale for Writing Tasks at the 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Level**

Based on the “ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines for Writing: Revised 2001

<b>ADVANCED</b>	
<b>Grade</b>	<b>HIGH</b>
<b>100%-90%</b>	Writer can write extensively about the topic with significant precision and detail, tending to emphasize the concrete aspects of the topic. Can describe and narrate in all main time frames with good control of aspect. In addition, the student can demonstrate some ability to incorporate the functions and other criteria of the Superior level, showing some ability to develop arguments and construct global, and/or impersonal terms. Often shows remarkable ease of expression when writing. Good control of a full range of grammatical structures and fairly wide general vocabulary, though may not use these comfortably and accurately in all cases. Weaknesses in grammar, syntax, vocabulary, cohesive devices, or punctuation may occasionally distract the native reader from the message. Production often reads successfully but may fail to convey the subtlety and nuance of the Superior level.
<b>MID</b>	
<b>89%-79%</b>	Writer is able to meet academic writing needs with good organization and cohesiveness that may reflect the principles of his/her first language. She/He is able to write straightforwardly by means of narratives and descriptions of a factual nature. Demonstrates the ability to narrate and describe with detail in all major time frames. His/Her writing is characterized by a range of general vocabulary that expresses thoughts clearly and exhibits some variety of cohesive devices in a text of several paragraphs in length. Good control of the most frequently used target language syntactic structures, e.g., common word order patterns, coordination, subordination. There may be errors in complex sentences, as well as in punctuation, or spelling. Writing may at times resemble oral discourse or the writing style of the first language. Incorporates organizational features both of the target language or the writer's first language. Writing is understood readily by natives not used to the writing of non-natives
<b>LOW</b>	
<b>78% - 68%</b>	Writer is able to meet basic academic writing needs, by means of narratives and descriptions of a factual nature, and demonstrates the ability to narrate and describe in major time frames with some control of aspect. Also, he/she is able to combine and link sentences into texts of paragraph length and structure. Writing may not be substantive, incorporating a limited number of cohesive devices, but resorting to much redundancy and awkward repetition. Subordination in the expression of ideas is present and structurally coherent, but generally relies on narrative patterns of oral discourse or the writing style of the writer's first language. Writer demonstrates sustained control of simple target-language sentence structures and partial control of more complex structures. Writing can be understood by natives not used to the writing of non-natives, although some effort may be required in reading the text.
<b>Grade</b>	<b>INTERMEDIATE</b>
<b>HIGH</b>	
<b>100%-90%</b>	Writer is able to compose connecting sentences into paragraphs using a limited number of cohesive devices that tend to be repeated and with some breakdown in one or more features of the Advanced level. Writer can write simple descriptions and narrations of paragraph length in different time frames, although with some inaccuracies and inconsistencies, resulting in a loss in clarity. The vocabulary, grammar, and style of the writer essentially correspond to those of the spoken language. The writing is generally comprehensible to natives not used to the writing of non-natives, even though it contains numerous and perhaps significant errors; however, gaps in comprehension may occur.

	<b>MID</b>
<b>89%- 79%</b>	Writer can write short, simple texts, loosely connected based on personal preferences, daily routines, common events, and topics related to personal experiences and immediate surroundings. Most writing is framed in present time, with inconsistent references to other time frames. The writing style closely resembles the grammar and lexicon of oral discourse. Writer shows evidence of control of syntax in non-complex sentences and in basic verb forms, and may demonstrate some ability to use grammatical and stylistic cohesive elements. Writing is best defined as a collection of discrete sentences and/or questions loosely strung together. There is little evidence of deliberate organization. Natives used to the writing of non-natives can understand the text.
	<b>LOW</b>
<b>78%- 68%</b>	Writer meets some limited practical writing needs based on statements and questions related to familiar material. Most sentences are recombination of learned vocabulary and structures. There are short and simple conversational-style sentences with subject-verb object word order, written mostly in the present time with occasional and often incorrect use of past or future time. Writing tends to be a few simple sentences, often with repetitive structure. Vocabulary is limited to common objects and routine activities, adequate to express elementary needs. There may be basic errors in grammar, word choice, punctuation and spelling. Natives used to the writing of non-natives can understand the text, although additional effort may be required.
<b>Grade</b>	<b>NOVICE</b>
	<b>HIGH</b>
<b>100%- 90%</b>	Writer meets limited basic practical writing needs by means of simple notes to express himself or herself within the context in which the language was learned, relying mainly on practiced material. Writer is able to recombine learned vocabulary and structures to create simple sentences on very familiar topics, but the language produced may only partially communicate what is intended. There is inadequate vocabulary and/or grammar. Writing is often comprehensible to natives used to the writing of non-natives, but gaps in comprehension may occur.
	<b>MID</b>
<b>89%- 79%</b>	Writer is able to reproduce from memory a modest number of isolated words and phrases in context, and can supply limited information on simple forms and documents and other biographical information. Writer exhibits a high degree of accuracy when writing on well-practiced, familiar topics using limited formulaic language. With less familiar topics, there is marked decrease in accuracy. Errors in spelling or in the representation of symbols may be frequent. There is little evidence of functional writing skills. Writing is difficult to understand even by those accustomed to reading the texts of non-natives.
<b>20%</b>	<b>LOW</b>
<b>78%- 68%</b>	Given adequate time and familiar cues, the writer can reproduce from memory a very limited number of isolated words or familiar phrases, but errors are expected.

## Motivation: A Determining Factor for Successful Language Learning

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**Resumen:** Esta investigación revela que la motivación tiene un papel muy primordial en el aprendizaje de una segunda lengua. Por una parte, si los estudiantes están motivados, el aprendizaje se facilita y se promueve. Por el contrario, si la motivación es baja, el aprendizaje se impide y el proceso enseñanza-aprendizaje no alcanza las metas establecidas en un currículo específico. Por lo tanto, es el deber de los profesores el identificar los problemas que afectan a los estudiantes, analizarlos, y proveer soluciones para mejorar el proceso de aprendizaje. Por consiguiente, un estudio etnográfico se llevó a cabo en la carrera de turismo impartida en la Universidad Nacional Sede Regional Brunca para aclarar el tema de motivación en dicha carrera. Esta investigación se realizó con un grupo de la carrera de *Gestión Empresarial del Turismo Sostenible*. Dichos estudiantes estaban recibiendo el segundo de cuatro cursos de inglés que incorporan las cuatro habilidades básicas llamado Inglés Integrado II. Por ende, esta ponencia reporta los resultados de dicha etnografía. Los resultados muestran que el tipo de evaluación utilizada por los profesores, los cambios hechos a la maya curricular, la metodología empleada por profesores previos al curso, y la falta de instrucción de estrategias de aprendizaje que los estudiantes pueden emplear para mejorar el aprendizaje tienen un impacto notorio en la habilidad comunicativa que los estudiantes de esta lengua extranjera podrían alcanzar. Para llegar a estas conclusiones, los investigadores utilizaron múltiples instrumentos de recolección de datos. Éstos incluyeron: observación no-participativa, observación participativa, entrevista no estructurada, foto etnografía, y recolección de artefactos relacionados al proceso enseñanza-aprendizaje. Ellos permitieron que los investigadores realizaran una interpretación confiable de la situación específica de esta población.

**Palabras clave:** Motivación, estrategias de aprendizaje, currículo, evaluación continua, enseñanza

**Abstract:** This investigation reveals that motivation is a key factor in learning a foreign language. On the one hand, if learners are motivated, learning is eased and promoted. On the other hand, if motivation is low, learning is prevented and the teaching-learning process does not attain the goals proposed in the specific curriculum. Therefore, it is the task of teachers to identify problems that affect students, analyze them, and come out with solutions to improve the learning process. As a result, an ethnographic study was carried out in the Tourism major at Universidad Nacional Brunca Campus to shed light on motivational issues. This investigation was conducted with one group of *Gestión Empresarial del Turismo Sostenible*. These learners were taking the second of four English courses that incorporate the four skills, which is called Integrated English II. Consequently, this lecture reports on the results of this ethnography. These results show that the type of assessment by professors, the changes made to the curriculum, the methodology employed by previous teachers, and the lack of instruction on learning strategies that students can use to improve learning have a notorious impact on the communicative ability of these foreign language learners reach. To come to these conclusions, the researchers made use of multiple data-collection instruments. Among them were non-participant observation, participant observation, an unstructured interview, photo ethnography, and collection of artifacts. They allowed the researchers to have a reliable interpretation of the learning situation of this specific population.

**Keywords:** Motivation, learning strategies, curriculum, assessment and evaluation, instruction

## I Introduction

The ethnographic research in the classroom has the purpose of helping the teacher and the academic institution to observe if there is any phenomenon going on with a determined group of students that may show particular behaviors. In fact, every group has a culture and it is interesting to find out, through observation, that certain patterns of behavior are repeated most of the times. The first thought that the ethnographers who carried out this project had about the phenomena that could possibly be observed was the use of learning strategies that students of Tourism from Universidad Nacional in the region of Pérez Zeledón employed to learn a second language. But in the course of the observations, more behaviors emerged and they are explained in the following chapters of this ethnography. Moreover, the purpose of any investigation is to determine the weaknesses or strengths of the programs, literature employed, and classroom conditions, among others. The institution or the teacher should work on the solutions or improvements of the problems (if any) that can arise during an ethnographic study.

The two ethnographers who carried out the project decided to observe a group of students that were enrolled in the Tourism major at Universidad Nacional, Sede regional

Brunca during a semester. This group was composed of twelve boys and nine girls with ages ranging from 18 to 23 years. Most of them came from San Isidro de El General and surroundings (13 students) and the rest come from San Vito and Osa (8 students), two counties that belong to the province of Puntarenas, Costa Rica. These learners were taking the second of four English courses that incorporate the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). These courses were based on the books that are part of the Interactions series from the McGraw Hill Company.

The students' proficiency levels were varied. Some learners had a good command of basic grammar while others had notorious flaws in grammar and pronunciation. The students used basic vocabulary and had some trouble using some basic structures, such as the simple present and the simple future tense. In their course they took before the one where the ethnography was conducted, they used the *Interchange* textbook by Jack Richards, but they manifested that they received little instruction in skills other than speaking.

Both ethnographers used observations in the first phase of the investigation. At the beginning, it was non-participant observation. Later on, as the ethnographers and participants were getting to know each other better, there were some useful interactions that allowed the ethnographers to gather valuable data. Three more data collection instruments were used, first, a single interview. Another instrument used during the first phase of the research was photo ethnography. This strategy was simple, but it could show interesting aspects of the people in class if pictures are well selected for the purposes of the investigation.

In addition, for data collection purposes the ethnographers used another method called participant observation; this technique consisted of becoming involved in some activities inside the classroom or engaging in some conversations with students in order to obtain useful information about the learners and how they behave in their natural environment. Also, it served as a way to approach students and ask questions in a way that they did not feel interviewed, and that was the manner to collect complete and reliable information from pupils.

Some artifacts collected by the ethnographers were also used to gather more information about students' performance and their curriculum. Using these instruments allowed the observers to determine that some patterns were repeated almost in every class in addition to gathering other aspects that could not be proven just by talking or by observing.

The second phase of the ethnography consisted of extracting the constructs in order to define each one and categorize them. After that, the ethnographers made some judgments' about the behaviors that they thought were most important. This ethnographic project may be useful for authorities of Universidad Nacional in the area of tourism for them to carry out a needs assessment before implementing changes in the major's curriculum. These authorities should consider the points of view of the students to establish major modifications to their curriculum since there was discomfort that they showed several times when the ethnography was in its first phase.

Besides, this project had a lot to do with the second language field in the way that it helped the teacher to see if students were aware of the use of language learning strategies and how frequently learners employed them in order to be successful language learners. Also, it helped to analyze the factors that affected their performance and proficiency in the learning of the target language.

## II Literature Review

The learning process of a second language is composed of a series of stages that lead the learner to the mastery of that target language. For this process to be successful, many aspects must be considered in addition to the learner and the context where the learning is taking place. The first aspect that can be mentioned is the design of the curriculum. This involves ways of organizing and planning language teaching and learning. This organization and plan, according to Brown (1995), must be based upon a careful “gathering of information that will serve as the basis for developing a curriculum that will meet the learning needs of a particular group of students” (p. 35). He went on to say that “once identified, needs can be stated in terms of goals and objectives which, in turn, can serve as the basis for developing tests, material, teaching activities and evaluation strategies...” (p. 35). When referring to students’ needs, Jere Brophy (2001) provided a synthesis of research on motivating students to learn. There are five levels that provide a model in order to satisfy student’s needs. First, there must be essential preconditions, which are basically to give learners the appropriate supportive settings. Motivating them by maintaining success expectations is the second. This aspect has a lot to do with instructing students on how to set goals and pursue them. Third, motivating by capitalizing on students’ intrinsic motivation, in essence, is to adapt tasks to the learners’ interest in a novelty way. Brophy included the premise where instructors can and should stimulate motivation to learn. The last aspect seeks to involve the students into thinking and problem-solving tasks, to project enthusiasm, model interest in learning and motivation to learn (as cited in Jones, p. 191).

After the needs has been carried out, curriculum developers must organize and arrange the needs according to priorities taking into account the characteristics of the learners, the circumstances in which the educational institution operates, and the setting where the language- learning and teaching process is to be conducted. In this way, the needs of the learner can be fulfilled because of the process that was followed to develop the curriculum.

The second aspect has to do with the use of resources. Resources must be carefully evaluated to have a clear notion of the equipment, infrastructure and academic personnel that can be used to develop the curriculum. There is no point in implementing a perfect syllabus without the physical and human material necessary to develop it. Thus, the syllabus and the resources available must go hand in hand to assure that the learning and teaching process can be fruitful. Brown (1995), in his book *The Elements of Language Curriculum*, stated:

Curriculum development is a series of activities that contribute to the growth of consensus among the staff, faculty, administration, and students. This series of curriculum activities will provide a framework that helps teachers to accomplish whatever combination of teaching activities is most suitable in their professional judgment for a given situation, that is, a framework that helps the students to learn as efficiently and effectively as possible in the given situation. In a sense, the curriculum design process could be viewed as being made up of the people and the paper-moving operations that make the doing of teaching and learning possible. (p. 19)

This clearly indicates who the participants in the construction of the curriculum are. Thus, the learners opinions and needs must be considered when making decisions about the curricular design they will be part of. If they are not taken into account, the curriculum itself may not be in the student's best interests, and this may cause a demotivating effect on them.

Another important factor is the mastery of the target language by the instructors in charge of putting the syllabus to use. In addition to a well-designed curriculum and accessible resources, the instructors who are going to implement it must be knowledgeable and able to make the target language learning and teaching process easier for students. They must help the learners to acquire the language by carrying out activities that promote the use of the language for real purposes. They should also teach their pupils learning strategies that can help them overcome difficulties they may face while they are approaching the target language. This will help the students attain the goals and objectives that were set in the syllabus and really communicate using the target language with accuracy and appropriateness to the contexts. With the help of their instructor, students will be able to reach higher proficiency levels in the target language and culture.

In order to promote high proficiency levels, the facilitator must put dynamic activities into practice. He or she has to develop activities that allow for the internalization of the language so as to make its use automatic. In this regard, Krashen stated that "the language which learners are exposed to should be just far enough beyond their current competence" (as cited in Brown, 1995, p. 280). This means that the teacher should provide learners with opportunities to be exposed to the language not just in controlled ways. In addition, the facilitator should use authentic texts to promote the acquisition of vocabulary. Then, they must encourage participation in communicative activities that demand that they use what they are learning. The teacher should promote a non-threatening environment so that students can actually feel at ease to perform the activities proposed.

In addition to the mastery of the language and the implementation of dynamic activities, teachers must evaluate using different instruments and techniques to promote more valid and reliable estimates of their students' proficiency levels. Not only must they use tests, but they should try to have different types of assessment to reach the nearest approximation of students' true ability. They can do this by developing peer assessment and self-assessment of learner's participation and use of the language in the tasks and

activities that are developed in the classroom to ease the automatization of the language learned.

However, the most important factor in the learning of a foreign language is motivation. This term is not easily defined. Instead, the focus is on specific factors that work together to create motivation. Ellis (1994), in an overview of research and motivation, simply asserted that motivation affects the extent to which language learners persevere in learning, what kinds of behavior they exert, and their actual achievement (p. 479). Nonetheless, other authors like Gardner, proposed that theory specify four aspects of motivation. Gardner (1985) was one of the pioneering researchers in second language acquisition to focus on motivation. He chose to define motivation by specifying four aspects of it: 1. A goal 2. Effortful behavior to reach the goal, 3. A desire to attain the goal, 4. Positive attitudes toward the goal (p. 50)

A goal, however, was not necessarily a measurable component of motivation. Instead, a goal was a stimulus that gave rise to motivation. Gardner (1985) focused on classifying reasons for second language study, which he then identified as orientations. He found two main orientations through his research: 1. integrative: a favorable attitude toward the target language community; possibly a wish to integrate and adapt to a new target culture through use of the language. 2. Instrumental: a more functional reason for learning the target language, such as job promotion, or a language requirement (p. 54).

Gardner (1985) specifically delineated the difference between these orientations and actual motivation. Motivation “refers to a complex of three characteristics which may or may not be related to any particular orientation. These characteristics are attitudes toward learning the language, desire to learn the language, and motivational intensity” (p. 54). For example, an integrative orientation was a class of reasons suggesting why a person might undertake language study, including a desire to integrate with a target language community. By itself, this simply reflected a goal which might or might not lack motivational power. On the other hand, an integrative *motive* included this orientation, plus the motivation, which included desire, motivational intensity, and a number of other attitudes involving the target language community. (p. 54)

Gardner’s (1985) socio-educational model of motivation focused on the integrative motive. Motivation was the central concept of the model, but there were also some factors which affected this, such as integrativeness and attitudes. These were other factors that influenced individual differences and were seen as complex variables (p. 50).

From this historical review, it can be seen that motivation, even without a single integrated definition, is directly related to the success that a learner reaches in the process of learning a second language. As Ellis (1994) put it, “their affective states tend to be volatile, affecting not only overall progress but responses to particular learning activities on a day-by-day and even moment by moment basis” (p. 483). For this reason, we cannot afford to restrict ourselves to a small set of motivational variables, especially when we know from research in other fields that motivation is extraordinarily complex and multi-faceted. Therefore, it is necessary to do more research to explore the nature of a foreign language setting, language learning, and instruction, how that affects motivation in



learners and to include the possibility of a wide range of motivational factors that influence the language experience.

One specific area in which motivational factors can be appreciated at work is in the use of different learning strategies because the degree of motivation is of great influence on how and when students employ language learning strategies. Learning strategies are “behaviors or actions which learners use to make language learning more successful, self-directed and enjoyable” (as cited in Ellis, 1994, p. 531).

Learners at all levels use strategies, but sometimes they may not be aware they are using them. Successful language learners do not necessarily use more strategies; instead, they use different combinations of strategies. Many different categories of learning strategies have been documented. Oxford (1990) created a taxonomy of different strategies which are divided into two main, equally important categories. The first one, direct strategies, simply involves direct use of language. Under this heading are three areas: strategies dealing with memory, the entering and retrieving of information; cognition, the manipulation of language for reception and production; and compensation, the overcoming of limitations in existing knowledge. The second main category is indirect strategies, which support language learning, but do not directly involve using the language. Under this heading are three areas: strategies dealing with metacognition, the organization and evaluation of learning; affective strategies, the management of emotions and attitudes; and social strategies, the learning of a language with the help of others (pp. 38-136).

In a Foreign language setting, then, more research is needed to observe the wide range of factors that motivate and influence students to persevere in their efforts. This ethnographic study was intended to find relationships between motivation and students’ success in foreign language learning and determine the effect of their motivation in their proficiency in the second language.

### **III Findings**

This ethnographic project was designed to explore if there was any phenomenon going on with the group under study by observing the patterns that they could show and describing these students’ behaviors in the classroom and/or during breaks.

The first patterns that emerged were associated with the discomfort with their previous English course in which these learners scored nineties, but they soon noticed, in the course where the research was conducted, that their proficiency in English was very low.

Pupils expressed they had never engaged in activities in which the focus was listening, reading, and writing. What they did most of the time was to role-play given situations. Moreover, they had the chance to prepare a simple role-play in one or two weeks. Every time students went to this class, the professor introduced the topic by using power point presentations, which for them was really repetitive and boring. There were no challenges for the students to develop their English language skills.

In the course where the research was conducted, however, pupils felt there was a linguistic gap between what they really knew and what they were supposed to know at

the beginning of the second course. For this reason, the new professor had to review some of the topics that were supposed to be covered in the previous course. He also scheduled some recovery classes but just few students attended to those lessons. This aspect was the indicator of students' low motivation toward learning English and led to possible behavior such as arriving late to class, or not doing assignments.

Another finding that had an important impact on students' motivation was the fact that the major's curriculum was subject to several changes. One of the major concerns these learners had was that if they failed an English course, they would have to start over again because administrators eliminated some English courses from the learner's curricular program that they had already taken. This meant they took a course called *Ingles para Turismo I and II*, but the next year they would be called *Ingles Integrado I and II*, and these courses would not be equivalent with the two former courses. This fact raised the students' affective filter.

Another demotivating factor was that the grades these learners' were obtaining in the second English course were really low in comparison to the ones they obtained in the previous classes. The grades they were obtaining in the course were the research was conducted ranged from forties to seventies. These pupils were worried about their success in the course. The strange thing was that these students wanted to pass the course, but they did not certainly make so much effort to overcome their linguistic problems.

In one class that was observed, there were very few students and they were really tired and did not want to do any of the exercises or read the texts from the book they were supposed to read. Some students were yawning and even a girl commented that she wanted to do something different like singing or dancing instead of reading. Actually, that day students did not cover much material. At the end of the session, the ethnographer asked one student what was going on. This student explained that they were behaving that way because they had to comply with a lot of assignments in the other courses they were also taking.

A noticeable demotivating factor described in many observations was the fact that these students had an assigned classroom since the very beginning of the course but the planning for the distributions of classroom in this university was terrible and inconsistent. There were times that this group arrived at the classroom and it was occupied by students from the scientific high school. There were also improvements in the campus that caused a lot of interruptions and annoyance. For example, one time students were taking a listening quiz and people in the outside were repairing the university's restrooms, the entire group had to move to another classroom. In addition to this, the students of this group could just go to the language laboratory for an hour on Thursdays because other students, especially the learners majoring in English and French, used it all mornings and that was the only space students of tourism could be given. In fact, a girl of this group asked the instructor for the reason why they did not use the laboratory often even when they were charged for its use.

The groups cohesion did not help much either to organize the learning environment since they gathered in two or three main subgroups on their preference. This was observed in many of the sessions and they always sat next to the same people and

friends. They did help each other inside the subgroups, but they rarely worked with classmates that did not belong to their subgroup. This was a negative factor to solve problems that affected the whole group.

Notwithstanding the above, there were also positive aspects associated with motivation found during the observations. The learners expressed that they did feel they were learning the language in the course where the research was conducted because the methodology used incorporated a varied set of activities that were used for developing every one of the language skills. As an illustration, students had to prepare short speeches about a short investigation they did to write a paragraph, or they had to make up a role-play in grammar to practice some structures based on the situations the teacher provided them with.

The evaluation used was also accepted and seen as a motivating factor; they did not just have to take tests. Students had many chances and types of assessment that let them show their abilities in the second language learning in so many different ways such as oral presentations, writing paragraphs, which involved writing letters, their childhood experiences, and facts that had been outstanding in their lives. Moreover, students were allowed to role-play situations, did listening exercises and other fun activities to develop their language proficiency and competence.

Some other discoveries during these observations were the level of awareness about the use of learning strategies these students had. It is widely known that not many students are aware that they are using specific strategies to make their learning of a second language easier. In this group some students used learning strategies, but they were not really conscious of their benefit and most of these strategies that they employed were cognitive and social in nature. The identified strategies were the use of mother tongue when they could not say something in the target language. Also, students helped each other in different activities. They usually asked a more-knowledgeable classmate to check their outcomes in the English language. Most people on the group that always sat on the right side of the classroom relied on a girl who had been in Canada. They asked her for the meaning of words or their pronunciation. The other big group relied more on the teacher. Another unusual strategy was that a learner used was the repetition of words in order to use them correctly in the future. Furthermore, students went over the material before some of the final quizzes.

#### **IV Conclusions**

There are some implications that must be considered after the results of this ethnography are presented. If the authorities of the Universidad Nacional, Sede Regional Brunca in Pérez Zeledón, San José, Costa Rica, take it seriously and start to look at the findings, they may start to take action to reduce, in some way, the demotivation students of the tourism group were showing.

The first aspect that they can implement if they consider this ethnographic study is a careful needs analysis to determine the real needs these learners have. These language learners need to learn the language to put it into practice daily in their future occupations. Consequently, if the curriculum they follow in their major integrates the

language for the purposes the careful analysis produces, they will see their language learning experience in a more meaningful way since they may be employing what they are learning. They will see a match between the objectives of the English courses and the major's syllabi. Furthermore, a curriculum is not flawless, but through evaluation of its effectiveness, some adjustments can be carried out and implemented. For this, students' and teacher's perspectives must be considered because they are the main participants in the development of the curriculum.

In addition to this, some planning must focus on explicit teaching of learning strategies so that these learners can benefit from their use. The curriculum, and especially some of the English courses, must promote the teaching of learning strategies so that these students can put into practice as many of them as possible for them to find out about the ones that are more effective and efficient for their learning process. After they do this, they can take an active and more responsible role for their own learning, and their motivation will increase because the learners will be able to see the progress they have made in the learning of the target language. In real practice, they will also benefit from the learning strategies because if their level is not so high, these will help them overcome or compensate for their low proficiency. Therefore, the explicit teaching of learning strategies must be incorporated in the curriculum to help the students in their learning of the target language and to increase motivation.

Another action that can be taken based on the results of the investigation is the execution of some workshops by psychologists to help student's lower their anxiety and augment their motivation. In the university life, students have to deal with a lot of stress in carrying out the different tasks that are required of them to complete the courses in the specific curriculum they are immersed in. Most of the time, this process produces a lot of anxiety that may affect student's performance, and this may result in a diminution of their motivation. For this reason, if learners are encouraged to be aware of these factors and the way in which they can deal with them, they can be more motivated and overcome them to make their learning experience more accessible and successful. If these workshops are carried out for specific groups, the relationships and communication among them will also be improved, and the unity of the group will assist in their learning of the new language.

On the other hand, if the authorities in charge of this campus do not pay attention to the results and recommendations the ethnography provides, students will be the most affected. In the long run, students' grades may start to be in the decline, especially the grades of the learners with low motivation. This may subsequently lead to their failing the course they may be currently taking. Later on, their motivation could decrease even more up to the point where other courses' grades could be low or unsatisfactory. If this continues, these learners with low grades may tend to drop out of the university even when they could have overcome their motivational levels. In addition to this, if the authorities see that the number of students choosing the career of tourism leaves it in the first years, they might consider closing it and redirect the budget invested to other faculties and majors. This can affect the region in coming years because tourism will be a great source of income.

Not only the students will be affected but the teachers will face some motivational problems as well. If they see that their pupils obtain low grades, they will start thinking that maybe they do not know how to teach very well. They may even doubt about their talent and knowledge. If this happens, the teaching and learning environment may become in an inadequate place to learn, since most of the material studied will not be taken in by students. Therefore, the professor should implement different techniques and methods to help students overcome motivational and learning difficulties.

#### **4.1 Recommendations**

Several pieces of advice are given to improve the preceding ethnographic study. The first aspect that can be mentioned is the time that was devoted to the research. It will be more fruitful if the observations could take longer, for at least a semester, so that other patterns can be identified and more relationships among them can be found. In addition to this, more time will allow the ethnographers to follow up emerging patterns so as to find the roots of these and gather more information that can be used to interpret the behaviors and find solutions to the problems or issues they are evidencing. Plus, a longer period of time will also let researchers inquire more and obtain other perspectives from the administrative staff and directors of the major. This will allow the ethnographers to create a more holistic picture of the events that can be interpreted in a more reliable and valid way.

Another weak point of the investigation was that just some students' opinions were taken into account to describe what they thought about their previous instructor. The description other participants could give could have added to the understanding and perception of the teaching environment in regard to the methodology and activities of the instructor in the previous course. The findings were just based on the observations reports and on an unstructured interview that was carried out. This could have affected, in some way, the results that were obtained after the analysis.

Some recommendations can also be given to those that are immersed in the teaching-learning experience. For teachers, it would be a good idea if they can provide an opportunity for learners to explore which strategies they use and which they find most successful. In this way and as research in these areas continues, classroom methodology will incorporate results so as to maximize the time, experience, and success of language learners. For the students, it would make a difference if they organize and form a group of representatives that can be involved in the decision-making related to their major's curriculum. In this way, they may take action and be more motivated because their curriculum would be a reflection of careful study of their interests and those of the authorities. This will help the teaching-learning process be more effective.

Then, for the data collection, it would be quite helpful if some technological devices can be employed. For example, interviews to different participants can be tape-recorded to be able to write down all of the descriptions and perspectives that are given. This will also ease the review of any important part that can shed light into the problem being investigated. Video recordings of classes can help to identify patterns that otherwise would be skipped, such as facial expressions, or occurrences that cannot be

faithfully described by just written descriptions provided by the ethnographers. These video recordings can show more than a written historical account of events. The general public will be able to see, with their own eyes, what people in the site are doing, saying, and sharing with their non-verbal communication.

The development of the ethnographic investigation could be greatly aided if some previous studies on the same field could be provided as a guide. Along these lines, the ethnographers would not have to start from scratch. They could see examples of real occurrences, descriptions, analyses of data, and presentations of findings and conclusions. They can also be able to discover how their research is going to add to the previous knowledge on the subject, and if it is going to reshape the views that are held regarding the topic. This new project can expand one of them or focus on a different side of the same issue on another context and setting.

It is very important to be able to carry out some other ethnographies to become more skillful in noticing the patterns that are hidden in the things people do, say, and keep for themselves when they just make some gestures or remain silent. Besides, the ethnographers should have more practice in gaining access to the population and the participants that can provide the most revealing information. After this, they have to develop skills to explain and analyze the data so that the connections that they make can really picture the issue under scrutiny and can tell why the events occur the way they do because they have gained an understanding of the patterns and can see them as the participants do.

It is difficult, however, to be able to track down the individuals over a long period of time since the historical constraints affect the group under study and the situations and people change as well. Sometimes the ethnographer can face limitations in regard to the collaboration he/she receives from the authorities in charge of giving permissions to the site, such as classrooms or specific groups of learners. Besides, there may be cases where important informants leave the group for different circumstances, and then the ethnographer will be left with a gap to fill and no resource to be able to do it. Thus, a specific amount of time must be set to carry out the ethnography and to prevent the history from affecting the findings that the research could add to our understanding of the phenomenon being investigated.

The last point that can be recommended is the use of diaries on the part of the students for them to record detailed descriptions of their experiences. These diaries can be employed to understand language phenomena and related variables from the learner's point of view. They also help ethnographers to obtain natural data in the most natural setting possible since the learners will write their perceptions, feelings, emotions, advances, mistakes, and strategies that they utilize to overcome obstacles in their day-by-day learning experience. There is always the potential to discover or rediscover factors that appear to be important or meaningful from the learner's perspective, not from the outsider's point of view. Diary studies also raise factors because their authors write detailed and comprehensive descriptions of their experiences; it seems to be the best way to concentrate on individual learner variables. This can also serve as a way to have

students reflect on their own learning process and understand why they are reaching their intended goal, or they are failing to do so.

Another important recommendation that can be useful for the teachers who possibly read this project is to let students know that there are learning strategies that they can use to learn a language faster or easier. The problem is that teachers advise their students just to study for quizzes or tests, but they do not explain how to do it. It is also important to encourage teachers who do not know a lot about this topic to read about it in order to avoid confusions regarding multiple intelligences or learning styles. Language learning strategies also help the teacher organize varied activities to develop enjoyable lessons.

All of these suggestions can help improve the ethnographic study so that the conclusions obtained truly reflect the whole picture of the site under investigation and the perceptions that the people in it have about the issue.

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## About the Authors

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**Diego Garro Bustamante** holds a bachelor's degree in English teaching and a Master's degree in Second Languages and Cultures with Emphasis in English from Universidad Nacional. He started working as an English teacher at Liceo Nocturno de Pérez Zeledón. Since the end of the year 2003 up to the present, he's been a professor at Universidad Nacional Sede Región Brunca. His research interests include writing and grammar.

Appendix 1

SEDE REGIÓN BRUNCA PLAN DE ESTUDIOS - GESTIÓN EMPRESARIAL DEL TURISMO SOSTENIBLE		
BACHILLER I NIVEL I CICLO		
CÓD. DE MATERIA	NOMBRE DEL CURSO	CRÉD.
SCB400	Estudios Generales	3
SCB402	Taller de Sistema Turístico	3
SCB403	Geografía Turística de Costa Rica	3
LIY410	Introducción a la Informática	3
SCB401	Inglés Básico Turismo I	3
	Administración Empresarial	3
BACHILLER I NIVEL II CICLO		
CÓD. DE MATERIA	NOMBRE DEL CURSO	CRÉD.
SCB404	Estudios Generales <i>EBG05</i>	3
	Taller de Patrimonio Cultural	3
	Estudios Generales <i>EBF02</i>	3
LIY411	I Optativo <i>SCB4320 + C. de Historia</i>	3
	Inglés Básico Turismo II	3
BACHILLER II NIVEL III CICLO		
CÓD. DE MATERIA	NOMBRE DEL CURSO	CRÉD.
SCB406	Estudios Generales	3
SCB405	Gestión de Empresas Gastronómicas	3
SCB408	Contabilidad para las Empresas Turísticas	3
LIY120	Informática para Empresas Turísticas	3
	Inglés Integrado II	6
BACHILLER II NIVEL IV CICLO		
CÓD. DE MATERIA	NOMBRE DEL CURSO	CRÉD.
SCB414	Gestión Ambiental	3
SCB409	Gestión de Empresas Hoteleras	3
SCB407	Introducción a las Finanzas	3
LIY420	II Optativo	3
	Inglés III para Turismo	6
BACHILLER III NIVEL V CICLO		
CÓD. DE MATERIA	NOMBRE DEL CURSO	CRÉD.
SCB411	Planificación del Desarrollo Turístico	3
SCB412	Gestión de Empresas de Agencia de Viajes	3
SCB410	Estadística para Turismo	3
SCB413	Finanzas	3
LIY421	Inglés IV para Turismo	6
BACHILLER III NIVEL VI CICLO		
CÓD. DE MATERIA	NOMBRE DEL CURSO	CRÉD.
SCB415	Manejo y Planificación de Áreas Silvestres	3
SCB416	Legislación Turística	3
SCB417	Mercadeo Turístico	3
SCB418	Seminario de Organización Comunal	3
LIY422	Expresión Oral I Turismo Y Comercio	6
BACHILLER IV NIVEL VII CICLO		
CÓD. DE MATERIA	NOMBRE DEL CURSO	CRÉD.
SCB419	Gestión y Evaluación de Proyectos Turísticos	3
SCB420	Ordenamiento Territorial	3
	III Optativo	3
SCB421	Turismo Recreativo	3
LIY423	Expresión Oral II para Turismo	6
BACHILLER IV NIVEL VIII CICLO		
PRACTICA PROFESIONAL SUPERVISADA		15 CRÉD.



Appendix 2

OLD

**ESTRUCTURA DE CURSOS DE LA CARRERA POR NIVEL Y CICLO LECTIVO  
BACHILLERATO EN GESTIÓN EMPRESARIAL DEL TURISMO SOSTENIBLE**

Nivel	Código	Nombre Del Curso	Número De Créditos	Horas por Semana			Total de Horas
				Presenciales / Contacto	Estudio Independiente y Sist. Personal		
				Teoría + Práctica			
<b>NIVEL I</b>							
I ciclo lectivo 18 créditos		Estudios Generales	3	-	-	-	8
		Taller de Patrimonio Cultural Costarricense	3	3	2	3	8
		Administración Empresarial	3	3	-	5	8
		Geografía Turística de Costa Rica	3	3	3	2	8
		Introducción a la Informática	3	2	2	4	8
		Inglés Básico para Turismo I	3	2	2	4	8
II ciclo lectivo 16 créditos		Estudios Generales	3	-	-	-	8
		Taller del Sistema Turístico	4	3	4	3	10
		Contabilidad para Empresas Turísticas	3	3	2	3	8
		Optativo	3	-	-	-	8
		Inglés Básico para Turismo II	3	2	2	4	8
<b>NIVEL II</b>							
Nivel	Código	Nombre Del Curso	Número De Créditos	Horas por Semana			Total de Horas
				Presenciales / Contacto	Estudio Independiente y Sist. Personal		
				Teoría + Práctica			
<b>NIVEL II</b>							
III ciclo lectivo 18 créditos		Estudios Generales	3	-	-	-	8
		Gestión de Empresas Gastronómicas	3	3	3	2	8
		Introducción a las Finanzas	3	2	2	4	8
		Informática para Empresas Turísticas	3	3	2	3	8
		Inglés Intermedio Bajo para Turismo I	3	2	2	4	8
		Francés Básico para Turismo I	3	2	2	4	8
IV ciclo		Estudios Generales	3	-	-	-	8
		Gestión de Empresas Hoteleras	3	3	3	2	8

lectivo 18 créditos		Estadística para Turismo	3	2	2	4	8
		Optativo	3	-	-	-	8
		Inglés Intermedio Bajo para Turismo II	3	2	2	4	8
		Francés Básico para Turismo II	3	2	2	4	8

**NIVEL III**

V ciclo lectivo 18 créditos		Planificación del Desarrollo Turístico	3	3	3	2	8
		Gestión de Empresas de Agencia de Viajes	3	2	2	4	8
		Finanzas	3	3	2	3	8
		Gestión Ambiental	3	2	2	4	8
		Inglés Intermedio para Turismo III *	3	2	2	4	8
		Francés Básico para Turismo III	3	2	2	4	8

VI ciclo lectivo 18 créditos		Manejo y Planificación de Áreas Silvestres	3	2	2	4	8
		Legislación Turística	3	3	2	3	8
		Mercadeo Turístico	3	3	2	3	8
		Seminario de Organización Comunal	3	3	3	2	8
		Inglés Intermedio para Turismo IV *	3	2	2	4	8
		Francés Básico para Turismo IV	3	2	2	4	8

Nivel I	Código	Nombre Del Curso	Número De Créditos	Horas por Semana			Total de Horas
				Presenciales / Contacto Teoría + Práctica	Estudio Independiente y Sist. Personal		
<b>NIVEL IV</b>							
VII ciclo lectivo 16 créditos		Gestión y Evaluación de Proyectos Turísticos	4	3	3	4	10
		Ordenamiento Territorial	3	2	2	4	8
		Turismo Recreativo	3	3	3	2	8
		Optativo	3	-	-	-	8
		Optativo	3	-	-	-	8
VIII ciclo lectivo 15 créditos		Práctica Supervisada	15	2	36	-	38

Nivel	Código	Nombre Del Curso	Número De Créditos	Horas por Semana			
				Presenciales / Contacto Teoría + Práctica	Estudio Independiente y Sist. Personal	Total de Horas	
<b>OPTATIVOS</b>							
		Recursos Humanos	3	2	-	6	8
		Taller de Turismo Responsable	3	2	3	3	8
		Economía	3	2	3	3	8
		Seminario Turismo y Género	3	2	3	3	8

\* Se impartirán en el 2007.


- El Plan de Estudios tiene un total de 137 créditos distribuidos en 8 ciclos lectivos (4 años).
- En relación con los cursos optativos, al menos uno debe pertenecer a un área disciplinaria diferente al área DE CONOCIMIENTO.


Carrera: Ingeniería de Software  
 Asignatura: Ingles Básico para Turismo I, curso I, 1911  
 Subárea: Básico Nivel: I Grupo: 29  
 Profesor: Diego Guzmán Bustamante

I Semestre  II Semestre  Anual   
 I Trimestre  II Trimestre  III Trimestre

Año 2007

Appendix 3

  
UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL  
COSTA RICA

  
SEDE REGION BRUNCA

**REGISTRO DE ASISTENCIA  
Y CALIFICACIONES**

Carrera: \_\_\_\_\_  
Asignatura: Inglés Básico para Turismo II Código: LIYHII  
Subsede: Brunca Nivel: I Grupo: 89  
Profesor: Diego Garro Bustamante

I Semestre  II Semestre  Anual   
I Trimestre  II Trimestre  III Trimestre

Año 2007

		Quiz1 Quiz2 Quiz3 Quiz4 Quiz5 Quiz6 Quiz7						
Nº	NOMBRE DEL ALUMNO	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	David Arias	81.25	72	40	75	56	73.33	60
2								
3	Julian Arias	93.75	92	80	100	80	86.66	0
4								
5	Douglas Azofeifa	81.25	68	73.33	66.66	68	60	50
6								
7	Jaikel Chacoñ	56.25	60	73.33	50	56	73.33	50
8								
9	Pablo Cordero	56.25	100	80	66.66	88	93.33	60
10								
11	Jhonnathan Rivera	50	60	80	66.66	52	96.66	30
12								
13	Marcela Corrales	62.5	64	80	75	64	56.66	70
14								
15	Leonardo Gamboa	37.5	53	66.66	66.66	44	63.33	40
16								
17	Patricia Ugalde	56.25	48	60	70.83	60	66.66	60
18								
19	David Leiva	81.25	80	73.33	70.83	76	70	60
20								
21	Alejandra Mora	87.5	96	46.66	58.33	60	80	60
22								
23	Susan Naranjo	81.25	84	86.66	66.66	68	70	70
24								
25	Johnny Otárola	75	56	66.66	75	36	43.33	70
26								
27	Laura Quiros	56.25	68	66.66	45.83	40	70	50
28								
29	Giannina Rodríguez	100	84	100	100	95	90	70
30								
31	Rita Rodríguez	62.5	64	60	58.33	8	30	30
32								
33	Kenneth Rojas	68	60	46.66	66.66	60	60	40
34								
35	Juan Salazar	53	80	93.33	75	36	70	60
36								
37	Silvia Sobrado	81.25	80	80	58.33	48	76.66	60
38								
39	Juan Solís	75	84	80	66.66	92	80	90
40								
41	Lizeth Valverde	43.75	32	60	54.16	72	76.66	50
42								
43								
44								
45								

8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16		
		19.99			88	50	92			
		26.7			96	90	0			
	20.07	22.25			96	80	96	9.06		
	17.95	19.12			96	100	100	9.86		
		26.78			92	50	96			
	17.79	20.85			88	80	100	8.66		
		22.76			96	90	96			
	15.9	20.45			100	50	0	5	95	5
		19.53			88	100	100			
	21.9	24.8			92	70	96	8.6		
		20.53			88	70	96			
	19.56	18.87			92	90	96	9.96		
		15.45			92	60	100			
		17.1			88	60	100			
		28.76			0	100	100			
	13.4	15.6			88	70	0	5.26		
	17.19	22.33			92	70	100	8.7		
	20.07	24.62			96	70	0	5.5		
		23.81			88	0	92			
		26.58			88	0	92			
		16.23			92	60	100	8.4		

Universidad nacional  
Sede Región Brunca  
Quiz # 5 Turismo

Total points: 20 pts  
Points gotten: 19

Score: 95

Student's name: Giannina Rodríguez Rojas

I. Write questions to the answers provided. 10 pts

1. Was Diego at ~~home~~ the restaurant ?  
No, he was at home.

2. Where did Jessie go last month ?  
Jessie went to England last month.

3. Why ~~did~~ Mary and Kate didn't go to the party ?  
Because they had to study for a grammar test.

4. What did Carlos buy at the store ?  
He bought a pair of tennis shoes and a cap.

5. What did John eat for dinner ?  
John ate a large pizza for dinner yesterday.

6. Where did you sleep ?  
I slept at Jake's house.

7. Did you study for the test ?  
Yes, we did.

8. Was Karla fine after the accident ?  
No, he got hurt.

9. What did Mario send ?  
He sent a present to his grandmother.

10. How was Mary after the game ?  
He got tired.

II. Completion 10 pts

Read the following story and complete it using the verbs below in the past tense:

-go-know-start-study-see-help-plan-buy-leave-take-

Last year my family and me went to the beach, but it was a mess. We took the necessary supplies and left. We bought suntan lotion, some towels, sun glasses, sandals and, of course, food. When we arrived at the beach, the sky was really dark, but we put up our tent anyway. We planned to be there the whole weekend, but it started to rain an hour after we got there. We did not know what to do, so my father decided to go out of the tent and see. He saw that the food was spoiled. For this reason, we decided to go back home. When I got home, I helped my sister to do a home assignment, and then I also studied for a grammar test. I hope that this year the trip can be planned better so as to avoid any problems.

## Multimedia: Enhancing Speaking in EFL Classrooms

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**Resumen:** El uso de multimedia en clases de inglés como lengua extranjera se ha convertido en una importante herramienta para promover la comunicación. Aderssen y Kramsch (1999) manifestaron que “usar recursos de multimedia transforma nuestra labor de enseñar un idioma como un sistema formal a enseñarlo como una... ‘práctica comunicativa’” (p. 2). Recursos tecnológicos como los videos, la música, sitios web, computadoras entre otros proporcionan información auténtica que puede ser utilizada para aprender un idioma extranjero. Estos recursos además proveen ejemplos del lenguaje utilizado en situaciones reales. Los profesores de idiomas deben generar espacios para que los aprendientes se beneficien del uso de la tecnología y materiales auténticos. De acuerdo con el Programa de Estudios de Inglés del Ministerio de Educación Pública (2001) “El profesor debería proveer una variedad de oportunidades para los estudiantes, con el propósito de generar los modelos de información necesarios” (p. 22). El uso de videos como base para que los estudiantes produzcan sus propios trabajos digitales es una manera de promover las habilidades lingüísticas, especialmente la del habla. Esta actividad con fines pedagógicos requiere que los estudiantes hagan uso de recursos como videos, guiones, cámaras, computadoras y proyectores. Este estudio propone el uso de elementos de multimedia como una estrategia alternativa para reforzar la habilidad oral de los estudiantes de inglés. Los y las profesores (as) de inglés encuentran en esta investigación una experiencia pedagógica sistematizada que propone el uso y la producción de videos cortos como una técnica para enriquecer el dominio del inglés como lenguaje extranjero.



**Palabras clave:** expresión oral, tecnología, multimedia, videos, actividades

**Abstract:** The use of multimedia in classes of English as a foreign language has become a tool to promote communication. Aderssen and Kramersch (1999) stated that “using multimedia transforms our task from teaching language as a formal system to teaching language as ... ‘communicative practice’” (p. 2). Videos, music, web-sites, computers and other technological resources provide authentic input to learn a foreign language. Furthermore, these materials are sources of natural occurring language. Language teachers should generate settings in which students benefit from technology and authentic materials. According to the Costa Rican National English Syllabus (2001), “The teacher should provide a variety of opportunities for the students in order to bring about the necessary models or language input” (p. 22). The use of videos as input for students to produce their own short-videos is a way to enhance the linguistic skills, specially speaking. This activity demands the language learners to use devices such as videos, scripts, cameras, computers and projector. This paper recommends the use of multimedia as an alternative strategy to reinforce students’ speaking skill. Teachers of English find in this research a systematized teaching experience that proposes the use and production of short videos as a technique to enrich students’ language proficiency.

**Key words:** speaking, technology, multimedia, videos, teaching activities

## 1. Introduction

The new technological era has brought both benefits and challenges for language teachers. Learners are now more familiar with technological devices, and they demand that their teachers make use of technology in classes. Classes developed by using books, whiteboards or poster-boards are not interesting anymore for students who are used to using the latest devices in the market. Traditional teaching resources make students lose their attention spam more quickly and wander around, so teachers must look for different methodologies and strategies to draw their attention. The task of using technology in classes becomes a matter of interest; especially for language teachers who can find in multimedia-based activities support to develop their students communicate competence.

The teaching of second and foreign languages has varied significantly in the last years. This variation is closely linked to the new trends in technology. Both learners and teachers live immersed in technological environments where devices such as phones, computers, cameras, television, and others are commonly used. Due to the fact that media play a key role in the outside world, most language learners expect to find mechanical paraphernalia in the classrooms. Certainly, multimedia-based lessons are more attractive and motivating. Brinton (as cited in Celce-Murcia, 2001) supported this claim as follows “media help us [teachers] to motivate students by bringing a slice or real life into the classroom and by presenting language in its more complete communicative context” (p. 461). In other words, media materials provide learners with contextualized situations in which language is used naturally. Multimedia-based activities help pupils to link language instruction and the outside world.

### 1.1. Objectives

- To research the role of multimedia in language teaching.
- To design multimedia-based activities that reinforce EFL learners' speaking.

### 1.2. Research questions

- What is the role of multimedia in language teaching?
- What kinds of multimedia-based activities reinforce EFL learners' speaking?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1.1. Linguistic Skills

The development of students' four basic linguistic skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) must be the main concern of teachers when planning classroom activities. Learning a foreign language does not only mean to understand it but also being able to establish and keep up with communicative situations. Learners must be exposed to the language so that they become confident when using it. Learners of foreign or second languages must be provided with comprehensible input in order to help them reach linguistic competence. Input, as Gass and Selinker (2001) defined, is the language to which learners are exposed (p.259). This comprehensible input should address the four main language skills. According to Tiwari (2008), speaking and writing are grouped as active skills whereas listening and reading are grouped as passive skills (p. 26). In other words, when a learner is listening or reading, s/he is carrying out a passive action because this person is just receiving knowledge or information. On the other hand, active skills are those through which the learner produces or puts into practice the knowledge acquired by means of the passive skills. In formal language learning settings, auditory input is most of the times offered by the instructors. However, later in the journey, many other sources can be used to reinforce listening. Even though some theorists appeal to speaking as the second skill to be developed in the learning process, before starting to produce utterances in the target language, learners need sufficient and quality input (Krashen, 1986, p 43). Once learners are able to comprehend and internalize the input provided, they are ready to start producing output. In the beginning, such production may not be accurate at all, but with time, practice and interaction, students start producing native like structures. Such production or output, as Gass and Selinker (2001) called it, can be achieved by speaking or writing (p. 26). Speaking usually comes first, and it might be because speaking is commonly the ultimate goal students have when learning a target language. Being able to speak is also a source of motivation for students to continue with the learning process.

### 2.2. The Use of Multimedia in Language Teaching

Media-based language lessons are currently the tendency when teaching a language. Most teachers rely on the use of media to develop dynamic classes. Educators trust these resources to bring the outside world – the target language – into their language classrooms. It is important to remark that media involve a large number of audiovisual aids. Brinton (as cited in Celce-Murcia, 2001) defined media as:

The most immediate connotation of the term ‘media,’ at least as related to language teaching, is that of the ‘large M media’ – of technological innovation in language teaching, of mechanical paraphernalia, and of glossy, polished audiovisual aids – with all the media anxiety that these can conjure up in teachers. (p. 460)

Brinton also divided these resources in nontechnical and technical media. The former is more frequently used in environments where technology is not available. Nontechnical media include the use of boards, flashcards, posters, maps, photos, newspaper and others. The latter depends on technology; their main constituents are software and hardware. Some items that belong to technical media are television, projectors, video player, computers and language lab. (p. 462) Not all these visual aids represent a novelty in the language teaching; however, their use assure pupils an opportunity to improve their language proficiency. Finally, multi-media based lessons facilitate the task of language learning to almost all types of learners.

### 2.3. Video-based activities in the EFL classrooms

The increasing availability of technology has facilitated the learning/ teaching process. In the area of languages, technology allows learners to have contact with natural occurring language. It makes the learning process more natural and realistic. For example, television exposes pupils to patterns of pronunciation, vocabulary, gestures and facial expression. Movies and videos are used in language classroom as means to expose learners with the target language patterns. Nolasco and Arthur (2003) stated that video-based activities help students “... to imitate the production of certain words and phrases, and the body language that accompanies them” (p. 60). After watching a video, instructors can ask students to imitate the way the utterances are said and, the body language used by the characters. These types of activities help students use extra-linguistic clues to understand and interpret what is being said. An advantage of using videos is that most of them contain a number of distinctive voices and accents. Additionally, language learners can get familiar with different cues in the speakers’ voices, for instance, authority, hesitation, cooperation, level of education as well as their place of residence. Likewise, learners benefit from the target cultural aspects that most videos encompass. All these features enrich learners’ verbal and non-verbal strategic competence and prepare them to face conversations in real contexts.

## 3. Data analysis

This section contains the analysis of the data gathered during this research. A questionnaire was administered to EFL teachers to garner their insights about the use of multimedia as aids to help students develop their linguistic skills.

■Table 3.1. Linguistic skills that EFL teachers emphasize the most in the language classes.

Linguistic skills	% of EFL teachers' answers
Speaking	67%
Listening	11%
Reading	11%
Writing	11%

*Note:* The information in this table was taken from the Instrument 1: Questionnaire for EFL Teachers, which was administered in November, 2012.

Table 3.1 depicts the emphasis teachers give to the language skills when developing their classes. Speaking is the skill to which tutors pay more attention when teaching English. Language instructors' perception regarding the importance of developing speaking in classes is consistent with what theorists have pointed out about the necessity of achieving speaking competence as the main goal of the learning process. Being speaking the most emphasized skill means that teachers devote time to plan and design conversational tasks. Actually, some teachers are accustomed to using technology; thus, they might resort to media-based activities to help students reach communicative competence.

■Table 3.2. Activities implemented to reinforce speaking.

Teaching Activities	% of EFL teachers' answers
Watching Videos	89%
Brainstorming	77%
Listening to songs	77%

■Table 3.2. (continued)

Teaching Activities	% of EFL teachers' answers
Round tables	77%
Debates	66%
Note taking	33%

*Note:* The information in this table was taken from the Instrument 1: Questionnaire for EFL Teachers, which was administered in November, 2012.

Table 3.2 shows information about the teaching activities used by EFL teachers when reinforcing speaking in their classes. 89% of the teachers rely on video-based activities to help their students develop oral skills. Teachers consider that videos provide students with authentic language. Video-based activities are also helpful when dealing with visual and auditory learners. The use of videos reinforces what students hear with images. Also, learners have the chance to focus on non-verbal communication which most of the times is a cultural matter. Teachers also agreed with the fact that songs are key aids to make students participate orally in classes. Finally, using videos and songs to develop speaking skills has become very popular amongst teachers.

■ Table 3.3. Multimedia devices used in EFL classrooms and their availability in the institution.

Multimedia Devices	% of use of the devices	% of Availability in the institution
Projector	77%	77%
Cameras	11%	22%
Computers	100%	66%
Songs	100%	33%
Videos	100%	22%

*Note:* The information in this table was taken from the Instrument 1: Questionnaire for EFL Teachers, which was administered in November, 2012.

Table 3.3 illustrates the most available multimedia devices at educational institutions. Among them, projectors and computers are the most common devices in EFL classrooms. Informants stated that these types of media are useful when developing the different stages of the lesson (warm up, presentation, practice, and consolidation). It is important to remark that even though videos and songs are the least available multimedia resources, teachers agreed with the fact that such means are the most used devices in the classroom. There are different reasons to carry out activities in which song and videos are the bases; for instance, these visual-aids are appealing and keep learners updated with new trends in music and famous artists. Also, the information displayed in table 3.3. indicates that teachers make use of mechanical paraphernalia to develop their classes. In other words, teachers are creative and innovative when developing their classes. For this reason, it is imperative to provide them with extra resources to ease their work.

Almost all informants of this investigation recommended the use of media to develop language classes. Instructors claimed that media-based activities catch the students' attention. In addition, informants agreed with the fact that video-based activities expose learners to comprehensible input. 44% of the teachers said that they resort to the use of videos because these resources contain natural, spontaneous language.

The analysis carried out to the data garnered from EFL teachers help to recognize the extent to which professors reinforce the students' speaking skill through the use of media. The information gathered shows that teachers face limitations regarding the availability of media in their institutions; however, information stated on Table 3.3 also indicates that teachers make an effort to bring those devices into the classrooms. Finally, the key role of multimedia in current language classes is supported by teachers' answers in questionnaire # 1 (appendix 2). Those positive perceptions about the implementation of multimedia-based classes encouraged the researchers of this proposal to systematize a teaching experience in which language learners are required to use videos, computer, projector and cameras.

#### **4. The Use of Multimedia to Reinforce Speaking in EFL Classrooms**

Media take an almost infinite variety of forms, and both language teachers and learners should resort to these audio and visual aids. Multimedia-based activities involve students more naturally in the learning process. However, language educators have to be creative to incorporate media in their lesson plans. Instructors must plan carefully which media fulfill their learners' linguistic needs. By using media, learners will experience the target language in a more authentic and meaningful way. Consequently, the researches of this paper propose video-based activities as a way to expose learners with language in its more complete communicative context. Furthermore, these kinds of activities enhance students' speaking skill. In sum, this is a systematized teaching experience that proposes the use and production of short videos enrich students' language proficiency. The proposal in appendix No. 1 follows the next format:

- Activity 1. Work Bank

In this section, students are provided with some vocabulary from the video. The teacher encourages them to brainstorm the meanings of the words according to different contexts. After the students' brainstorming, the teacher supplies the meaning of the words.

- Activity 2. Taking Notes

In this activity, students watch the video. They are asked to identify and associate the vocabulary studied with the images on the video. Students focus on the characters' extra-linguistic cues such as facial expression, use of gestures, and style of clothing. Then, learners watch the video a second time and take notes about the sequence of events presented on the video.

- Activity 3. Speaking

In this section, students put into practice the speaking skill. They have to retell the story and discuss about the situations shown on the video. They also comment on the characters' extra-linguistic cues such as facial expression, use of gestures, and style of clothing.

- Activity 4. Video Making

This task can be carried out as a class activity or as an extra-class assignment. It is important to remark that pupils need time to develop it. To perform this task, the students get in groups of four or five. Then, they choose a song of their interest. The next step consists in planning a sequence of events to represent the situations stated by the lyrics of the song. Next, they act out the events and film a video. Students are allowed to use the original video of the song as a guide or to make up their own version. Students have to include captions explaining what is going on in the story.

- Activity 5. Sharing experiences

In the last part of this video-based task, the students show the video to the classmates. They also have to prepare an oral presentation to talk about the main video issues. They follow some questions to prepare their speech.

## 5. Conclusions

Considering the wide variety of multimedia resources and the potential effectiveness of using them in EFL classrooms, teachers should boost the use of innovative techniques. Traditional methodologies need to be changed in order to provide learners with meaningful learning experiences. In addition, multimedia are not resources for teachers only; students can also be encouraged to use media as aids to support their learning process. The use of multimedia might help learners develop autonomy and generate self-confidence. However, multimedia should not be used randomly. It is recommended to establish a plan and state clear teaching objectives. Multimedia-based activities might prevent both, teacher and students, from losing the focus on the learning/teaching process. Even though educational institutions have a limited number of technological resources, teachers show interest in providing learners with authentic material by using multimedia. Thus, it is necessary to encourage teachers to keep on using media and request help from education authorities in Costa Rica. Having technology does not mean that students are going to learn a foreign language, but at least, the process can be eased.

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Appendix 1: Video-based Activities

Multimedia: Enhancing Speaking in EFL Classrooms

CONLA UNA /2012 1

# VIDEO: MISUNDERSTOOD by Bon Jovi

## 1. ACTIVITY WORD BANK



- **Whole-class activity:** Read out loud and discuss the following vocabulary.
- **You can share the meaning of the vocabulary with your classmates and exchange information.**

WORD BANK	MEANING
slip	
hit	
find	
pick-pocket	
wander	
steal	
amnesia	
chase	
dump	
float	
land	
ashore	
mistake	
earthquake	
fall	



Designed by Jimenez/Palacios/Acuña

**2. ACTIVITY** TAKING NOTES 

- **Individually:** Watch the video "Misunderstood" by Bon Jovi and try to associate the vocabulary studied with the images on the video.
- Watch the video again and take notes about the sequence of events presented on the video (e.g. Jack was buying his girlfriend some flowers when he slipped and hit his head.)



A large, rounded rectangular area with a dashed border, containing four horizontal lines for writing notes. A small cartoon pencil character is positioned in the bottom right corner of this area.

**3. ACTIVITY** SPEAKING

- **Whole-class activity:** Focus your attention and comment on extra-linguistic clues such as characters' facial expression, use of gestures, and style of clothing. Then, retell the story and discuss if the situations shown on the video are possible. For example: Jack was attacked by some dogs, and they ripped his clothes off. Use expressions such as: I don't think that is possible because...



Designed by Jiménez/Palacios/Acuña



**4. ACTIVITY VIDEO MAKING**

- **Whole-class activity:** Make groups of four or five. Choose a song of your interest. Then, plan a sequence of events to represent the situations stated by the lyrics of the song.
- Act out the events and film a video.
- Include captions to explain what is going on in the story.
- You can use the original video of the song as a guide or you can make up your own version.

**5. ACTIVITY SHARING EXPERIENCES**

- Show the video to the class.
- 
- Prepare an oral presentation to refer to the planning and development of the video. Use the next questions as a guide for your speech. Why did you choose this song? Which were the most entertaining aspects of producing the video? Which were the main difficulties faced during the production of the video? Why did you choose to represent the message of the song with that sequence of events?



**Appendix 2: Questionnaire for EFL teachers****Instrument #1: Questionnaire for EFL Teachers**

UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL

SEDE REGIONAL BRUNCA

RESEARCH: Multimedia: Enhancing Speaking in EFL Classrooms

RESEARCHERS: M.A. Yalile Jimenez, Lic. Elian Acuña, M.A. Sandra Palacios.

The following questionnaire is part of a study being conducted by three professors of the English Department at Universidad Nacional. It is aimed at gathering data about the use of multimedia in EFL classrooms. Any information you provide will be used for academic purposes only. Thank you for your cooperation.

**PART I. PERSONAL INFORMATION**

1. Your gender?  Male  Female
2. What is the highest academic degree attained?  
 PhD  Masters  Licentiate  Bachelor's
3. What is your area of specialization?
4. How long have you been teaching English?  
 1-5 year(s)  6-10 years  11-15 years  16 years or more \_\_\_\_\_

**PART II. THE USE OF MULTIMEDIA IN EFL CLASSROOMS**

5. Based on your teaching experience, rank the order you consider students should develop the following language skills in the EFL context. (Being 1 the most important and 4 the least important).  
 Listening  Speaking  Reading  Writing
6. Which of the following activities have you implemented to reinforce speaking in the class? You can choose more than one option.  
( ) Listening to songs ( ) Debates  
( ) Round tables ( ) Note taking  
( ) Brainstorming ( ) Watching videos
7. Based on your teaching context, rank from 1 to 4 the linguistic skills that you emphasize the most during your English classes (being 1 the most emphasized and 4 the least emphasized).  
 Listening  Speaking  Reading  Writing

8. Write a check (✓) if you use these types of multimedia in your English classes. If the answer is yes, mark in which stage of the lesson and frequency you use them, and write your perception about students' reaction towards their use.

			FREQUENCY	STUDENT'S REACTION	Availability in the institution
Projector	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Warm-up	<input type="checkbox"/> Every class		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Presentation <input type="checkbox"/> Practice <input type="checkbox"/> Consolidation	<input type="checkbox"/> Every other class <input type="checkbox"/> Twice a month		<input type="checkbox"/> No
Cameras	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Warm-up	<input type="checkbox"/> Every class		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Presentation <input type="checkbox"/> Practice <input type="checkbox"/> Consolidation	<input type="checkbox"/> Every other class <input type="checkbox"/> Twice a month		<input type="checkbox"/> No
Computers	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Warm-up	<input type="checkbox"/> Every class		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Presentation <input type="checkbox"/> Practice <input type="checkbox"/> Consolidation	<input type="checkbox"/> Every other class <input type="checkbox"/> Twice a month		<input type="checkbox"/> No
CD player	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Warm-up	<input type="checkbox"/> Every class		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Presentation <input type="checkbox"/> Practice <input type="checkbox"/> Consolidation	<input type="checkbox"/> Every other class <input type="checkbox"/> Twice a month		<input type="checkbox"/> No
Videos	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Warm-up	<input type="checkbox"/> Every class		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Presentation <input type="checkbox"/> Practice <input type="checkbox"/> Consolidation	<input type="checkbox"/> Every other class <input type="checkbox"/> Twice a month		<input type="checkbox"/> No
Songs	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Warm-up	<input type="checkbox"/> Every class		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Presentation <input type="checkbox"/> Practice <input type="checkbox"/> Consolidation	<input type="checkbox"/> Every other class <input type="checkbox"/> Twice a month		<input type="checkbox"/> No

9. Do you consider that the use of these types of multimedia in the language classroom is effective in developing speaking skills? \_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

## Song-based Activities to Enhance EFL Learners' Pronunciation

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**Resumen:** La pronunciación es un elemento clave para fomentar la comunicación oral. Las personas podrían transmitir mensajes utilizando gramática y vocabulario deficiente y aun así ser comprendidos por los demás; sin embargo, no podrían comunicarse efectivamente sin una pronunciación adecuada. Dauer (1993) argumentó que “el cerebro de los oyentes identifica sonidos específicos del habla, los interpreta como palabras y oraciones de un lenguaje particular y descifra su significado” (p.1). Es decir, si estos sonidos no son producidos claramente, el oyente sería incapaz de entender el mensaje deseado. En las clases de idiomas extranjeros, la enseñanza deductiva de la pronunciación ayuda al aprendiz a discriminar y producir sonidos. Por ello, la siguiente propuesta recomienda la enseñanza explícita de la pronunciación a través de canciones. De acuerdo con Mishan (2005), “en el contexto de la enseñanza del inglés (ELT, por sus siglas en Inglés), la expansión internacional de la música británica/estadounidense hace que muchos aprendices se familiaricen y disfruten canciones en el idioma inglés” (p. 196). Esta característica de la música, hace de las canciones un material atrayente y auténtico para enseñar la pronunciación del idioma inglés. Tales recursos pueden ser adaptados de distintas maneras para enfatizar el uso de fonemas específicos de la lengua meta. Tomando en cuenta estos escenarios, esta investigación propone el uso de actividades basadas en canciones para mejorar la pronunciación de estudiantes del idioma inglés como lengua extranjera.

**Palabras clave:** habla, comunicación, pronunciación, fonemas, canciones

**Abstract:** Pronunciation is a key element to foster oral communication. People might transmit a message with deficient grammar and vocabulary and still be understood by others; however, they would not be capable to communicate effectively without accurate pronunciation. Dauer (1993) argued that “the listener’s brain identifies specific speech sounds, interprets them as words and sentences of a particular language, and figures out their meaning” (p. 1). In other

words, if the sounds are not enunciated clearly, the listener would not be able to understand the desired message. In foreign language classrooms, the deductive teaching of pronunciation helps learners to produce and discriminate sounds. For this reason, the next proposal recommends the explicit teaching of this linguistic micro-skill through songs. According to Mishan (2005), “in the ELT [English Language Teaching] context, the international span of British/American music means that many learners are familiar with and enjoy English language songs” (p. 196). These features of music make songs an appealing kind of authentic material to teach English pronunciation. Songs’ lyrics can be adapted in several ways to emphasize the use of specific phonemes in the target language. In the light of these considerations, this research paper proposes the use of song-based activities to enhance EFL learners’ pronunciation.

**Keywords:** communication, speaking, pronunciation, phonetic alphabet, songs

## 1. Introduction

English is one of the most spoken languages in the world because of the high number of individuals who use it either as their mother tongue or lingua franca. In fact, this language is a fundamental linguistic and cultural tool for people to communicate with other speakers of English worldwide. The prominence of English has evolved its teaching in different societies. In this sense, education researchers have focused on the learning process. After a long journey, these specialists on teaching have suggested an array of methodologies to teach English in EFL contexts. However, Strevens (as cited in Celce-Murcia, 2001) claimed that:

the complex circumstances of teaching and learning languages –with different kinds of pupils, teachers, aims and objectives, approaches, methods and materials, classroom techniques and standards of achievement – make it inconceivable that any single method could achieve optimum success in all circumstances. (p.5)

Education scholars have stated that there is not a perfect method to teach a language. This healthy skepticism among researchers provides teachers with the opportunity to propose new methodologies to address specific needs in pupils. It is important to mention that almost all language instructors agreed with the fact that, in order to teach a language successfully, all the language areas should be emphasized. Fundamental agents of these language areas include the macro-linguistic skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and the micro-linguistic skills (vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation). Because of their features, writing and reading are closely intertwined, as well as listening and speaking. On one hand, vocabulary and grammar play a significant role when reinforcing the former linguistic skills; on the other hand, pronunciation is a key element when enhancing listening and speaking. In addition, this micro-skill becomes a vital element when EFL learners attempt to communicate, as it affects the pupils’ communicative competence and performance.

- Objectives

- To investigate about the role of pronunciation in EFL classrooms.
- To design song-based activities that enhance EFL learners' pronunciation.
- Research questions
- What is the importance of promoting pronunciation in the classroom?  
What kinds of activities promote pronunciation effectively?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 The speaking skill and its communicative nature

Most language learners pursue to communicate in the target language. Speaking becomes the core means to reach communication among interlocutors. Nonetheless, Bailey and Savage (as cited in Celce-Murcia, 2001) stated that “speaking in a second or foreign language has often been viewed as the most demanding of the four skills” (p. 103). Speaking is a demanding process because it requires that the speaker think about the message and convert it into utterances. In addition, being able to utter words and/or sentences involves knowing and using language features such as reduced forms, slang, stress, rhythm, intonation patterns, vocabulary, pronunciation, and others. EFL learners have to work on these language features in order to be prepared for spontaneous communication. According to Bailey and Savage (as cited in Celce-Murcia, 2001), “speaking is an activity requiring the integration of many subsystems... all these factors combine to make speaking a second or foreign language a formidable task for language learners.... yet for many people, speaking is seen as the central skill”(p. 103). Accordingly, EFL learners establish oral communication as the ultimate goal for learning a language; in fact, most of them feel that they have reached such goal when being able to speak the target language.

### 2.2 Pronunciation as a means to foster communication

English has spread rapidly as an international language; as a result, it is common to listen to EFL speakers with different accents. According to Janet Goodwin (as cited in Celce-Murcia, 2001), “pronunciation is the language feature that most readily identifies speakers as non-native. It is a filter through which others see them and often discriminate against them” (p. 117). A mispronounced word can lead speakers to misunderstandings. In consequence, pronunciation should be learned and practiced in order to avoid communication breakdowns. Language instructors should focus on the teaching of clear, comprehensible pronunciation. Both, language teachers and learners, have to be realistic in pronunciation issues. As stated by Brown (2001), “many learners of foreign languages feel that their ultimate goal in pronunciation should be accent-free speech that is indistinguishable from that of a native speaker. Such goal is not only unattainable for virtually every adult learner, but in a multilingual, multicultural world, accents are quite acceptable” (284). Overcoming the habits of the native language in pronunciation is not an easy task; it requires understanding features about organs for speech, points of articulation, manners of articulation, vowel and consonant sounds, and the phonetic



alphabet. Regarding the latter aspect, the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) is a tool used to teach pronunciation. Dauer (1993) defined it as:

... a writing system in which each letter corresponds to a different sound in the language. A word that is written in the phonetic alphabet will always be pronounced exactly the way that is written, since the same sound is always represented by the same letter. The phonetic alphabet consists of the letters of the Latin alphabet plus a number of special letters and symbols. (p. 13)

The IPA system is a teaching resource that can be used to overcome pronunciation difficulties. It is relevant to point out that accents are accepted in this multilingual, multicultural world; however, accurate pronunciation is demanded for most English speakers to reach communication.

### **2.3 The relevance of considering learning styles**

Learners disclose differences with respect to their preferences to deal with new material in the classroom. Dunn and Dunn (as cited in Kafipour, Yazdi, & Shokrpour, 2011) referred to learning styles as “a term that describes the variations among learners in using one or more senses to understand, organize, and retain experience” (p. 308). Oxford (1995) ascertained that there are learners who “prefer to learn via the visual channel” (p. 36). As a result, students may feel affinity for activities that entail reading, visual aids, and written instructions. In the same way, Kinsella (1995) suggested a kinesthetic category of learning styles that “implies total physical involvement with a learning environment such as taking a field trip, dramatizing, pantomiming, or interviewing” (p. 172). Following the same theory, Oxford believed that “students who enjoy the oral-aural learning channel” are auditory learners (p. 36). These kinds of students prefer to take part in discussions, conversations, and group work since they, as students, perceive the material presented in the class more easily by listening to it. By doing this, learners can develop prowess in their pronunciation, as they acquire the phonetic features more promptly than other people do. Therefore, learners internalize material by considering their auditory, visual, and kinesthetic faculties.

### **2.4 Multiple intelligences theory**

Students, in general, present strengths and weaknesses when learning. Gardner in his Multiple Intelligences theory (MI) (as cited in Schaffer, 2001) stipulated that “every human possesses several intelligences in greater or lesser degrees” (p. 31). These intelligences define the kinds of abilities that one person may have upon solving different tasks. In this sense, such intelligences are classified into verbal-linguistic intelligence, which is related to words, semantics, and syntax; logical-mathematical intelligence, which consists of the ability to deal with numbers and solve operations; and bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, which entails the ability to control body movements in order to express intentions (Schaffer, 2001, p. 31-33). In the light of these facts, considering the linguistic, the logical-mathematical, and the kinesthetic intelligence is paramount to comprehend that students learn differently.

Gardner also deemed other types of intelligences. The visual-spatial intelligence is used to perceive the visual-spatial world. The interpersonal intelligence is associated with

the ability to sense others' feelings or moods. Afterwards, the intrapersonal intelligence is related to how one can examine and understand oneself. The naturalistic intelligence involves the ability to perceive and enjoy the nature. Finally, the musical intelligence requires sensitivity to rhythm, melodies and musical notes (Schaffer, 2001, p. 31-33). The latter kind of intelligence along with the linguistic is relevant to account for how useful songs are to teach pronunciation, as students practice their linguistic intelligence by using the musical. Overall, teachers should consider this theory so that students can have access to equal opportunities to learn the material presented in the classroom through distinct activities. To sum up, Garner proposed eight kinds of intelligences for teachers to deal with the intricacies of the teaching/ learning process.

### 2.5 The role of music in EFL

Music is useful in EFL teaching because it offers benefits not only for students' cognition development purposes but also for a multicultural class. Abbott (2011) pointed out that "because song lyrics are often highly repetitive, their use may help automate L2 skills by exposing learners to forms, syntax, lexical items, segmental, and supra-segmental [features] (p. 10). For example, songs are suitable means to foster the teaching of pronunciation, as the lyrics have the learners identifying and repeating linguistic patterns for the purpose of internalizing them more smoothly. The same author also sustained that "music activities have the power to excite, move, and soothe learners in the language classroom" (p. 10). This situation occurs inasmuch as music is intertwined with culture. Actually, cultures present musical traditions that could be used to enrich a multicultural classroom and create cultural awareness. Hence, having songs in the EFL classroom can be helpful to enhance the learning experience and shape students' tolerance in a multicultural class.

### 3. Data Analysis

The next tables depict the main results of the research conducted to suggest deductive song-based activities to reinforce the students' pronunciation in public high schools. The data were gathered by administering a questionnaire to seven EFL teachers from different high schools in Pérez Zeledón, Costa Rica. The aim of such instrument was to carry out a needs analysis so that the authors of this paper could determine whether or not the teachers of English in the region might implement song-based activities to teach such an important micro-skill in the EFL classroom.

■ Table 3.1. Linguistic skills that teachers emphasize when teaching pronunciation

Linguistic skill	% of Use
Speaking	I. 100%
Listening	II. 71%
Reading	III. 14%
Writing	IV. 0%

*Note:* The information in this table was taken from the Instrument 1: Questionnaire for EFL Teachers, which was administered in November, 2012.

According to the information in Table 3.1., the linguistic skill that EFL teachers emphasize the most when teaching pronunciation is speaking followed by listening. This fact reveals that such professionals possess sufficient knowledge on applied linguistics to address the students' needs with respect to the learning process of this micro-skill. Following the previous assumption, these educators must know that, in order to enhance the students' pronunciation, listening and speaking activities require a great deal of drilling exercises. This statement suggests that students can repeat and be exposed to specific features of the foreign language like the target phonemes and allophones. In this sense, songs can be useful to teach this micro-skill, for learners can hear and identify the previous language hallmarks in any stanza of the song. The use of songs should, thereby, assist EFL teachers when working on reinforcing students' pronunciation because these teaching resources contain enough and repetitive input for learners to internalize certain linguistic features successfully.

■ Table 3.2. Activities that teachers use to enhance students' pronunciation.

Teaching Activities	% of Use
Phonetic transcription	71%
Games	V. 57%
Listening to recordings	VI. 57%
Role-playing	VII. 57%
Songs	VIII. 57%
Discrimination of sound in short texts	IX. 42%
Tongue twisters	X. 42%
Reading aloud	XI. 29%
Sound drilling	XII. 29%

*Note:* The information in this table was taken from the Instrument 1: Questionnaire for EFL Teachers, which was administered in November, 2012.

Table 3.2. shows that 71% of the teachers of English use phonetic transcription, which is a deductive activity to deal with pronunciation. This statistical datum is paramount for the purpose of this research since it supports the authors' intention to employ a deductive approach when teaching this micro-skill through song-based activities. In the same way, when teachers were asked about the approach that they adopt to teach pronunciation, 50% of them deemed the deductive one as their choice. Grounded on this fact, deductive activities can fulfill the EFL professionals' expectations in regard to the teaching of pronunciation, for teachers prefer to handle this linguistic micro-skill explicitly. Another remarkable aspect stipulated in figure 3.2. is that, in 57% of the cases, EFL educators ascertained that they make use of songs to teach pronunciation, so they can take advantage of this proposal. Based on these findings, EFL instructors need to teach pronunciation deductively through songs in which learners discriminate phonetic symbols in order to put them into practice when speaking.

■ Table 3.3. Reasons to teach pronunciation through music

Reasons	% of Teacher's Support
Authentic material	XIII. 85%
Music appealingness	XIV. 57%

*Note:* The information in this table was taken from the Instrument 1: Questionnaire for EFL Teachers, which was administered in November, 2012.

All of the teachers who filled out the questionnaire responded that they recommend songs to teach pronunciation. The reasons behind their support are displayed in table 3.3. On one hand, 85% percent of these professionals stated that songs are authentic materials. As a result, such resources are meaningful for students, as the lyrics normally portray the language that native speakers of the target culture use for different purposes. These materials are not accommodated for students to learn the language. Nonetheless, their usefulness lies not only in the fact that learners are more prone to acquiring native-like features in aspects like pronunciation but also in that they become more tolerant towards the cultural messages conveyed through music. On the other hand, 57% of the teachers sustained that they advise the use of songs because students like them and enjoy them. The appealingness of music makes songs suitable tools to aid students when learning the pronunciation micro-skill in an engaging manner. In short, teachers believe that songs are an appealing and meaningful way to teach pronunciation; therefore, it is necessary to provide them with activities to teach and learn pronunciation with more efficiency.

#### 4. Song-based activities to enhance EFL learners' pronunciation

Pronunciation should be taught in order to make EFL learners aware of the differences between the spelling and pronunciation of sounds in English. Language instructors ought to implement activities that develop learners' ability to identify specific speech sounds as well as articulate and utter them. These activities should consider students' learning styles, multiple intelligences, and interests. The authors of this proposal used the auditory learning style, the musical intelligence, and the students' interest in music as bases to design activities to teach pronunciation. These song-based activities offer teachers a tool to enhance their students' pronunciation and speaking skills by using authentic material (songs). The activities in appendix 1 were designed taken into account the next cognitive targets from the English syllabus of the Costa Rican Ministry of Public Education:

- Good and services (7<sup>th</sup> grade)
- Description of people's physical appearance (8<sup>th</sup> grade)
- Natural resources and the promotion of conservation (9<sup>th</sup> grade)
- Common illnesses and new diseases and epidemics (10<sup>th</sup> grade)
- Morals and values (11<sup>th</sup> grade)

Conversely, the Communicative Approach was used as a guide to design these activities. Each activity includes three exercises with their corresponding instructions. Every exercise can be described as follows:

- Pre-listening: Pronunciation capsule

This section includes a brief explanation of the features of the sound addressed in the activity. Also, it contains figures that illustrate the lip position and place of articulation of the sound.

- While-listening: Pronunciation activity

In this part, the students listen to the lyrics of a song. Each activity has a different task; however, all activities require the learners to discriminate and identify specific English sounds.

- Post-listening: Speaking activity

This part introduces the students to speaking skill activities so that the pupils can practice the pronunciation of the sounds emphasized in that song.

## 5. Conclusions

Pronunciation is a key element for enhancing the speaking ability. EFL learners who want to reach effective communication have to pursue clear, comprehensible pronunciation. Through understanding the sound system of English and developing self-awareness of the differences between the spelling and pronunciation of letters in English, pupils are able to improve their accent. As a matter of fact, this research shows that most teachers of English support the explicit teaching of pronunciation by using the IPA phonetic symbols to account for the previously mentioned situation. On the other hand, it is the language teacher's responsibility to provide learners with opportunities and activities that help them to overcome the habits of their native language. Grounded on such tenet, this proposal aims at providing teachers with songs in which students are presented with the pronunciation features of the target language. In this way, students can practice this micro-skill through authentic and appealing didactic resources. One limitation of this proposal is that the activities were designed to work with the Costa Rican Ministry of Public Education English syllabus for III cycle and diversified education in academic high schools. Nonetheless, the authors hope that teachers from different institutions and modalities can use these song-based activities as bases to create more exercises according to their students' needs with respect to the pronunciation micro-skill.

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#### **About the Authors**

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**Appendix 1: Song-based Activities**

Seventh grade:

CONLAUNA: M.A. Yalile Jiménez, M.A. Sandra Palacios, and Bach. Kevin Brand

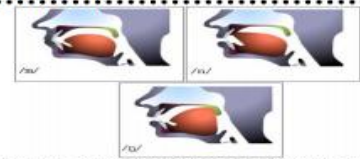
## Unit 9 > Goods and Services

**Pre-listening**

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Analyze the following information with your classmates and teacher.

**Did you know?**

- ↳ The sounds /m/, /n/, and /ŋ/ are nasal sounds.
- ↳ /m/ is pronounced in words like seem, mysterious, and money.
- ↳ /n/ is pronounced in words like wonder, wanna, and not.
- ↳ /ŋ/ is pronounced in words like paying, ching, and sing.



**While-listening**

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Listen to the song "Price Tag" by B.O.B. Then, identify which underlined sounds are pronounced with /m/, /n/ and /ŋ/ by writing the specific sound in the dashes provided.

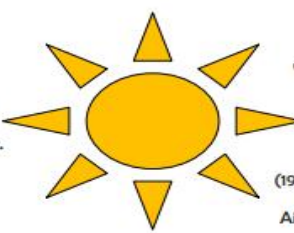
[Verse 1: Jessie J]

(1) Seems like everybody's got a price,  
I (2) wonder how they sleep at (3) night.  
When the sale (4) comes first,  
And the truth comes (5) second,  
Just stop, for a (6-7) minute and  
(8) Smile

Why is everybody so serious!  
(9) Acting so (10) suer (11) mysterious  
Got your shades on your eyes  
And your heels so high  
That you can't (12) even have a good time.

[Pre-Chorus:]  
Everybody look to their left (yeah)  
Everybody look to their right (ha)  
(13) Can you feel that (yeah)  
We're (14) paying with love tonight...

[Chorus:]  
It's (15) not about the money, money, money  
We (16) don't need your (17) money, money, money



We just (18) wanna make the world dance,  
Forget about the Price Tag


(19) Ain't about the (ha) Cha-China Cha-Ching.  
Ain't about the (yeah) (20) Ba-Bling Ba-Bling  
Wanna make the world dance,  
Forget about the Price Tag.

[Verse 2: Jessie J]


We need to take it back (21) in time,  
When music made us all (22) UNITE!  
And it (23) wasn't low blows and video Hoes,  
Am I the (24) only (25) one (26) gettin... tired?

Why is everybody so obsessed?  
Money can't buy us (27) happiness  
Can we all slow (28) down and (29) enjoy right (30) now  
(31) Guarantee we'll be (32) feelin  
All right.

[Pre-Chorus:]  
Everybody look to their left (yeah)  
Everybody look to their right (ha)



GOODS AND SERVICES



Seventh grade (continued):

CONLAUNA: M.A. Yalile Jiménez, M.A. Sandra Palacios, and Bach. Kevin Brand

Can you feel that (yeah)  
We're paying with love (33) tonight...

[Chorus]

It's not about the money, money, money  
We don't need your money, money, money  
We just wanna make the world dance,  
Forget about the Price Tag

Ain't about the (ha) (34) Cha-Ching Cha-Ching.

Ain't about the (yeah) Ba-Bling Ba-Bling  
Wanna make the world dance,  
Forget about the Price Tag.

[Verse 3: B.o.B]

Yeah yeah  
Well, keep the price tag  
And take the cash back  
Just give me six (35) strings and a half step  
And you (36) can keep the cars  
Leave (37) me the garage  
And all I...  
Yes all I need are keys and guitars  
And guess what, in 30 (38) seconds (39) I'm leaving to (40) Mars  
Yes we (41) leaving across these  
(42) undefeatable odds  
It's like this (43) man, you can't put a price  
(44) on life

We do this for the love so we fight and sacrifice (45) every night  
So we ain't (46) gon' (47) stumble and fall  
(48) never  
(49) Waiting to see, a (50) sign of defeat uh uh  
So we gon keep everyone (51) moving there feet  
So (52) bring back the beat (53) and everyone will (54) sing  
It's (55) not about...

[Chorus]

It's not about the (56) money, money, money  
We don't need your money, money, money  
We just wanna make the world dance,  
Forget about the Price Tag

Ain't about the (ha) Cha-Ching Cha-Ching.

Ain't about the (yeah) Ba-Bling Ba-Bling  
Wanna make the world dance,  
Forget about the Price Tag.

It's not about the money, money, money  
We don't (57) need your money, money, money  
We just wanna make the world dance,  
Forget about the Price Tag  
Ain't about the (ha) Cha-Ching Cha-Ching.  
Ain't about the (yeah) Ba-Bling Ba-Bling  
Wanna make the world (58) dance,  
Forget about the Price Tag.

[Outro: Jessie J]

Yeah yeah  
Oo-oooh  
Forget about the price tag

**Post-listening**

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Comment on the next phrase "Seems like everybody's got a price." Share your insights with your teacher and classmates.





Eighth grade:

CONLAUNA: M.A. Valile Jiménez, M.A. Sandra Palacios, and Bach. Kevin Brand

## Unit 2 / Description of People's Physical Appearance

### Pre-listening

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Analyze the following information with your classmates and teacher.

#### Did you know?

- ↪ The vowel sounds in eyes and make are diphthongs.
- ↪ Eyes, shining, and I are pronounced with /aɪ/. The regular spelling patters are *i* and *y*.
- ↪ Make, day, and face are pronounced with /eɪ/. Your lips should be spread and unrounded.



### While-listening

**Instructions:** Listen to the song "Just the Way You Are" by Bruno Mars. Match the numbers with the diphthongs that you hear in the song by writing the corresponding number in the parenthesis.

<p>Oh her (1) <u>e</u>yes, her eyes (2) <u>M</u>ake the stars look (3) <u>l</u>ike they're not (4) <u>sh</u>ining Her hair, her hair Falls perfectly without her (5) <u>tr</u>ying She's so beautiful And I tell her every (6) <u>d</u>ay</p> <p>Yeah (7) <u>I</u> know, I know When I compliment her She won't believe me And its so, it's so Sad to think she don't see what I see</p> <p>But every (8) <u>t</u>ime she asks me do I look okay I (9) <u>s</u>ay</p> <p>When I see your (10) <u>f</u>ace There's not a thing that I would change Cause you're amazing Just the way you are And when you (11) <u>s</u>mile, The whole world stops and stares for a while Cause girl you're amazing Just the way you are</p> <p>Her (12) <u>n</u>ails, her nails I could kiss them all day if she'd let me Her laugh, her laugh She (13) <u>h</u>ates but I think it's so sexy</p> <p>She's so beautiful And I tell her every day Oh you know, you know, you know</p>	<p>I'd never ask you to (14) <u>ch</u>ange If perfect is what you're searching for Then just (15) <u>st</u>ay the (16) <u>s</u>ame</p> <p>So don't even bother asking If you look (17) <u>o</u>kay You know I say</p> <p>When I see your face There's not a thing that I would change Cause you're (18) <u>a</u>mazing Just the way you are And when you smile, The whole world stops and stares for a (19) <u>w</u>hile Cause girl you're amazing Just the way you are</p> <p>The (20) <u>w</u>ay you are The way you are Girl you're amazing Just the way you are</p> <p>When I see your face There's not a thing that I would change Cause you're amazing Just the way you are And when you smile, The whole world stops and (21) <u>st</u>ares for a while Cause girl you're amazing Just the way you are</p>	
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/aɪ/ ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

/eɪ/ ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

### Post-listening

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Select five of the words from the song to describe one of your family members. You can also use the phrases below to form the sentences.

S/he has...	-	S/he is...
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Ninth

CONLAUNA: M.A. Valile Jiménez, M.A. Sandra Palacios, and Bach. Kevin Brand

## Unit 9 Natural Resources and the Promotions of Conservation

### Pre-listening

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Analyze the following information with your classmates and teacher.

#### Did you know?

- ↪ With /b/, the vocal cords vibrate as in beat, butterfly, and somebody.
- ↪ /p/ is voiceless and aspirated at the beginning of words.
- ↪ Words that contain the /p/ sound are power, pebble, and simple.



### While-listening

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Listen to the song "Make a Wave" by Demi Lovato. Then, complete the transcription with the missing sound phonetic symbols. The sound could either be /b/ or /p/.

They say the /'\_\_it/ of a /'\_\_ʌrəflaɪz/ wings,  
 Can set off a storm the world away  
 What if they're right and the smallest of things  
 Could /'\_\_aʊə/ the strongest hurricane?  
 What if it all /'\_\_ɪ'gɪnz/ inside?  
 We hold the key that turns the tide  
 [Chorus:]  
 Just a /'\_\_ɛbl/ in the water (ohh)  
 Can set the sea in motion (ohh)  
 A /'sɪm\_\_l/ act of kindness (ohh)  
 Can stir the widest ocean  
 If we show a little love (a little love)  
 Heaven knows what we could change (oh yeah)  
 So throw a /'\_\_ɛbl/ in the water (oh yeah)  
 make a wave, make a wave  
 Make a wave, make a wave  
  
 The single choice to take a stand  
 reach out your hand to someone in need (help  
 /'sʌm\_\_ʌdi/)  
 Don't fool yourself and say you can't  
 You never know what can grow from just one seed  
 (yeah)  
 So come with me and seize the day  
 This world may never be the same

[Chorus:]  
 Just a /'\_\_ɛbl/ in the water,  
 (Just a /'pɛ\_\_l/ in the water)  
 Can set the sea in motion,  
 (Can set the sea in motion)  
 A /'sɪm\_\_l/ act of kindness (ohh)  
 Can stir the widest ocean  
 (Stir the widest ocean)  
 If we show a little love,  
 (If we show a little love)  
 Heaven knows what we could change,  
 (Heaven knows what we can change)  
 So throw a /'\_\_ɛbl/ in the water,  
 (throw a /'\_\_ɛbl/ in the water)  
 Make a wave, make a wave  
 (Make a wave, make a wave)  
 Make a wave, make a wave (Yeah, yeah)  
 (Make a wave, make a wave)  
 Make a wave, make a wave  
 (Show a little love and make a wave, seize with me)  
 Heaven knows what we could change (Oh, oh)  
 So let's show a little love  
 You never know we could change  
 So throw a /'pɛ\_\_l/ in the water  
 Make a wave, make a wave  
 Oh, Oh, Oh, Oh...

### Post-listening

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Which natural elements are mentioned in the song? Refer to the phrase "Just a pebble in the water can set the sea in motion."



NATURAL RESOURCES AND THE PROMOTION OF CONSERVATION



Tenth grade:

CONLAUNA: M.A. Yalile Jiménez, M.A. Sandra Palacios, and Bach. Kevin Brand

# Unit 9

## Common Illnesses, New Diseases and Epidemics

### Pre-listening

INSTRUCTIONS: Analyze the following information with your classmates and teacher.

#### Did you know?

- ☞ Pee, needle, and meat are pronounced with /i/. You produce the vowel as if you were smiling.
- ☞ It, stick, and in are pronounced with /ɪ/. You relax your lips a little to make the sound.



### While-listening

INSTRUCTIONS: Listen to the song "Why does it hurt when I pee?" by Frank Zappa. Then, identify which underlined sounds are represented with /i/ and /ɪ/ by classifying them into the chart below.

Why does it hurt when I pee?  
 Why does it hurt when I pee?  
 I don't want no doctor  
 To stick no needle in me  
 Why does it hurt when I pee?  
 I got it from the toilet seat  
 I got it from the toilet seat  
 It jumped right up  
 N grabbed my meat  
 Got it from the toilet seat  
 My balls feel like a pair of maracas



My balls feel like a pair of maracas  
 Oh God I probably got the  
 Gon-o-ka-ka-khackus!  
 My balls feel like a pair of maracas  
 Ai-ee-ai-ee-ahhhh!  
 Why does it  
 Why does it  
 Why does it  
 Why does it hurt...when i  
 Pee?

/i/	/ɪ/

### Post-listening

INSTRUCTIONS: What would you advise the man in the song to treat his problem? Answer this question by using the phrases below. Tell your teacher and classmates about your suggestions.

He needs to... - You should visit... - You had better see... - I think ...



Eleventh grade:

CONLAUNA: M.A. Yalile Jiménez, M.A. Sandra Palacios, and Bach. Kevin Brand

## Unit 7 MORALS AND VALUES

### Pre-listening

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Analyze the following information with your classmates and teacher.

#### Did you know?

- ↳ When second, and men are pronounced with /e/. Your lips should be slightly spread and unrounded.
- ↳ Ass, thank, and act are pronounced with /æ/. Your lips are more spread and your jaw open wider than for /e/.



### While-listening

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Listen to the song "Who I am Today" by Jason Mraz. Then, identify which underlined sounds are represented with /e/ and /æ/ by circling the option that best fits the sound you hear in the song.

I thank (/e/ or/æ/) the boy who kicked my ass  
 when (/e/ or/æ/) I was seventeen (/e/ or/æ/)  
 I thank the ones who chose to laugh and those who  
acted (/e/ or/æ/) mean  
 I thank the bullies for their scraps (/e/ or/æ/) and  
accidents (/e/ or/æ/) and then some  
 They shaped my life; they made me like who I've  
 become  
 I thank the girls who gave their hand (/e/ or/æ/) and  
 showed me how to dance (/e/ or/æ/)  
 I thank the ones who laughed and passed (/e/ or/æ/)  
 who never (/e/ or/æ/) gave a second (/e/ or/æ/) chance  
 (/e/ or/æ/)  
 I learned that (/e/ or/æ/) it's okay for some to go and  
 some to stay  
 They shaped my life; they made me love who I am  
 today  
 And I, I know that life is good  
 I thank the captains (/e/ or/æ/) of the boats who brave  
 the sea  
 I thank the farmers for the sowing of the seeds  
 I thank the men (/e/ or/æ/) who paved the road I'm  
traveling (/e/ or/æ/) on  
 They shaped my life, they took me down the  
paths (/e/ or/æ/) I've gone  
 They shaped my life, they took me down the

paths I've gone  
 I thank the volunteers for giving up their time for free  
 I thank the engineers; (/e/ or/æ/) all those who keep  
 our water clean  
 I thank the janitors (/e/ or/æ/) for all their (/e/ or/æ/)  
 years behind the scenes  
 They shaped my life they taught me  
generosity (/e/ or/æ/)  
 They shaped my life they let (/e/ or/æ/) me see who I  
 could be  
 So, I, I know that life is good  
 I thank the galaxy (/e/ or/æ/) for how it made up  
gravity (/e/ or/æ/)  
 I thank the sky above for hosting clouds to float on top  
 of me  
 They gave me air to breathe and give me rain and (/e/  
 or/æ/) give me snow  
 They shaped my life, they gave me so much room to  
 grow  
 I thank the frogs, and daddy (/e/ or/æ/) long legs (/e/  
 or/æ/) and the bees  
 I thank the micro organisms under every tree  
 I thank the fertile soil for the life behind the food I eat  
 They shaped my life they gave me possibility



Eleventh grade (continued):

CONLAUNA: M.A. Yalile Jiménez, M.A. Sandra Palacios, and Bach. Kevin Brand

And I, I know, that life is good...

yes I, I know....

Yes (/ɛ/ or/æ/) I. Yes I....

I thank the boys who kicked my ass (/ɛ/ or/æ/) when I was 17

I thank the ones who laughed (/ɛ/ or/æ/) and those who acted mean

I thank the bullies for all the names they called along the way

They shaped my life; they made me love who I am today

They shaped my life; they made me love who I am today

You shaped my life. You make me love who I am today.



**Post-listening**

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Listen to the song again. Identify the main values in the song. Share your opinion with the class.



## Appendix 2: Instrument

Questionnaire for EFL teachers:

I Congreso de Lingüística Aplicada de la Universidad Nacional

Researchers: M.A. Yalile Jiménez, M.A. Sandra Palacios, and Bach. Kevin A. Brand.

Research Topic: Song-based Activities to Enhance EFL Learners' Pronunciation

Instrument: Questionnaire for EFL teachers

Date of Administration: \_\_\_\_\_

**Objective:** This questionnaire is aimed at gathering data about the perception of Costa Rican EFL teachers at public high schools regarding the use of song-based activities to enhance their students' pronunciation. The instrument requires that you answer the following questions thoroughly. The answers provided will be employed in the analysis of the main factors to consider when designing activities to teach pronunciation. The information provided will be confidential and used with academic purposes only.

### MULTIPLE CHOICE

**PART I:** Place a check mark on the box that answers the next questions according to your experience as an EFL teacher in public high schools. Select only ONE response per question.

1. What kind of modality do you teach?

- Academic English       English for conversation       Any other: \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is the main difficulty that you have faced when teaching your classes?

- Time to develop the class                       Time to prepare the lesson  
 Lack of varied activities and techniques       Lack of training  
 Students' poor motivation towards the course       Students' discipline problems in the class

3. Do you include activities for your students to practice pronunciation?

- Yes                       No

*If your answer were "No," skip question 4.*

4. What kind of approach do you use to teach pronunciation?

- Inductive                       Deductive

Questionnaire for EFL teachers (continued):

**PART II:** Place a check mark on the box(es) that answer(s) the next questions according to your beliefs regarding pronunciation teaching. You can choose ONE or SEVERAL responses in each question.

5. What linguistic skill(s) do you prefer to emphasize when using activities to teach pronunciation?
- |                                    |                                   |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reading   | <input type="checkbox"/> Writing  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Listening | <input type="checkbox"/> Speaking |
6. What kinds of activities do you use to enhance your students' pronunciation?
- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Games                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Role-playing                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Phonetic transcription                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Repetition of long stories              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reading aloud                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Sound drilling                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Songs                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Discrimination of sounds in short texts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tongue twisters                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Listening to the sounds in recordings   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Making up pieces of writing with the sounds | <input type="checkbox"/> Other activities: _____                 |

**PRODUCTION**

Write a concise response to each of the following questions.

7. Do you think that teaching pronunciation is important? Why?
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
8. Do you recommend the use of songs to teach pronunciation? Why?
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## Techniques for the Translation of Costa Rican Folkloric Literature Addressed to English-speaking Readers

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**Resumen:** Una gran parte de la literatura de folclor costarricense todavía no se ha traducido al inglés, dejando a los lectores nativos de inglés sin conocer las características culturales y de idiosincrasia costarricense. La traducción de los cuentos populares ticos al inglés es un reto sobrecogedor pues es importante preservar todas las expresiones coloquiales y la representación correcta de las tradiciones, y esto fuerza al traductor a convertirse en un investigador de su propia cultura tan compleja. El proceso traductorio requiere un conocimiento vasto del matiz lingüístico y semántico que caracteriza a los cuentos populares ticos. Los traductores deben haber vivido, atestiguado o por lo menos entendido en su cabalidad las situaciones en las que se basan estos cuentos, ya sea por medio de entrevistas o investigaciones. Además, otra deber es la identificación de las técnicas de traducción específicas que aseguren la equivalencia óptima del espíritu del texto. La incorporación de elementos como si la intención del texto mera es elogiar la riqueza folclórica costarricense o dejar alguna moraleja de cómo son tradicionalmente los costarricenses tradicionalmente es también obligatoria. Por lo tanto, el objetivo de esta propuesta es establecer las técnicas de traducción más apropiadas para la traducción al inglés de cuentos populares costarricenses. Estas técnicas e establecerán basándose en el análisis de las características de tres textos originales de Carmen Lyra, sus traducciones y la revisión de las herramientas de traducción aplicadas.

**Palabras Clave:** folclor costarricense, literatura costarricense, traducción inversa, traducción literaria, técnicas de traducción

**Abstract:** A significant part of Costa Rica's folkloric literature has not been translated into English yet. Consequently, numerous cultural and idiosyncratic features that are unique to Costa Ricans remain out of reach for non-Spanish speaking readers. The translation into English of popular tales inspired by the *ticos'* way is one daunting challenge. The importance of the preservation of the colloquial expressions and the proper representation of traditions forces the



translator to become a researcher of his own complex culture. The translation process requires a deep working knowledge of the linguistic and semantic nuances that characterize popular Costa Rican tales. Translators must have lived, witnessed, or at least, thoroughly understand -by means of interviews and research- the situations which these tales are based on. If the intention of the source text is to acclaim the richness of Costa Rica's folklore, or to teach a moral on how Costa Ricans traditionally are, the complete and clear incorporation of such elements in the target text is mandatory. Consequently, the identification of the specific translation techniques that assure the optimal conveyance of the spirit of the text is a must. Therefore, the objective of this proposal is to set the most appropriate translation techniques for the translation into English of popular tales representative of Costa Rica's folklore. These techniques are established based on the analysis of the characteristics of three original texts of the same author, their translations, and the examination of the translation tools applied.

**Keywords:** Costa Rican folklore, Costa Rican literature, inverse translation, literary translation, translation techniques

## 1 Introduction

Costa Rican folklore has found representation by means of daring and touching pieces of writing throughout the years. Reputable authors like Joaquín García Monge: *Cocorí*, Carlos Luis Fallas: *Mamita Yunai*, Aquileo Echeverría: *Concherías*, and Carmen Lyra transport readers to an atmosphere of simple everyday life in the countryside or old San José where mothers, priests, rascals and animals steal the show with their witty words and crazy ways. One of the best representatives of Costa Rican idiosyncrasy is María Isabel Carvajal. Best known as Carmen Lyra, she was born in San José, Costa Rica on January 15<sup>th</sup>, 1887.

Being the most important female writer from Costa Rica, María Isabel worked as a teacher, nurse, journalist, translator, and she was among the first writers to speak out against foreign fruit companies arriving to Costa Rica. She died in 1949 in Mexico where she was forced to exile due to her communist ideology and bold actions. Her literary legacy includes *En una silla de ruedas* (1918), *Bananos y hombres* (1934) and the famous *Cuentos de mi tía Panchita* (1920).

*Cuentos de mi tía Panchita* is a collection of twenty three folk tales considered classics of Costa Rica's children literature. Through the characters' actions, the author represents traditions, ideologies and the peculiarities of Costa Rica and its people. Along these tales Carmen Lyra makes constant use of Costa Rican colloquial expressions that reflect how "*campesinos*" talk. Precisely, that *campesinos*' talk is somehow confusing even for Costa Ricans. Spanish-speaking readers may face difficulty understanding idioms and popular expressions, and the pronunciation or abbreviation of many words. Therefore, the translation of such aspects requires special attention when it comes to choosing the right translation techniques to meet the cultural needs of the target readers, English-speakers.

Students of the English Teaching major from UNA, Brunca Region Branch translated into English three different short stories written by Costa Rican folklore author

Carmen Lyra. The tales chosen are: *Domingo Siete*, *Por qué tío Conejo tiene las orejas tan largas*, and *Tío Conejo y Tío Coyote*. Once the translation process was finished, Professors M.A. Gretel Torres and M.A. Noelia Jiménez proofread and edited the translations. The purpose of doing so is to identify what translation tools the students used, what techniques are the most suitable when working on folkloric pieces of writing in Spanish translated into English, and how effective they are in the target text.

Therefore, the research questions this paper aims to answer are:

1. What translation tools may be used by students when translating Costa Rican folklore literature from Spanish to English?
2. What translation tools are actually used by students when translating Costa Rican folklore literature from Spanish to English?
3. How effective are the translation tools used in the target texts?

The identification of such techniques or tools and their effectiveness intent to be helpful to all translators facing the challenge of inverse translation of literary works that represent a country's idiosyncrasy through vocabulary, traditions and style. Clearly, recommending these tools for this type of contexts is open to debate, and further study will improve the results. This paper is divided in two main sections. First, some basic principles of inverse and literary translation will be discussed. Then, some examples from the translation will be analyzed to show which translation techniques are helpful in literary translation.

## 2 Literary Review

Even though some people refuse to translate into their second language, and others propose that it will not be accurate, worldwide inverse translation is needed every day in numerous daily situations. And Costa Rica having so many foreigners living and visiting the country, translators could take advantage of that and start translating the local literature to show them the country's culture. The translation process is pretty much the same in both directions whether from English to Spanish or from Spanish to English; it involves three stages: comprehension, desverbalization and reformulation. The difference will be the time and effort needed to get the job done (Beeby, 1948, p 47). It will also depend, using the concepts of PACTE group, on the bilingual and extra linguistic competence (p.3) the translator has; as it is known a translator cannot translate what he does not understand. Also, when translating literature translators need to understand and know both cultures to be able to express the same in a way that people from another culture/country will understand.

### 2.1 Inverse translation

When translating, in general, the basic idea is to transmit the intended message in another language in a clear and sufficiently correct way, in words of McAlister in his article in the Routledge Encyclopedia (p. 66). And as said before, to translate into a second language it is important to have a good bilingual and extralinguistic competence. The

bilingual sub-competence is the pragmatic, socio-linguistic, textual and lexical-grammatical knowledge in each language; and the extra-linguistic sub-competence is the encyclopaedic, thematic and bicultural knowledge (PACTE, 2003, p.3). Just to clarify, these are only two of the six sub-competences a translator needs to develop, according to what PACTE group has researched throughout the years. However, these two are important in inverse translation because they are used when understanding the original text (TO) and when reformulating the target text (TT). The easy part here is to understand the TO because it is in the translator's L1; and it is assumed the translator has good competence in it. Even though, it is necessary to stress that sometimes translators will be required to investigate a little about their own culture to assure an appropriate equivalence in the TT. The daunting part is using his extra linguistic competence to reformulate the TO into his L2. However, translators believe this task can be achieved.

In the first stage of comprehension in the translating process, the translator needs to be aware of the situational, verbal, and socio historical context the literary text is immersed in (Beeby, p. 52). As in translating any other text, it is always important to know who is the author of the TO, when and where was it written and who could have been the possible audience. This needs to be considered because the translator must portray the same characteristics of the writing style of the author in the TT. In the verbal context, the translator analyzes the way the text is written and will have to produce the same effect the words have in the original, into the translation. Regarding the socio-historical context, this is where all the cultural differences are found. Right here is where translation techniques are of use to accomplish the main goal: transferring the intended meaning in a clear and sufficiently correct way.

The second stage of desverbalization, which is where the translator forms the semantic representation of the TO, happens in his brain. This is the part where a lot of people have spent years trying to put in words what goes on in the translator's mind. Further, in the final stage of reformulation, the translator will write the TT taking into account everything that he already analyzed about the contexts the TO is involved in. He will find ways to reproduce the communicative situation, the purpose of the text, and the social and cultural differences.

## **2.2 Literary Translation**

One of the aspects mentioned before is that even though the comprehension of the TO in our L1 is supposed to be the easy part, one must consider that literature is immersed in the ideology, poetics and universe of discourse of a language. Some of the things that may differ are grammar rules and conventions, and words or expressions that are characterized by time use or that are inextricably bound up with culture (Lefevere, 1992, p. 16).

Lefevere proposes some basic principles translators need to have in mind and apply when translating literary texts. The first characteristic in literary texts is the illocutionary power hidden in words or phrases, that is to say, the effect the author looks for words to have. Translators need to be aware of this to not render literal equivalences in the TT and lose the effect. In the same way, translators should not translate words or sentences alone;

they must translate “chunks” of text (p. 17) to always have in mind the context. Here, the relation between these principles and the context analysis Beeby proposes. When dealing with differences of cultural contexts, translators need to analyze the relation between the TO and the audience of the TT and decide if they want to bring the first to meet the second (foreignization) or the second to the first (domestication). By foreignizing the text, the translator leaves all the foreign aspects of the L1 culture in the TT to show those cultural aspects to culture in L2. By domesticating the text, all those foreign characteristics of the TO are omitted in the TT and explained or referred in a different manner using L2 referents, and in this way the culture of L1 is not portrayed. Thus, this paper proposes leaving all those foreign aspects in the TT to show the Ticos’ idiosyncrasy to the L2 culture. Since all of them are intrinsically bound up to Costa Rican culture, amplification and equivalence techniques are strongly proposed to be used in the translation of Costa Rican folk tales into English.

### 2.3 Translation Techniques

Translation techniques are needed when the experience, phrase, word, or situation described is accepted in the OT culture, but there is not exact equivalence, translation or is just not accepted in the same way in the TT culture. These differences, as said before, are related to ideology, poetics, universe of discourse and language (Lefevere, p.87). The genre used for this paper, short stories, gives some space to apply these tools since translators are not limited by rhyme and rhythm as it would happen in a poem. Translators can use footnotes, glossaries, and explanations in the body of the text or even images to produce the TT.

The first technique that needs to be used, if explained in preferred order of use, is **equivalence**. Equivalence transfers the same situation through different stylistics and structural resources; it goes beyond words and emphasizes in the meaning required in the situation. For example: if we analyze some phrases in different languages for the same situation: greetings: *hola* (Sp), *hello* (En), *bounjour* (Fr), *bongiorno* (It). Other example can be the expression people say to other when they sneeze: ¡*Salud!* (Sp), *God bless you!* (En), *À tes souhaits!* (Fr), *Salute!* (It). And just for the sake of another example if *God bless you* is the religious phrase people use to wish wellness to other, in Spanish someone would say *Dios le bendiga*, in French *Que Dieu vous bénisse*, and in Italian *Dio te benetica*.

However, when a translator can’t find the right equivalence, the second technique to use is **amplification** or expansion, which is applied when the TT needs to use more words than the TO to re-express the idea or reinforce the sense because its correspondence cannot be expressed as concisely (Deslile). Amplification is also used to cover syntactic or lexical gaps (Albir, Molina, 2002, p. 4). For example from Spanish to English *vivificante* will be better expressed as *live-giving*. In here footnotes, translators’ notes or explanations in the body of the text are of use.

The third technique is **adaptation**, in simple words is to “express the message using a different situation” (Albir, Molina, 2002, p. 4). This procedure is more related to the

content than to the expression; for example, one well known case analyzed by Nida is the Bible phrase *blanco como la nieve*; if someone is translating to a culture that has no idea of what snow is, translators will need to find something that will relate to the color *white* and the use that as the reference to the expression *as white as...*. Adapting helps translators avoiding a cultural *calque* which can lead to confusion and loss of some extra linguistic elements. Another example proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet is an English father who kisses his daughter on the mouth after a long trip, *he kissed his daughter on the mouth*, if the target culture will think this is not appropriate, a suggested translation can be *abrazó tiernamente a su hija* (Vazquez, 1979, p325). In this way we can avoid conflicts between different cultures.

A fourth technique is to compensate (**compensation**) for those features that are implicit in the TO and need to be explicit in the TT for better understanding. The two basis of compensation are, first the difficulty to find the right, accurate and natural equivalence, and the loss of content or stylistic effects (Vasquez, p. 374). For example, *the praise he gets in the remembrances of sentimentalist* can be translated as *los elogios nostálgicos que le dedican los sentimentalistas* (374). The verb *get* in English is a very common one with a lot of connotations, so in Spanish is better translated, according to the situation and style of the TO, as *dedican*. And then *remembrances* as *nostálgicos*, is by the effect implicit in the sentence in the TO that needs to be explicit in the TT. By compensating all those elements, the TT will be as faithful to the original as possible and will express the best it can the culture of the TO.

The final technique to use is **omission**. Omission is applied when translators need to be economic or as natural as possible in the TT. The concept of natural is not an easy one, but it can be explained as when in the TT there are no foreign elements to the culture and to the language; as people commonly say “this translation does or does not sound natural in X language.” In this way, we need to know what the “preferences” of each language are. For example, English uses more verbs than Spanish, and Spanish uses more nouns than verbs; this can be explained in how English uses gerunds and infinitives to create nouns and present and past participles to create adjectives.

### 3. Body

#### 3.1 Description of the participants

The students that translated the three short tales written by Camen Lyra were the students (ten in total) from the course Translation Workshop: Translation for Specific Purposes, taken along the second semester of 2012. They were students in third and fourth level of the English Teaching Major at UNA, Brunca Region Branch. They had already taken the course Translation Workshop: Introduction to Translation where the basic principles of translation are studied and applied. Their ages ranged from twenty one to twenty five years old, and they were eight women and two men. They translated the tales, and gave an analysis of examples of the translation techniques they used where they had to explain the reasons why they chose those specific techniques.

### 3.2 Description of the process

Students translated the tales in two groups of three and one group of four participants. The assignment was the second quiz of the course Translation Workshop: Translation for Specific Purposes, based merely on the translation of literature field. They were given five days to develop the translation process and the analysis. Students were allowed to use printed and online dictionaries, glossaries, forums and any other internet-based source of information, as well as interviews with translators, English professors and other potential informants. The final papers were e-mailed to the professor to be proofread. Students were given a grade on their translations and analysis by the professor of the course. Next, Professors Noelia Jiménez and Grettel Torres proceeded to examine the translations given, the techniques used, and their effect on the target text. The students involved were fully aware of the fact that their work would be analyzed and presented by the authors of this paper as part of a proposal in CONLA-UNA 2013.

### 3.3 Translation techniques that may be used in the translation of folklore short tales from Spanish to English

Based on their formal studies in translation, their own experience working on the translation of folklore pieces of writing and a literature review, the authors of this paper can say that these techniques offer the translator the opportunity to bring the source text and the target reader closer. Therefore, regarding the first research question: *What translation tools may be used by students when translating Costa Rican folklore literature from Spanish to English?*, the authors of this paper consider that the translation techniques that seem to be most suitable for the translation of folklore literature in Spanish into English are equivalence, amplification, adaptation, compensation, and omission. As mentioned in the literature review section, *equivalence* is a translation technique that transfers the message of the source text by means of different stylistics and structural resources. *Amplification* makes use of extra information to cover existing syntactic, lexical and cultural gaps between languages. *Adaptation*, which has to do more with content than with mere expressions, allows translator to use different situations to transmit the spirit of the author's ideas. On the other hand, *compensation* helps translator to make up for those features that are implicit in the TO but required to be explicit in the TT. And last but not least, *omission* authorizes the translator focus his attention on the aspects that actually need to be covered in the translation, leave out issues that result redundant or unnatural to the target text readers.

### 3.4 Translation techniques used by the students in the translation of folklore short tales from Spanish to English

About the second and third research question: *What translation tools are actually used by students when translating Costa Rican folklore literature from Spanish to English?*, and *How effective are the translation tools used in the target texts?*, the authors of this proposal state that based on the translation and analysis made by the students, amplification and equivalence turned out to be the most frequently used techniques, and that their contribution to the understanding of the target texts by the readers seems to be

highly effective. Examples of the translations and analysis made by the students, and the observations made by the authors of the paper follow:

### 3.4.1 Examples of amplification and equivalence

#### 3.4.1.1 Technique: Amplification

##### 3.4.1.1.1 Tale: *Domingo Siete*

##### Example #1:

Source text: Les contó su aventura y mandó a su esposa que fuera adonde el compadre rico y le pidiese un cuartillo para medir el oro que traía. Ella fue y dijo a la mujer del compadre rico, que estaba sola en casa:

--Comadrita, ¿quiere prestarme el cuartillo? Es que vamos a medir unos frijoles que cogió mi marido.

Suggested translation: He told them about his adventure and sent his wife to the rich *compadre* to ask him for a *cuartillo* (a measure unit to weigh grains, beans and others used long time ago in Costa Rica) to measure the gold he had brought. She went out and told the rich *compadre's* wife, who was alone:

---Comadrita, can I borrow your *cuartillo*? I need to weigh some beans that my husband harvested.

Analysis and observation: The translators used amplification to provide some background information about the object as a unit of measure used in old times so that the word “*cuartillo*” could be kept in Spanish in the target text. In this way, readers know the name of the object in proper Spanish and its definition in English. The purpose of doing so is to offer the English-speaking reader a bit of Costa Rican culture through the word *cuartillo* and a short definition to give an idea about the concept that might work as a basis for further research if desired by the target readers.

##### Example #2

Source text: Comadrita

Suggested translation: *Comadrita*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The godmother of child who is also a very close friend of the family or the mother of the baby.

Analysis and observation: The translators used amplification by means of a foot note because they wanted to keep the essence of the word by conserving it and involving the reader in the cultural context he/she is reading. They decided to use a footnote to avoid repeating the use of amplification in the body of the text as it happened for the word

*cuartillo*. In the foot note the translators gave a simple but concise explanation of the term that clarifies the concept and functions as well as a starting point for further research.

#### 3.4.1.1.2 Tale: Tío Coyote y tío Conejo

##### Example #1

Source text: Tío Conejo respondió: --Aturúsele tío Coyote, ya entre poco acabamos.

Suggested translation: Uncle Rabbit talked back: Stuff your face (*Aturúsele*) Uncle Coyote, we are almost done!

Analysis and observation: Translator decided to apply amplification by using an idiomatic expression in English next to the word *Aturúsele* in Spanish. This gives readers a view of how *Ticos* speak compared to the way they speak. Even though there exist an equivalent in English that may replace the term in Spanish, translator decided to offer the chance for target readers to have both elements for a better understanding of the spirit of the text.

##### Example #2

Source text: Pero la viejita comenzó a encontrar los quelites de las matas de chayote zapallo comidos...

Suggested translation: One day the old lady found the *quelites* of the chayote squashes and zucchinis eaten up.



**Figure 1.** *Quelites* (shoots or stems)

Image taken for academic purposes only from:

[http://www.google.co.cr/search?um=1&hl=en&tbo=d&biw=1280&bih=666&tbm=isch&sa=1&q=quelites&oq=quelites&gs\\_l=img.3..0j0i24i9.2466.4060.0.4727.8.8.0.0.0.0.224.1001.3j4j1.8.0...0.0...1c.1.Wlq1Hk1zLEU](http://www.google.co.cr/search?um=1&hl=en&tbo=d&biw=1280&bih=666&tbm=isch&sa=1&q=quelites&oq=quelites&gs_l=img.3..0j0i24i9.2466.4060.0.4727.8.8.0.0.0.0.224.1001.3j4j1.8.0...0.0...1c.1.Wlq1Hk1zLEU)

Analysis and observation: Translators decided to offer the target reader three different elements. First, the word *quelites*, second, a picture to exemplify the term in Spanish, and third, the words for it in English. Based on this, the English-speaking readers can have a clear idea of the term *quelites*, which not only is a typical dish, but also part of



the *Tico*'s vocabulary. Once again, culture through colloquial words is emphasized in the translation.

#### 3.4.1.1.3 Tale: *Porqué tío Conejo tiene las orejas tan largas.*

Example #1

Source text: ¡Tatica Dios!

Suggested translation: *Tatica Dios!* (Costa Rican colloquial expression to call on God – “Papa God” when in distress. Costa Ricans commonly use of the suffix –tico/-tica to soften up expressions and make them sound more traditional)

Analysis and observation: Translators kept the very common expression *Tatica Dios* and supported it by explaining its use and meaning. Being *Tatica Dios* such a common and unique expression to Costa Rica, it resulted mandatory to keep it and explain it. In this way, English-speaking readers have the colloquial expression in Spanish and its explanation in English for complete understanding.

Example #2

Source text: ¡Viera que almuercillo más ñeque le tengo!

Suggested translation: Wait to see what a *ñeque* (yummy) lunch I have for you!

Analysis and observation: Translators offered the word yummy to show what *ñeque* means in English. Yummy and *ñeque* are both informal words that are used by people to talk about delicious food. For Costa Ricans *ñeque* is both informal and colloquial, and since the purpose of the translation is to show English-speaking readers how *Ticos* speak and live, keeping it is a way for them to learn about those aspects by having the reference of the meaning of that word in their own language.

#### 3.4.1.2 Technique: Equivalence

##### 3.4.1.2.1 Tale: *Domingo Siete*

Example #1

Source text: ¡Con una envidia!

Suggested translation: Green with envy!

Analysis and observation: The translators applied equivalence in this case since one idiom was used by the author of the tale. The source text uses the expression “Con una envidia” which has the commonly used equivalent in English “Green with envy”. Through this idiom in English, the target text readers understand what the characters want to express, since it has exactly the same meaning and intention than in Spanish.

Example #2

Source Text: ¡Ave Maria!

Suggested Translation: Hail Mary!

Analysis and observation: The translators applied equivalence in this case since both languages, Spanish and English, use the expression and give it exactly the same meaning. Both expressions are part of a famous catholic prayer meant for Virgin Mary, and used by people when is distress or surprise. Most readers can understand the expression regardless their religious believes.

3.4.1.2.2 Tale: *Porqué tío Conejo tiene las orejas tan largas*

Example #1

Source text: ¡Ai verá!

Suggested translation: I'll show ya!

Analysis and observation: Translators decided to use an informal expression in English to replace the informal expression *¡Ai verá!*. It can be noticed that when being informal or colloquial speakers tend to change the pronunciation of words or to shorten them up. This happens in the source text with *¡Ai verá!*, the word in Spanish *Ahí* turns into *Ai*; consequently, translators looked for an expression in English that is both, contracted and reduced. In this way the meaning and style of the source text are conveyed in the target text.

Example #2

Source text: Hasta luegoito...

Suggested translation: Tootles...

Analysis and observation: For the translation of the expression *Hasta luegoito*, translators decided to use the informal word in English Tootles. This word is a way to say goodbye in an informal, mischievous or playful manner, just in the way the character meant the *Hasta luegoito* to sound like in the original text. The use of an equivalent allows the readers to feel the tone of the story being told by the author through the characters' talk.

#### 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

As seen along this paper, translators working on pieces of Costa Rican folk literature in Spanish to be translated into English need to take several aspects into account before, during and after the translation process. First, social, cultural and cognitive contexts altogether need to be analyzed in order to choose the best tools to translate and convey the message intended by the author of the original text. Second, previous the translation process, translators are required to fully understand the source texts. All words, expressions, actions and nuances of the text are to be clarified. A great deal of research is mandatory so that the results of the translation benefit not only the target readers, but also the author of the original text since his art is being spread.

Third, identifying and applying the right translation techniques is a process that starts even before initializing the translation. It is developed during the translation and is verified after the translation. The translator is allowed to correct and improve his job while going over the so-called “final version” of the translation. Asking colleagues for advice is accepted and strongly recommended when a translation becomes a challenge due to certain elements. Fourth, comparing the translation to parallel texts (translations of similar genres) is of great use to assure a natural presentation of the message to the target readers.

Target readers and their needs become the focus of the translator when the purpose of the translation is to convey a message expressed by the author and her desire to celebrate and spread Costa Rica’s idiosyncrasy. The translation of the folk tales demands paying attention to both, the ideas of the author and the needs of the target text readers.

Fifth, based on the translations and analysis made by the students and the observations and working experience of the authors of this proposal, it can be suggested that amplification and equivalence are the most suitable tools to be used when translating Costa Rican folk tales to English. These tools give the translator the possibility to diminish the gap between the source text and the target text readers by giving them useful extra information or natural and common expressions in their own language to fully understand the texts and their spirit. Sixth, the use of these techniques is strongly recommended; however, applying them on this specific genre is open to debate and changes or improvements will always be embraced.

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## Appendices

### Translation: Why Uncle Rabbit Has Those Long Ears

Imagine! One day Rabbit got a craving for becoming taller and he talked to a black vulture for he wanted this bird to take him to the clouds where *Tatica Dios* is. (Costa Rican colloquial expression to call on God – “Papa God” when in distress. Costa Ricans commonly use of the suffix *-tico/-tica* to soften up expressions and make them sound more traditional).

Rabbit arrived at the presence of The Lord, who had good mood that day. Rabbit told The Lord that he wanted to be taller, that it was a handicap to be so small because everybody wanted to eat him, here and there.

The Lord said: “You will, but first you must bring three skins to me; the lion’s the tiger’s and the alligator’s and with the requirement of killing all of them on your own”

Rabbit did not wait for more details; he got on the black vulture without saying goodbye to the Lord and came back to the Earth. The first he did was to keep an eye on Tiger and one day that this one was taking a nap, Rabbit appeared yelling crazily: “Most Holy Trinity, Hail Mary, Full Grace, The Three Very Sweet Names!

Due to the fuss, Lion woke up and very scared he screamed: “What is wrong with you buddy? “Oh, Tiger, do not even ask! Imagine that a hurricane is just coming! For God’s sake, tie me up with these little vines because I do not want to be taken away”. And Rabbit ran from here to there, from there to here. Lion was extremely frightened.

“Do not tell me that Rabbit! Now, what am I going to do? Is not there something to tie myself as well?”

Rabbit had some very hard-wearing vines ready covered by some leaves and pretending that he did not expect that request, he said: “ Well, there are here some little vines if you want, the problem is that I may not be able to tie you because my hands are trembling”.

Tiger exclaimed: “try Rabbit, pleased try!

And Rabbit, who was very good at making knots, left poor Tiger well- tied to a tree. Then, Rabbit started stoning him. When Rabbit saw that Tiger was more dead than alive, he approached Tiger with a stick and hit him until he was dead. Then, Rabbit untied Tiger and took his skin off with a knife and left the skin under the sun to ventilate it. After that, Rabbit started thinking how he would obtain the Lion’s skin.

Rabbit knew about a mountain lion who was messing around in a ranch cattle.

He went to see the owner and told him, “hey man, can we make a deal?”

“Let’s see, what’s the matter?” he replied.

Listen! Do you want to get rid of the Lion?

The man laughed and said, “Yes, but, how are you going to do it if you are too short?”

“I’ll show ya! Promise me that after he is dead you will help me in everything I ask, and I promise that in ten days this nuisance will disappear.”

Rabbit took him to a place where there was a deep, sandy hole with funnel shape and smooth walls. If someone fell there, there was no way to get out without help. Rabbit demanded the owner to cut branches and cover the hole with them in order to give a ground covered with leaves appearance. Then, he suggested the owner to tie a fat calf on the very sore of the hole and he ran in search for the lion.

When he finally found the lion, he yelled at him, “Hey Brother Lion, I was looking for you. Wait to see what a *ñeque* (yummy) lunch I have for you! Follow me and you will see.”

Brother Lion did follow him, Rabbit drove him to the place and addressed him in a way that he had to pass over the hole. Of course, Lion stepped on the branches and rolled down into the

hole. Eight days later, he died of hunger. Rabbit ran in search of the owner in order to help him to take the lion out. Once they did it, he tore off his skin with a knife and extended it next to the tiger's skin and left it there airing.

He was missing the lizard's skin.

Rabbit knew Lizard was really partying. Thus, a moonlit night, Rabbit took his guitar and went to the riverside to sing and be at the top of his voice.

Brother Lizard emerged and asked him:

"Man, why are you so happy?"

Rabbit answered, "How could not I be happy if I am going to a party in which there are four beautiful girls!

(Rabbit took his hand to his mouth and kissed his fingertips).

"Are you pulling my leg? Where is it?"

"Mmm somewhere..." and Rabbit pretended to continue.

Brother Lizard said: "why do not you take me with you bro?"

"I do not like nuisances like you", answered Rabbit.

"Well, what can I do? Let's go, but you must be careful with the account! And be careful of not putting one's foot in it!". Brother Lizard made a thousand of vows, and they continued in their way, but Rabbit pretended to be lame so Brother Lizard proposed him to ride over his back. Thus, Rabbit did it. When they were walking in a short distance, Rabbit hit him harshly with a little stick that he had hidden it, but he did not have a good shot because Brother Lizard was dazed, so Rabbit hit him again so that Brother Lizard spent several days without seeing the sun's light.

Rabbit treated himself badly.

"Oh foolish, it's a shame, I will not have an opportunity like this

However, he did not give up since he went to look for a parrot that lived near the river, where Brother Lizard lived.

Rabbit made a deal with the parrot. He said that if she could ask him several questions in the afternoon. When Rabbit walked over there again, the parrot yelled, "Hey! Rabbit! Where are you going?"

"I'm going to the marriage of the king's daughter."

"Imagine what a great party! Let's go.

Brother Lizard heard them, and when he saw Rabbit, he became mad.

"Mmm, you are here, you bandit, now I will tell you".

Rabbit got far from Lizard and asked the parrot, "Who is that elegant youngster? I do not know him, this is the first time I see him and I do not understand why he is so angry at me?"

"Do not tell lies! Do you think that the hit that you gave me the other day was soft?"

"No, you are the liar!", said Rabbit, "This Lizard thinks that I am my brother who is very shameless with experience". Thank God he is in jail because of one of his many mischieves. You do not know the embarrassments that I have suffered because of him! All of this, due to our almost identical appearance.

Brother Lizard trusted him: "Ha! So, it was not you! Go! Excuse me. But, where are you going?"

"Well, the king's daughter is going to tie the knot and I am going to be the best man. The party will rock, it'll be a blowout! Well, Gotta go. Toodles!"

Brother Lizard wanted to go. He was at the drop of a hat.

"Man, why don't you take me?"

"That's a pleasure! Come"

And they left.

After walking a lot, Rabbit pretended he tripped over and falls moaning: “ouch, ouch, ouch!” I guess my foot is crippled. Now I am a real hunk. You should better return home Brother Lizard, let me here. I can't take a step.”

“How come? Oh God! Get on my back and let's go to the wedding. There'll be plenty of people glad to massage you. What should the king say if you are not there?”

“I would not dare. That's unfair. You did me the favor of being my companion; I can't take advantage of your kindness.”

“Oh God! What's the matter? Get on and bite your tongue.”

“Just as I wanted” taught Rabbit. And finally, he got on Brother Lizard.

Rabbit was trying to distract Brother Lizard, so he was making noises and then started to talk, “Man, your silly brother instead of hitting my nose, knocked my nape.”

He did not finish telling this, when Rabbit gave to Brother Lizard a clubbed in his nose that left him stiff right there.

After that, Rabbit took his knife and started cutting the skin until it got dry. Once it was ready, Rabbit called the buzzard and asked if he could carry him and the different skins that he had with The Lord. When both Rabbit and the buzzard came to his Divine Majesty, Rabbit threw the skins at the Lord's feet without having any delay and said: “here it is!”

Unfortunately, that day The Lord was not in a good mood and asked rudely: “Well, so what?” Rabbit exclaimed: “well you told me that if I wanted to be largest I had to bring you a tiger, a lion and a lizard's skin, which must be killed by myself and here they are!”

The Lord said: “Oh wretch!” I supposed that you will get with your own way! I do not want to imagine all the things you made on the Earth!”

After saying this, The Lord took rabbit ears and started pulling them, it produced rabbit ears get larger (it is important to know that rabbit ears were short before being pulled by The Lord) and said: “Get out of here!”

Rabbit ran away quickly while rubbing his ears seeing this, The Lord forgot about his bad mood and started laughing.

### **Translation: Sunday Seventh**

Once upon a time there were two güechos *compadres*, one rich and one poor. The rich one was very stingy, like those who don't even give salt to cook an egg. The poor one used to go every Friday to the mountain to cut some firewood that he used to sell in the city when it was dry. One of those Fridays he got lost in the woods and the sunset came before he could find the exit road. Tired of going from here to there, he decided to climb a tree to stay the night. He tied to a tree the donkey that helped him with his job and climbed up almost to the top. After some time of being there, he suddenly saw a light from the distance. As he got close, he realized it was a big illuminated house located in a clearing in the woods.

It seemed like there was a great party. There was music, singing and laughing. The man tied his animal and got closer little by little. The binge was on the inside because the rooms that were at the entrance were empty. He got into the house on tiptoes until he find what it was. He hid himself behind a door and stared across a crack. The living room was full of ugly, messed-hair witches who were dancing and jumping like the monkeys. They were all singing this only song:

Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday  
third

Hours passed and the witches didn't get tired of their dancing and their continues swing

Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday

third

The *compadre* bored of hearing the same thing, he added singing with his güecho voice

Thursday and Friday and Saturday

sixth

The witches stopped shouting and jumping...

---Who has sung?--- some of them asked.

--- Who has fixed our song so well?—some others said.

--- What a beautiful thing! The one who has sung like that deserves a prize!

All of the witches started to look around and they finally could get to the poor *compadre*, who was trembling behind the door. Hail Mary! They didn't know where to put him: some of them lifted him, others put him down and kisses and hugs were here and there.

One of them yelled:--- Let's cut his güecho.

And every one replied: Yeah, yeah!

And the poor man said: --- Over my dead body!

But before he finished, the inventor was cutting his güecho with a knife by no provoking any pain or bleeding for him. Then, the witches filled bags with gold from one quarter of their treasures as a way to pay the *compadre* for finishing their song.

He brought his donkey to load the sacks and he left where the witches told him. From the distance he heard them shouting:

Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday

third

Thursday and Friday and Saturday

sixth

He had no problem to arrive to his house, where his wife and children waited anxiously because they were afraid for their father's save. He told them about his adventure and sent his wife to the rich *compadre* to ask him for a *cuartillo* (a measure unit to weigh grains, beans and others used long time ago in Costa Rica) to measure the gold he had brought. She went out and told the rich *compadre's* wife, who was alone:

---*Comadrita*<sup>19</sup>, can I borrow your *cuartillo*? I need to weigh some beans that my husband harvested.

But the rich man's woman started thinking.

“Shut up!”, hasn't your husband plant anything? Who better than us? We know better than anyone that you do not have more land than the one where the four stakes of the hut are stuck? She smeared the bottom of the *cuartillo* with glue to find out what their *compadres* were going to measure.

They measured so many *cuartillos* of gold that they even lost how many had counted. When they returned the *cuartillo*, they did not notice that in the bottom of it, some coins were glued there. The rich *comadre*, who was very greedy and liked to take the bread out of people's mouth, to see that, cross herself and went looking for her husband.

“Look!” You say your *compadre* is penniless, that he has to walk with one hand behind him and the other in front of him to cover himself up, that he does not have where to die. Well, you

<sup>19</sup> <sup>1</sup>The godmother of child who is also a very close friend of the family or the mother of the baby.



are wrong. –And the woman showed the cuartillo, told what had happened and bothered his husband until he went looking for his compadre.

“Aha! compadrito” he said, “How rascal you are! So, do we have to measure the gold in cuartillo?”

The other, who was an honest man, told his adventure simply. The rich man went back to his home, green with envy! The woman advised him go to the mountain and lumber wood.

Who knows- she said- that it happens to you too. On Friday morning he started the journey with five mules. The whole day he did nothing but to swipe with the axe the trees. At nightfall, he entered to the deeper part of the mountain and got lost. He climbed a tree and saw the light, so he follows it. He arrived to the house where the witches celebrated their party every night. He did the same thing that his poor compare did; he hid himself behind the door. The wishes were in the best moment of their singing:

Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday

Third

Thursday and Friday and Saturday

Sixth

Then, a little trembling voice coming from the güecho sang: Sunday seveth...

Hail Mary! Why he meant it!

The witches grew furious; they pulled their hairs and yell of anger.

Who is the daring person that has spoiled our song?

Who is who has said that “Sunday seveth”?

They searched showing up their teeth like god growling. The witches found the scary man and they take him out with stumbles and tugs.

You will see what will happen to you, güecho of trap – Said one witch that run away toward the interior of the house. Then, she came back with a big ball in her hands that was nothing less that the güecho of his poor compadre. Pawn! She planted the güecho in the poor wretch’s nape and it stack there as if there it had born. The witches took back the packages of firewood and untied the mules of the man and then they let them deep in the scrub. At daybreak, my rich compadre arrived at his home with two güechos, with aching body and without his five mules. Of course, his miss got so mad that bile run through her body and got so sick that had to rest in bed.

### **Translation: Uncle Rabbit and Uncle Coyote**

An old little lady had a wonderful orchard in which there was everything you could imagine: little radishes, cilantro, tomatoes, little zucchinis, tender squashes and lettuces. One day the old lady found the *quelites* (see Figure 1.) of the squashes and zucchinis eaten up. Then, she saw a total damage in the plants; thus, she made a big wax puppet and planted it in the doorway.



**Figure 1.** *Quelites* (shoots or stems)

Image taken for academic purposes only from:

[http://www.google.co.cr/search?um=1&hl=en&tbo=d&biw=1280&bih=666&tbm=isch&sa=1&q=quelites&oq=quelites&gs\\_l=img.3..0j0i2419.2466.4060.0.4727.8.8.0.0.0.224.1001.3j4j1.8.0...0.0...1c.1.Wlq1Hk1zLEU](http://www.google.co.cr/search?um=1&hl=en&tbo=d&biw=1280&bih=666&tbm=isch&sa=1&q=quelites&oq=quelites&gs_l=img.3..0j0i2419.2466.4060.0.4727.8.8.0.0.0.224.1001.3j4j1.8.0...0.0...1c.1.Wlq1Hk1zLEU)

Well, sir, the fact is that Uncle Rabbit was who was eating the plants; he got into the orchard at the night and ate everything up.

When he arrived and found the scarecrow, he hid behind some bushes to look at it carefully. Uncle Rabbit convinced himself that the scarecrow did not moving and that it was a lie; thus, he showed his bravery and said: - Oh man! Let's see what the thing is? Let's go and see if you can tackle me.

Thus, Uncle Rabbit gave a punch to the scarecrow but he got stuck because the scarecrow was made of wax. He became really angry and gave another punch to the scarecrow, but he got stuck again. Uncle Rabbit was trying unstuck his hands from the scarecrow, but his legs, head and ears also got stuck.

The next morning the old lady went to the orchard and she found Uncle Rabbit stuck on the scarecrow.

-Aha! I already found the problem. Naughty! You were the one who was destroying my orchard! -Hold on there, you will see what will happen to you. I'm going to peel you.

Thus, the old lady took Uncle Rabbit and put him into a sack. Then, she let him near the kitchen while she was going to bring some water.

Uncle Rabbit thought -Ah what a nuisance, what happened to me! So, he began to shout desperately, -Get me out of here! Get me out of here!

At that moment Uncle Coyote was passing near the old lady's house and heard that someone was shouting. He got into the kitchen and saw the sack on the floor. Uncle Coyote asked, - Who is here? And Uncle Rabbit answered, -I, uncle Rabbit! Someone put me into this sack to marry me with the king's daughter, and I don't want. I don't want to get married.

Uncle Coyote said:

-That's great! Marry you with the King's daughter! So, who doesn't? What else do you want?

Uncle Rabbit said:

-So, not even this way. She is the King's daughter, but I would not like to marry her. Not even if they gave me gold with her, I would say no. -What a trouble! What a trouble! Life is well managed by oneself! I wanted to die single.

Uncle Coyote said:

-If I were you I would be dancing of happiness. I would not think twice like you.

Therefore, Uncle Rabbit suggested: Why don't you help me to get out of here? You could take my place and get married to the King's daughter. In the wedding, the groom will be inside the sack. So, the princess could not see you because the King wants I marry his daughter. After the wedding, the king will have to accept you are his daughter's husband.

Uncle Coyote approved the idea without thinking about all times Uncle Rabbit had cheated him. Uncle Coyote untied the sack for letting Uncle Rabbit get out. Then he got into the sack. Once Uncle Rabbit had tied the sack again, he thought -here is the way! And then he ran as fast as he could.

He hid among the shrubbery to see what will happen with Uncle Coyote.

The old lady came back to the kitchen with a jar full of water. Then, she put a pot of water on the fire and sat down to wait.

When Uncle Coyote heard someone was in the kitchen, he began to talk. –Hey! What time the princess is coming? I really want to marry her.

–Yeah! I know what kind of princess you are waiting for. – The little old lady replied.

When the water was boiling, she untied the sack and said –Aha! The rabbit turned into a Coyote. That’s okay!

Uncle Coyote trying to be loveable said: –Yes ma'am, but I really want to marry her.

The little old lady took the pot of hot water and threw it into the Coyote’s back.

The unlucky Uncle Coyote went out running and howling.

When Uncle Rabbit saw Uncle Coyote running and howling, he shouted to him:

–Goodbye! Uncle Coyote, waiting for your marriage your back was burned.

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Some days later, Uncle Rabbit ran into Uncle Coyote. Uncle Rabbit was like the day he was going to be buried. So he thought: –Oh God! Now, I am in troubles!

When Uncle Coyote saw Uncle Rabbit, he became really mad.

–Well, we have to talk seriously. –said Uncle Coyote.

Uncle Rabbit played dumb and said –What are you talking about Uncle Coyote? I try to remember and I cannot find any offensive act against you.

–Be quiet silly rabbit! Thank God I know the kind of rabbit you are. Pray God because you will pay me all together.

Uncle Rabbit was looking at all directions and he saw a sapodilla tree at the edge of a fence. It was full of delicious fruits. Then he told to Uncle Coyote: –Well, what are we going to do? The one who can is the winner.

–But before killing me, let me get on the tree and eat a sapodilla that I am seeing from here. It’s look delicious; I don’t know why it wasn’t fallen yet. Don’t kill me yet! Take my hand back down to make sure I coming back to you.

–What the hell! Said Uncle Coyote, go and eat the sapodilla. Then your story will change. I won’t go away until you get off the tree.

While getting up the tree, uncle Rabbit was saying:

–Damn! I believe that I’m in dangerous. He is going to eat me.

Once on the tree, Uncle Rabbit began to pretend he was eating a sapodilla. He said: –Oh, it’s delicious! It’s like eating sugar! What a delicious fruit!

Uncle Coyote! I think God made these sapodillas full of sweet lumps.

–Do you want a try?

–Yes! Uncle Coyote replied.

–There it goes! Open your mouth and close your eyes.

So he did it. The dumb of Uncle Coyote opened his mouth. Uncle Rabbit chose the biggest sapodilla he could find and threw it into Coyote’s mouth with all his strength.

Of course all the Uncle Coyote’s teeth falling off and he began to run screaming of pain.

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As the days were going by, Uncle Coyote ran into Uncle Rabbit again.

Uncle Coyote did not have any tooth. He took uncle rabbit of his ears and told him –Today you couldn’t run away, silly rabbit! Look what you have done to me!

Uncle Rabbit couldn’t stop laughing at Uncle Coyote because he didn’t have teeth and his back was burned.

-Well, what can we do? When you say things are like you think; nobody cannot make you understand. God knows that I didn't want to hurt you. The problem is that I am an unlucky guy when helping you. Every time I want to give you a surprise, I finish make you feel bad. I hope you can be patient with me!

Uncle Rabbit took a deep breath.

-Be quiet liar! Only who doesn't know you, can believe in your words.

-Do you know where I was going? I'm going to eat a lot of cheese! What a cheese! It's looks delicious.

- Where is that cheese? - replied Uncle Coyote.

-Well, let's go and I will show you.

-So, both walked, but Uncle Coyote was holding Uncle Rabbit during the road.

They arrived to a large patch in which the moon was reflected.

-Look at that cheese! I think it is enough for year. Tell me if you don't want to taste it. -said Uncle Rabbit.

And the dumb Coyote believed what the Rabbit said. He asked -How can we get it?

-It's easy! We have to drink all the water. It is not too much, we can finish soon.

So, they did it. Uncle Coyote was drinking as much water as he could, but uncle Rabbit wasn't drinking anything.

-Ay! Uncle Rabbit, I can't stand it. -said Uncle Coyote.

Uncle Rabbit talked back: -Stuff your face (*Aturúsele*) Uncle Coyote, we are almost done!

After a while, Uncle Coyote was gasping and his belly seemed as a drum.

So, the cynic of Uncle Rabbit said:

-Do you know what we are going to do? We are going to run down the hill for getting our belly empty. Then, we could finish with the water.

Uncle Coyote agreed. Uncle Rabbit took the Coyote's hand and began to run.

Uncle Coyote could not even scream. Then, something was heard as when busting a bladder inflated beef. The belly of the poor Uncle Coyote burst in the middle of the hill.

Thus, Uncle Rabbit could run up and down freely.

## A Comparative Approach to the Teaching of English Literature

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**Resumen:** Esta ponencia aspira a plantear un nuevo alcance metodológico a la enseñanza de la literatura en colegios y universidades de Costa Rica donde el inglés se enseña como lengua extranjera. Motivado por la necesidad de acercar a los alumnos y alumnas de inglés al estudio de la literatura como parte de su currículum académico, y aun más provocado por el hecho de que muchos de estos estudiantes no logran apreciar la literatura en sí, el autor pretende adoptar aquí una postura comparatista y sugerir el valor de textos escritos en otros idiomas pero especialmente de formas alternativas de arte y conocimiento en la captación del interés de los y las estudiantes en el texto literario y en la expansión de su potencial para una educación de mayor nivel y crecimiento cultural. El campo de la literatura comparada se caracteriza por la lucha entre teorías y metodologías. Sin embargo, es precisamente dentro de este marco de conflicto que una mayor variedad de posibilidades críticas se desprende. En consecuencia, cualquier texto literario que esté siendo estudiado en una clase de inglés como lengua extranjera presumiblemente puede enriquecerse de un examen de sus relaciones con otras obras escritas en inglés y en otras lenguas y con otros textos artísticos como canciones, películas, pinturas o incluso edificios. A través de una serie de explicaciones acerca de las metodologías más importantes para la enseñanza de la literatura y cómo la literatura comparada puede servir objetivos pedagógicos específicos, esta ponencia propone una renovación en la experiencia y práctica de la enseñanza de la literatura mientras que trata de salvar la brecha entre la crítica literaria y el aprendizaje del inglés como segunda lengua en nuestro contexto educativo.

**Palabras clave:** literatura comparada, enseñanza del inglés, artes, experiencia, cultura

**Abstract:** This conference presentation aims at proposing a new methodological approach to the teaching of literature in Costa Rican high

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schools and universities where English is taught as a foreign language. Incited by the necessity to bring English learners closer to the study of literature as part of their academic curriculum, and further provoked by the fact that a good number of such students unfortunately fail to appreciate literature in its own right, the author here attempts to adopt a comparatist's standpoint and suggest the value of other language texts but especially of alternative forms of art and knowledge in both awakening the students' interest in the literary text and in unlocking their potential for higher education and cultural growth. The field of Comparative Literature is characterized by struggle among theories and methodologies. However, it is against this conflictive background that a wider range of critical possibilities unfolds. Thereby, any literary text that is being studied in an EFL classroom may allegedly be enriched by an examination of its relationships with other works written in other languages and with other artistic texts like songs, films, paintings or even buildings. Through a series of explanations about the most important methodologies for the teaching of literature and how Comparative Literature might lend itself to their specific pedagogical objectives, this conference proposes a renovation in the experience and practice of literature teaching while at the same time trying to bridge the gap between literary criticism and the teaching of English as a foreign language in our educational context.

**Key words:** comparative literature, English teaching, arts, experience, culture

## I Introduction

The list of reasons for teaching literature to EFL students is long. As a matter of fact, besides the obvious benefit of bringing learners closer to their target language, especially through the reading of authentic texts (Carter & Long, 1991; Elliot, 1991), much more is gained by reading and learning about literature than an improvement of the student's lexical and grammatical skills. After a very recent study conducted on 105 Turkish learners of English as a foreign language, Celvet Yilmaz (2012) concludes that they "should be provided more exposure to literature courses thereby maximizing language learning" (p. 91). However, this is not the only benefit that literature offers to the EFL classroom. Akyel and Yalçın (as cited in Yilmaz, 2012) mention, among other advantages, an expansion of the learners' worldview, plus a developed creative and imaginative potential and a stronger appreciation of literature as a whole (p. 86). One other important outcome that should motivate teachers to teach and students to study literature in EFL programs is a better acquaintance with culture. As unsophisticated as it may sound, literature "serve[s] as a medium to transmit the culture of the people who speak the language in which it is written" (Valdes, as cited in Elliot, 1991, p. 65). It is precisely this cultural dimension that facilitates an experience of literature and language that may eventually become crucial for the integral education of the language student.

Evidently, much may be said about the paramount role of literature in the teaching of English as a foreign language, and it actually is very encouraging to have witnessed lately a fundamental revival in the use of authentic literary texts in the EFL classroom (Hall, 2005; Belcher & Hirvela, 2000). Nevertheless, the question still remains of how literature should be approached and how it should be taught to language learners. Teaching literature is not like teaching grammar, composition, or even reading. It requires a unique treatment of the subject matter inasmuch as such subject matter is in itself unique and provides myriad possibilities for examining not only linguistic but also cultural realities. The literary text asks for a full experience of its content and interpretive suggestions, for a thorough exploration of its rough tracks and winding paths, a task that many language learners seem unwilling or unprepared to undertake but that might instill in them a heightened sense of knowledge and culture. Hence, a comparative approach to the study and criticism of literature offers a possibility to potentiate the role of literature in the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language since it will propel the cultural and linguistic experience to a level of fuller acquisition. Here, such approach is suggested and endorsed, yet not without having been confronted first with the existing methodologies for the teaching of literature and with the very nature of the comparative studies of literature as a discipline.

## **2 Problems in Teaching Literature**

One of the main problems of teaching literature in English to Spanish speakers in Costa Rica lies in their literary background. As a rule of thumb, Costa Ricans are not avid readers. In an informal interview to a group of twenty second-year students enrolled in the Associate's Program of English at Universidad Nacional in Pérez Zeledón, only two admitted having read more than one book to completion in their lives (August 2012). Such response may be regarded as indicative of a generalized reluctance among educated Costa Rican young adults to read literature willfully. A positive perception and approach to literature in the native language, however, underlies the reception of literary studies in other languages (Yilmaz, 2012, p. 92). It is clear that the teaching of literature in Spanish is not a viable practice among Costa Rican learners and teachers of English inasmuch as their focus is always the acquisition of a foreign language. Nevertheless, a general appreciation for literature should be encouraged at all costs, and an open mind regarding the role of the native language in such an endeavor might prove beneficial.

Another obstacle that hinders the teaching of literature effectively is the difficulty with which EFL students regard and approach literature in English. Evidently, a certain command of the language is needed in order not only to comprehend but also to appreciate a literary text to its fullest. According to Yilmaz (2012), "most of the students [of literature] feel frustrated with its unusual linguistic styles and elements such as complex characterization, plot, theme, and setting" (p. 91). This is a reality that many Costa Rican students of English as a foreign language also have to face. Some experts suggest, among other solutions, choosing texts that fit the students' level of linguistic competence in order to deal with this issue (Carter & Long, 1991; Showalter, 2003), and such should be the course to follow in almost all the cases in which a literature in a

foreign language is being taught. However, there is also a need to teach students to regard the literary text not simply as an encrypted piece of writing but as a personal and academic challenge out of which true knowledge may be gained. Vietnamese scholar Truong Thi My Van suggests that EFL teacher-training programs focus too much on “language teaching methodology and offer little guidance on the analytical methods that are essential to interpreting literature and designing effective classroom activities” (2009, p. 2). The same is true for Costa Rican EFL teachers, who lack themselves training in literature and literary analysis and know little about how to teach them. To promote a true, more effortless learning of literature among EFL students, certainly texts must be more carefully chosen but without detriment to the use of analytical methods for approaching those texts.

One last problem faced by English literature teachers is the wide gamut of interests that students have and that might and should be taken into account when choosing texts for reading and analysis. Yilmaz (2012) suggests that students “should be introduced to the wide range of literary texts suited to their individual needs and interests,” yet he also admits that their tastes are so diverse that this ends up discouraging teachers (p. 87). Making literature enjoyable to learners is perhaps the major concern of committed teachers, and it is also one of the most challenging and demanding tasks that they have to undertake. Jenny Elliot de Riverol (1991), from the British Council of Valencia, stresses the value of motivating literature learning among EFL students:

...the need to use the imagination when discussing literature “enables the learners to shift their attention beyond the more mechanical aspects of the foreign language system” (Collie & Slater, 1987, p.5). The learner may find himself completely absorbed by the work and this will lead to a high motivation level making the activity memorable and enjoyable. (p. 66)

The “use of imagination” to which Elliot makes reference clearly suggests a search for alternative methods and resources that may bring students closer to literature. Such resources are infinite, especially if the various interests of students are effectively taken into account, yet an exploration of the comparative relationships that exist between literatures in different languages and between English literature and other forms of art might render substantial possibilities for success in the literature classroom.

## **2.1 Current Methodologies for Teaching Literature**

Certainly the methods and techniques that a teacher uses to teach anything have a strong impact on how his or her students react to the subject matter and even on whether or not they actually learn. The teaching of literature is no exception to this rule; what teachers do and how they do it exert “a considerable influence on students’ motivation to study literature” (Yilmaz, 2012, p. 88). Much of the writing about teaching literature focuses greatly on instructional methods; however, the possibilities are so many that they may be rather overwhelming. Famous literary critic and feminist writer Elaine Showalter (2009) explores her and other literature teachers’ experiences and methods in their classrooms only to advise, “Make use of whatever will do the job” (p. 37). Of course, such a suggestion is grounded on the conviction that an eclectic methodological approach to



teaching literature may prove enlightening and open the gate to new and fresh outcomes. The proposal offered here responds to this spirit but also draws from a number of methods that have been deemed of value by various experts.

Professors Mohammad Khatib, Saeed Rezaei, and Ali Derakhshan (2011), from Allameh Tabataba'i University in Iran, summarize several methodological models for the teaching of literature. Some of these approaches focus on language and structure and attempt to promote literature as a means to acquire linguistic competence. Maley's stylistic approach and Carter and Long's language-based model are examples of these (p. 205). Some other options bestow a greater emphasis on the reader and its relationship with the text, for example Maley's critical literary approach and Amer's story grammar and reader response approaches (p. 205). However, there are two important sources which the proposal outlined here most directly exploits in its attempt to delineate a new methodology for literature teaching.

Firstly, besides their language-based model, Carter and Long (1991) describe two other specific methods, also mentioned by Khatib et al. (2011, p. 205), which they consider of greater value to the teaching of literature. The first one, "the cultural model" (p. 8), perceives literature mainly in terms of its content and the opportunities for cultural learning that it provides. Showalter (2009) conversely favors a movement *away* from content and towards the very practice and process of reading (p. 17), but in actuality students are undeniably motivated by content, hence the necessity of choosing texts that both pique their interests and help them expand their horizons of expectations. Nevertheless, on account of the teacher-centeredness of the cultural model, Carter and Long (1991) seem to be more inclined towards their last option, the "personal-growth model" (p. 9), which intends to connect the literary text with the actual experiences of those students who read it. According to the authors, its main purpose is "to motivate the student to read by relating the themes and topics depicted in a literary text to his or her own personal experience" (p. 9). From this point of view, the learners' individual experiences are responsible for their motivation to read literature (p. 17). Yilmaz (2012) endorses this perspective and supports it upon the basis of a study made by Davis, Gorell, Kline and Hsieh in 1992, but he also proclaims the role of content in sparking the interest of students in reading literature. He explains, "...pedagogy that takes into account individual interpretations and responses to a literary text treated in EFL class, that emphasizes the content of a text, and that allows some freedom to choose selections has been found to improve student motivation" (p. 92). In sum, both the content of a literary text and its connections with the experiences of the individual readers are to be regarded as powerful tools for the improvement of literature teaching.

A second source weaves a narrower way towards the methodological proposal for the teaching of literature in EFL programs that is sketched here. Also cited in Khatib et al. (2011, p. 206), Van (2009) urges English literature teachers to subscribe to a more analytical view of literature and to sustain the use of critical approaches to teaching literature among EFL students. Even though some "anti-analytical" methodologies like Carter and Long's personal growth model have proven quite valuable for motivating students to read and study literature (1991, p. 9), Van insists on discussing six critical

approaches and “the benefits and drawbacks [that] they offer for teaching literature in the EFL classroom” (p. 3). She explores, among others, New Criticism, Structuralism, and Critical Literacy, yet it is her description of the use of Stylistics as a method for teaching literature that inspires a most significant scheme for combining student motivation and relevant literature learning. “One useful model of Stylistics,” she explains, “is Widowson’s (1983) comparative approach to teaching literature, in which excerpts from literature are compared to excerpts from other texts, such as news reports, tourist brochures, or advertisements” (p. 5). Van’s affirmation of Widowson’s contribution suggests the networking of significant elements for designing a new method for teaching literature to EFL students. Several pieces are falling into place as an emphasis on content and students’ experiences combines with the vindication of literary criticism as a viable tool for teaching literature.

## 2.2 Introduction to Comparative Literature

One superior way of understanding anything is by comparing it to something else. The study of literature and literatures across the world, especially in recent decades, has given way to such a thought and so has taken unexpected turns towards a post-modern view of its subject. An academic field in its own right, comparative literature continues, even today, to build and rebuild itself; the result is vastness and variety beyond measure. After an initial conception of comparative literature as “a branch of literary study which traces the mutual relations between two or more internationally and linguistically different literatures or texts” (Hussein, n.d., p.12), the field has experienced so much movement that it would be futile to try to delineate its boundaries and explain its nuances. Comparative literature has grown to encompass much more than the relationships between literatures written in different languages or different countries. It is today, as Professor Henry H. H. Remak (1961) puts it, also “the study of the relationships between literature on the one hand and other areas of knowledge and belief... on the other. In brief, it is the comparison of one literature with another or others, and the comparison of literature with other spheres of human expression” (p. 3). Among these “spheres,” Remak includes philosophy, history, science, and religion, but his emphasis, as has been the one for thousands of comparatists over the last century—and as is laid here for exploration—is on the arts: painting, sculpture, architecture, music, and as of late, film.

The work of comparatists, especially of those who follow the steps of the twentieth-century American School, focuses mainly on intertextuality, which is “the relation between two or more texts at a level which affects the way or ways of reading the new text” (Enani, as cited in Hussein, n.d., p. 43). Here the definition of a text, as was suggested before, is supposed to include any form of structured human communication. Therefore, it is the concern of comparative literature to explore the connections that may be found between a literary text and any other text—literary or not. Intertextuality incites comparatists and inexperienced readers alike to relate a story or a poem to whatever text they may bring to enrich the understanding and analysis of the work in question. After all, the possibilities for learning that literature offers are endless. Professor Ahmed Hussein (n.d.) puts it in a rather evocative way: “Literature, in a sense, resembles a body

of water on whose surface are reflected various forms of knowledge” (p. 47), and Wellek and Warren also declare, “Literature is one; as art and humanity are one” (as cited in Bassnett, 1993, p. 4). Accordingly, literature should never be viewed as isolated from the rest of human thought and production, and especially not in separation from other forms of art. Rather, it should be compared to as many other artistic texts as it cares to suggest, if only to partake of the superb experience of learning.

### **2.3 Teaching Literature through Comparison**

The value of literature for teaching English as a foreign language can hardly be contested. However, the teaching of literature in itself raises a lot of questions, the most vexed of which simply being how literature should be taught. A few current methods have already been discussed above, but another possibility, inspired by the comparative studies of literature, is suggested here in an attempt to bring EFL learners closer to a more substantial and academically productive relationship with the literature that they read in English. This proposal aims at establishing dialogues between the literary text being studied and other nonliterary texts that, via intertextuality, may contribute to both the experience of reading and the advancing of learning. It is a dynamic model that emphasizes discursive practices and feeds on reinventions, adaptations, and reconfigurations of the original text upon the basis of comparative criticism.

Another key component of this formula is an emphasis on the cultural dimension of literary texts, which in this case becomes ignited by the intertextual occurrences that are stressed in the comparative analyses of texts. Elliot (1991) shares this view: “Cultural implications should also be considered when planning teaching materials which involve literature. Shared history, religion or literary tradition make cross referencing easier” (p. 67). She indirectly justifies, therefore, the comparative practices in the EFL literature classroom. “When choosing literary texts for use...,” she confesses, “I have tended to choose works which also might be read in Spanish translation or which perhaps have been made into films and shown in cinemas...” (p. 67). Although Elliot is not specifically suggesting a comparative approach to the teaching of literature, her view is one that supports the use of alternative texts—even in the native language—to reinforce the cultural learning of EFL students of literature.

The personal growth model that Carter and Long (1991) advocate also communicates an inclination towards using alternative texts to potentiate the study of literature. The enrichment with which they promise that the experience of the reader will load his or her study of literature can be achieved naturally by resorting to intertextuality. Literature is made better by life itself, which in turn is richly enhanced by experiencing all sorts of texts which lie within and without other texts, that is, by “the relationship between your own experience and the way experience is conveyed by the cultural products which surround you,” of which the literary text is only one (p. 12). Carter and Long further propound that the reader experiences literature necessarily through the “connections” that he or she makes with other texts while “reading between the lines” of the text being studied (p. 12). Consequently, the experience of the reader is essentially an intertextual one, which calls for a better design and understanding of comparative

practices that might facilitate the teaching and learning of literature, especially in the EFL classroom.

The obvious possibility of comparing the story or poem being read and studied in English to some other literary text originally written in Spanish is only one among many. The use of native-language texts, however, carries collateral implications for the linguistic development of the EFL student which are not the focus of attention here; this is why such form of comparison is only acknowledged. Comparing the literary text to a different type of artwork like a painting, a movie, or a song, on the other hand, may prove not only harmless but highly advantageous in more than one way. Actually, there are three ways in which such a method may benefit the student. First, the exposure to other forms of art that may be situated closer to the experience of the literature learner<sup>21</sup> is certain to improve their appreciation and understanding of the literary text being studied. Second, comparing literary texts to alternative artistic products will present students with other forms and usages of the English language, or else it will provide new spaces and opportunities for linguistic production, which is, in any event, a well-grounded objective of all literature teaching. Third, the teaching of culture through literature is undoubtedly improved when art is included: the interest of the students is sparked,<sup>22</sup> their appreciation of culture is broadened, and their academic and personal growth is necessarily fostered.

Cross-referencing a literary text may prove valuable to its teaching, but opening up the possibility for students to explore other art forms and their messages in conjunction with the literature that they study may catapult their linguistic and cultural learning. From a comparative point of view, any literary text holds within itself the seed of an infinite number of other texts with which it maintains a potential relationship. Both the experience of the student and the skill and commitment of the literature teacher may unleash the necessary sprouting and growth for literature to be fully experienced. A method that leads instructors to teach literature by comparing it to other art forms purports not only to instill a new air into the available didactic models but also to restore the long-damaged relationship between the Costa Rican college student and the practice of reading literature.

#### 2.4 Sample Plans for Comparative Literature Teaching

In an attempt to illustrate a comparative methodology for the teaching of literature in English to EFL students, here there are three very simple examples of how texts may be approached and lessons designed using a literary text and another piece of artwork.

##### **Sample Plan 1**

**Text:** *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley (Letters 1-4)

**Objectives:** Students will...

1. Learn about Romanticism and the main characteristics of Romantic literature and art

<sup>21</sup> A survey conducted among thirty Costa Rican English literature students in November, 2011, reveals that music and film are the two most popular forms.

<sup>22</sup> All except one of the subjects surveyed declared a strong-to-moderate interest in combining their literature instruction with the learning about other art forms.

2. Be able to describe and identify the sublime in a literary text and a painting
3. Recognize the value of setting in acquiring a sense of meaning of art and literature
4. Appreciate literature and art in relation to what they offer to human experience

**Procedures:**

*Before reading:*

1. Students share orally their ideas about the highest mountains and coldest places that they have visited or that they know about.
2. The teacher offers some background information about the basic characteristics of Romanticism and Romantic literature and art, especially with regards to setting.
3. The teacher guides the students to preview some vocabulary.

*While reading:*

Students make a list of important setting descriptions as they find them.

*After reading:*

1. The teacher shows to the students an image of the painting “Wanderer above the Sea of Fog” by Caspar David Friedrich (1818), and they respond informally to it.
2. In groups, the students discuss their reactions to the painting and to the text that they have read, as well as any connections that they may find between the two.
3. The teacher reviews the concepts of Romanticism, setting, and the sublime using the painting and the literary text as illustrations.

**Sample Plan 2**

**Text:** *The Art of Love* by Ovid (Book 1)

**Objectives:** Students will...

1. Acquire a sense of currency when studying classic literature and thought
2. Be able to discuss the concept of love as revealed by art and literature across history
3. Form an opinion about the relationship between literature and film
4. Appreciate literature and art in relation to what they offer to human experience

**Procedures:**

*Before reading:*

1. Students interview each other about their personal love experiences and their ways to seduce and be seduced by their significant others.
2. The teacher offers some background information about the classic poet Ovid and his work *The Art of Love*.
3. The teacher guides the students to preview some vocabulary.

*While reading:*

Students underline or highlight those pieces of advice that Ovid offers and that they agree with or like and cross out those that they dislike.

*After reading:*

1. The teacher shows to the students the movie *Hitch* (2005), directed by Andy Tennant and starred by Will Smith, and they react to it informally.
2. In small groups, the students complete a chart in which they compare and contrast the seduction techniques suggested by Ovid and those presented in the film.
3. The teacher reviews the conception of love and leads a discussion focused on any similarities or differences that may be found across history or across artistic genres.

**Sample Plan 3**

**Text:** A selection of Native American myths, legends, and folktales

**Objectives:** Students will...

1. Be acquainted with the Mythological and Archetypal approaches to literature
2. Be able to read critically and interpret Native American myths and legends
3. Acquire a sense of American culture through its literature and art
4. Appreciate literature and art in relation to what they offer to human experience

**Procedures:***Before reading:*

1. In small groups, students recall traditional Costa Rican folktales and legends and discuss their significance and contemporariness.
2. The teacher offers some background information about the Mythological and Archetypal approaches to literature and especially about the hero archetype.
3. The teacher guides the students to preview some vocabulary.

*While reading:*

Students identify archetypes and mythological patterns in a Native American legend or folktale of their choice.

*After reading:*

1. The teacher plays the song “Indian Sunset” by Elton John as students read the lyrics from a handout.
2. In small groups, students respond to the lyrics and the characteristic music of the song and relate them to the Native American folktale that they each one has read.
3. The teacher reviews the concepts of myth and hero archetype and encourages students to share their views on both the song and the legends that they read.

**III Conclusions**

Comparing literature in English to other literatures but especially to other forms of art with which students are familiarized promises an underscoring of the learners’ experience and therefore a better attainment of the content and linguistic objectives of the literature class. On the other hand, if the secondary text used for comparison is not well-known by the students, the promise is also of an enrichment of the learners’ experience and a propelling of their cultural growth. In any event, the gains are considerable. Employing a

comparative approach to the teaching of English literature in the EFL classroom encourages participants to get involved and motivates them to learn not only the language but also the cultural, theoretical, and analytical components that might be featured in a given content unit. Likewise, this methodology enriches the language and culture class inasmuch as it highlights students' experiences and their relationships with other forms of human knowledge and creation.

For the literature teacher, on the other hand, assuming the role of the comparatist requires much creativity and resourcefulness, but it also provides him or her with a matchless opportunity to instill newness and excitement into his or her work. Literature professor Larry Danson recommends teaching new material often, even that which is unfamiliar to the teacher himself or herself; "Try always to do something that you haven't done before," he advises (as cited in Showalter 2003, pp. 45-46). As a result, the work of the literature teacher gets refreshed and renewed when he or she induces students to compare the literary text being studied to another less known text in Spanish or to a different cultural product which does represent the teacher's area of expertise.

### 3.1 Afterthought

It should be safe to assume that any committed teacher of English as a foreign language is in constant search for new methodologies, strategies, and techniques that might help him or her potentiate the learning experience of his or her pupils. Assessing and using new material, exploring innovative topics, following alternative procedures, among many other equally challenging tasks, necessarily transform the work of teachers into that of researchers and authors, and the result is bound to be an exhausted but satisfied and more efficient English teacher. Within the context of Costa Rican education, numerous efforts are made daily in this direction.

Nevertheless, more attention could be paid to the teaching of literature in English as one major resource that will surely enrich the learning process. For one thing, literature offers a potential for attraction that other materials do not have. According to Khatib et al. (2011), "...it provides a motivating drive for language learning and teaching due to its spectacular features not readily found in any other texts" (p. 207). On account of its uniqueness, literature lends itself naturally to the development of EFL lessons, especially when combined with communicative activities in the search for students' involvement and motivation (Van, 2009, p. 6). Consequently, the teaching of literature is to be an integral part of any EFL program.

In spite of the role that literature already plays in the teaching of English as a foreign language, however, the question of how to teach it is still of major concern. Many methodologies have been suggested in this regard, among which the personal growth model is perhaps the most realistic and context-driven one on account of its student-centeredness. "Effective and confident reading of literature," Carter and Long (1991) explain, "is closely connected with a reader's ability to relate a text to his or her own experience" (p. 30). Accordingly, any technique or strategy that aims at involving the student's experience will most certainly produce not only greater linguistic growth but also a heightened appreciation of literature.

Finally, the problems of teaching literature in English in Costa Rica may be evident if not serious or many, but the solutions probably lie in a stronger commitment on the part of teachers to motivate students and to restructure their classes so as to incorporate their interests and experiences. Teaching a course on Victorian literature to a group of Costa Rican twenty-year-old EFL students who are not particularly interested in reading, let alone literature, may seem like little less than a herculean labor. Nevertheless, the resources available, especially in this time and age, for turning a potentially boring class into something more than an anecdote are numberless. All is needed is a creative heart and a sincere interest in the students' academic and personal growth.

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## Material and Activity Design for Pronunciation of Consonants in a Tourism Course: Considering Students' Needs

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**Resumen:** Debido al gran auge que tiene el inglés como medio de comunicación internacional, más personas lo utilizan cada día en sus trabajos. Consecuentemente, ha sido necesario redefinir la forma de enseñar este lenguaje, dirigiéndolo de una enseñanza para propósitos generales (GE) hacia un inglés para propósitos específicos (ESP). Crear materiales y actividades de aprendizaje que satisfagan las necesidades de los estudiantes es un gran reto en ESP, pues muchos recursos disponibles no toman en cuenta las carencias y deseos de los discentes. El presente estudio determinó cuáles necesidades de los estudiantes no estaban siendo satisfechas en cuanto a materiales y actividades utilizados en el curso Inglés 4 para Turismo, el cual es parte del currículo del segundo nivel de la carrera de Turismo de la Universidad Nacional, Sede Regional Brunca. Primordialmente, la investigación se enfocó en determinar las necesidades y percepciones de los alumnos sobre los materiales y actividades de aprendizaje que les resultan más útiles y significativos para aprender la pronunciación de las consonantes del inglés que son estudiadas en este curso. Se implementó una metodología de análisis de necesidades centrada en el discente, tomando su perspectiva como fuente primordial de información. Se utilizaron dos instrumentos de recolección de datos para lograrlo: un cuestionario de análisis de necesidades y grupos focales. Distintos materiales y actividades fueron diseñados e implementados por los investigadores con dos propósitos: evaluar el grado en que estos cubrían las necesidades expuestas por los estudiantes y compartirlos con otros colegas del campo.

**Palabras clave:** Inglés para propósitos específicos, análisis de necesidades, diseño de materiales y actividades, pronunciación de consonantes, turismo.

**Abstract:** As English has become the language of international communication, more individuals use it every day in a variety of occupational contexts. Consequently, it has been necessary to redefine the way the English language is

taught and move from General English (GE) to the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) approach. One of the main challenges in ESP is to supply learners with materials and learning activities that properly fulfill their needs since the ones available are sometimes unsatisfactory. They do not take into consideration the learners' needs, lacks and wants. This study aimed at discovering which of those needs, lacks and wants regarding materials and learning activities were not being satisfied in a group of students in the course English 4 for Tourism, which is part of the second level in the Tourism Major at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Branch Campus. Particularly, the research study focused on determining the learners' needs and perceptions about the materials and learning activities that are more appealing and useful for them to learn the pronunciation of English consonants, which are studied in this course. A learner-centered approach to needs analysis was implemented, taking the learners' perspectives as the main source of data. Two main data collection techniques were used to determine students' perceptions: a needs analysis questionnaire and focus groups. Materials and activities were designed and implemented by the researchers with two main purposes: To assess the degree to which they really fulfilled the learners' needs and to share them with other ESP instructors.

**Keywords:** English for specific purposes, needs analysis, material and activity design, pronunciation of consonants, tourism.

## I Introduction

English learning and tourism development have become key elements for countries like Costa Rica to improve their economic situation. There is a significant connection between these two aspects. On one hand, the teaching of English, the language of business and commerce, has taken a very important role in today's society. It enables people to achieve a better economic and social position in society and also to communicate with individuals from other nations. On the other hand, in the last decade, tourism has become one of the most important economic activities in Costa Rica. It has changed the country's socio-economic direction. Correspondingly, the number of tourists who come from different places around the world increases every year, generating important revenues for Costa Ricans. This issue has generated more employment and better opportunities for several families. For this reason, there is an increase in the need to form better professionals in the field of tourism who can really communicate by using English effectively in real life situations.

Hence, tourism students require to be properly trained to use the language communicatively and effectively in real contexts. They need appropriate mastery not only of the four basic linguistic skills but also of other micro-skills like pronunciation. In fact, mastering pronunciation enables learners so that they are understood by English native speakers. Nonetheless, occasions are in which students are not provided with suitable materials and activities for them to improve the pronunciation of some sounds, including consonants. This causes miscommunication and lack of preparation of these future professionals. Therefore, it is necessary to design materials and activities that fulfill the needs, lacks and preferences of those learners who take English for Specific Purpose

courses (ESP). In order to propose a solution to the situation just described, the following research questions and objectives are proposed as the core of this research study.

### 1.1 Research Questions

1. What are tourism learners' perceptions in regard to the specific instruction of pronunciation in their ESP courses?
2. What are tourism learners' needs and preferences concerning activities and materials used for pronunciation teaching in their ESP courses?
3. What activities and materials should be designed to respond to the learners' needs and preferences regarding pronunciation teaching in their courses?
4. How do learners' assess the usefulness and contribution of the materials and activities designed by the researchers to reinforce their pronunciation of the consonant sounds /ð/, /θ/, /ʃ/, /tʃ/, /z/ and /dʒ/?

### 1.2 Objectives

1. To identify learners' perceptions in regard to the specific instruction of pronunciation in their ESP tourism courses.
2. To discover students' needs and preferences regarding the activities and materials to be used in pronunciation teaching in their ESP courses.
3. To define what materials and activities should be designed to respond to the learners' needs and preferences regarding consonant pronunciation teaching in their courses.
4. To assess the usefulness of the materials and activities designed by the researchers to reinforce the learners' pronunciation of the consonants /ð/, /θ/, /ʃ/, /tʃ/, /z/ and /dʒ/.

## II Literature Review

### 2.1 English for Specific Purposes or ESP

ESP has suffered great transformations since it was first introduced around the 1960s. One of the most important reasons why ESP has become such an important part of English Language Teaching (ELT) is the need for an alternative to General English (GE), which was not sufficient to fulfill the demands and needs of many learners who required the language to function in particular target situations and fields. Today experts conceive ESP as an approach to language learning more than a product. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) state that "ESP is not a particular kind of language or methodology, nor does it consist of a particular type of teaching material. Understood properly, it is an approach to language learning which is based on learner need" (p.19). The authors clearly determine that language teaching in ESP should depart from the reasons why people need to learn a foreign language.

In many ways, ESP and GE are similar but their emphasis on the learners' reasons for learning is what separates them from all other approaches and methods. Dudley-Evans

and St. John (1998) highlighted that “the main concerns of ESP have always been, and remain, with needs analysis, text analysis and preparing learners to communicate effectively in the tasks prescribed by their study on work situation” (p. 1). Considering this premise, it becomes fundamental to clearly understand and analyze the implications that needs analysis has in ESP course design.

### **2.3 Needs Analysis and Materials Design in ESP**

Meeting the needs of particular learners requires the ESP teacher to spend a great deal of his or her time designing appropriate courses for different types of learners. Course design is accomplished through asking questions which can provide “a reasoned basis for the subsequent processes of syllabus design, materials writing, classroom teaching and evaluation” (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 21). This process of asking questions is called needs analysis, and it is fundamental for any process intended in ESP. In the case of this research study, needs analysis was focused on materials design for specific purposes which, as stated by Vičič (2011), is one of the most important aspects in which ESP differs from GE (p. 109). Another author who pointed out the importance of materials is Larsen-Freeman (2000), who expresses that one strategy to solve the students’ inability to “transfer what they learn in the classroom to the outside world [is to implement] language materials that are authentic to native speakers of the target language” (p. 132). This means that, if the materials used are not authentic or appropriate for their target context, students will not be able to use the language effectively in real life interaction.

The selection, adaptation or writing of materials is a critical area of ESP teaching. This is mainly because providing students with suitable materials “will equip them with the knowledge they will need in their future business life” (Vičič, 2011, p.110). Materials’ selection or writing results from effective course development and needs analysis. Much of the work ESP teachers do in their practice is to decide the extent to which they should use only subject-specific materials or combine them with general materials. Ellis and Johnson (1994) stated that “general materials focus on one’s general ability to communicate more effectively, while subject-specific materials focus on a particular job or industry” (as cited in Vičič, 2011, p. 110). Nevertheless, it is widely known that one of the main obstacles for ESP teachers is the access to subject-specific materials suitable for their courses. Hence, most of them have to either use general materials or create their own.

Tailor-made materials or those designed by teachers require much more effort, but they result in a more rewarding process. These materials will also cater better for learners’ needs and, as Vičič (2011) puts it, ESP “learners will often feel more affinity for materials that they find relevant to their area of specialism” (p. 111). Clearly, there are great benefits in designing materials for learners, language programs and teachers. It is also relevant that pupils participate in the process of materials selection, given that ESP is predominantly student-centered; their considerations should be a priority in this process.

#### 2.4 A Learner-centered Approach to Needs Analysis and Materials Design

This study focuses on the application of a learner-centered approach to needs analysis and materials' design. The development of learner-centered curricula was a product of the advent of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Nunan, 1998, 24). One of the basic premises of communicative approaches is that the language users should not only have command of grammatical structures, but also be able to get things done in a target context. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) stated that in the past, the teaching of ESP was primarily concerned with the linguistic aspects of the language. Now, it has shifted towards developing communication skills, and learning is very much directed by specific learners' needs for mastering the language (pp. 18-19). This view of ESP points out the importance and roles of learners in the planning of a course or materials and their implementation. Kaewpet (2009) supported this view and added that "aside from language needs, learners' attitudes and feelings are clearly highlighted in the learner-centered approaches" (p. 212). The individuals' perceptions and interpretations are of great value to this approach.

#### 2.5 Pronunciation in the ESP Context

One of the most paramount aspects that ESP teachers have to understand is the speech process and the problems students may encounter when they are learning English. Dauer (1993) described the speech development in all tongues as a "chain of stages.... [in which] *the speaker's speech organs move*" (p. 1). Every person who seeks the ability to utter words and ideas in a target tongue has to go through several steps that go from identifying new sounds and articulating them properly to using them in context as required. All this effort, if followed properly, gives light to the miracle of speaking.

Accordingly, learners must be aware of several linguistic factors and take all of them into account in order to produce a sound, to join several sounds to pronounce a word, to link several words, to be able to express thought or pause groups, and then, to put those idea groups together to transmit a more complete and accurate message. Conversely, cases are in which problems may arise. Dauer (1993) explained that one of the main obstacles that block communication is mispronouncing a specific sound. She stated that in any part of the speaking process, "there could be a problem that results in the message intended by the speaker not being understood by the listener.... Perhaps [the speaker] cannot produce a particular sound" (p. 2). In other terms, a determining factor to function as a successful foreign language speaker is to pronounce sounds accurately. In the case of Spanish speakers who are learning English, many of them face difficulties when pronouncing sounds due to the differences that exist between both tongues.

#### 2.6 Consonant Sounds: English vs. Spanish

Both tongues, English and Spanish, share almost the same alphabet system, but many sounds differ greatly between them. This is one of the main reasons why major emphasis is placed on the English consonant sounds for the purpose of this research study. The sounds considered in this paper are the ones represented by the following symbols: /ð/, /θ/, /f/, /tʃ/, /z/ and /dʒ/. From these sounds, only the phoneme /tʃ/ is similar to the one

used for the combination “ch” in Spanish. Teschner and Whitley (2004) explained that there are some English phonemic units that are uncommon in other languages. As an illustration, they expressed that “the fricatives /θ/ (thin) and /ð/ (then) are high frequency in English but less common elsewhere” (p. 177). These two sounds and others give problems to English students.

In other cases, Spanish speakers tend to mispronounce some sounds, (for example, instead of using the sound /θ/ in a word, they may turn out to be using the sounds of their native tongue corresponding to the letters “s” and “t”), or even drop them. In the latter case, Dauer (1993) stated that, since many words end in a consonant sound in English that is unusual in other languages like Spanish, many speakers tend to omit them.

Another major difference between English and Spanish that challenges language learners is the fact that Spanish is more phonetic than English. In his book *The Sounds of Spanish: Analysis and Application*, Hammond (2001) commented that “Spanish pronunciation is closer to its spelling than English,” and this is reflected in the way dictionaries in both tongues are designed (p. 11). The same author explains that, while Spanish dictionaries do not include a phonetic transcription for each of its entries, English monolingual dictionaries do since even the native speakers of this language sometimes do not know the pronunciation of new words. This may confuse language learners at the time reading and speaking in English since they are inclined to mispronounce words like “think” and say something like /tɪŋk/ instead. In a nutshell, the learning of English pronunciation on the part of Spanish speakers may be affected by factors such as differences in pronunciation or nonexistence of consonant sounds, and differences between both languages

## 2.7 ESP and Tourism

People working in the field of tourism, in hotels or any other tourist project, will have to deal with thousands of tourists every year. Most of them come from other countries. Many of them are native speakers of English; notwithstanding, there are a great number of tourists whose native language is not English, but they use this language to communicate when they travel abroad. Therefore, being English the language of business and commerce, it is imperative to give students the tools to succeed in the field of tourism. This can be achieved by implementing effective teaching methodologies, especially the ones related to pronunciation and speaking instruction, so that instructors become able to satisfy socioeconomic expectations to help them be communicatively competent and accurate. As expressed by Saraceny, students need “not only to understand how to say things but also to be able to choose what to say” (2006, p. 171). This implies that individuals working in the field of tourism have to be able to use the language proficiently. They need to express their ideas in such a way that tourists will be able to understand them. This can be accomplished by mastering not only the formal structures of the language and the necessary vocabulary but also by learning the right pronunciation of words and sounds.

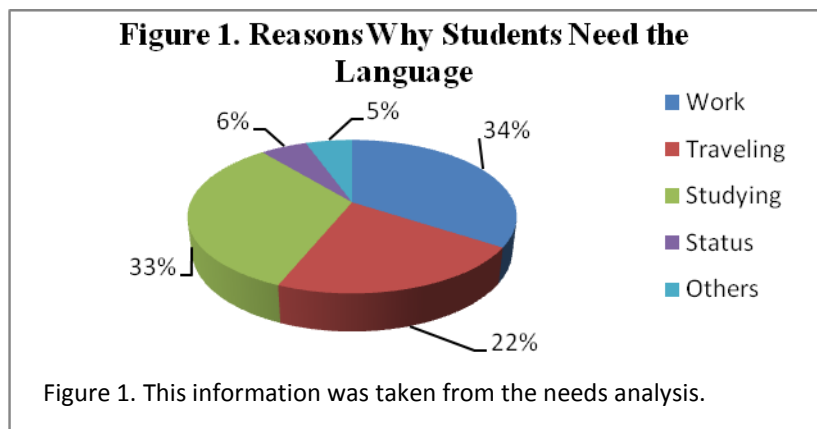
### III Students' Needs and Perceptions Regarding Pronunciation and the Materials and Activities Used for Its Instruction

In order to understand and establish student's perceived needs and insights regarding the use of different materials and activities, a learner-centered approach to needs analysis was implemented. It focused on exploring the issue from the point of view of the learners mainly. It intended to inspect tourism students' English pronunciation needs and their perceptions about the materials and activities used to teach this micro-skill.

The participants were a group of 26 second-year tourism students at Universidad Nacional Brunca Branch Campus. Two instruments were used to gather data in this research study. The first one was a needs analysis questionnaire aimed at collecting information about students' perception of the teaching of pronunciation in their major and the needs they had in terms of materials and activities. The other technique used was Focus groups. Three focus groups were carried out to implement and assess the material designed by the researchers in charge of this study in order to address the students' needs. After the analysis of the data collected, the following were the major findings obtained.

#### 3.1 Learners' Perceived Needs for Language

One of the most important findings in this study is learners' perceived needs for language. Results obtained in the needs analysis questionnaire<sup>23</sup> reflected that work is the most outstanding reason why students need English. Figure #1, shows that for 43% of the surveyed students, work is the most important reason why they need English. This means that English is necessary because it gives them access to better job opportunities. 33% of the participant students expressed that it is studying, and 22% of them considered that it is traveling.



Another relevant finding gathered in the needs analysis questionnaire is that the main use they will make of English is oral communication. Figure #2 shows that 49% percent of the surveyed students considered oral communication as the most relevant goal

<sup>23</sup> See Appendix A

of learning English. Besides, 33% of them chose reading comprehension as the most outstanding purpose for this, and 27% of the students considered writing as the main purpose for learning this target tongue. Only 1% of them chose listening comprehension as a purpose for learning English. The most remarkable finding is that oral perception is the main objective for students to learn English, just as it is proposed in the syllabus of their major.

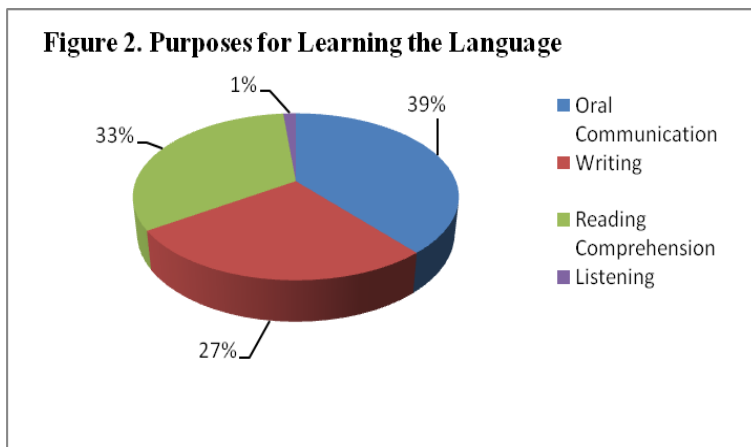


Figure 2. This information was taken from the needs

The data gathered through question #5 of the needs analysis questionnaire<sup>24</sup> and displayed in the table below shows the priority assigned by students to each one of the language skills. The surveyed students' ranking shows that speaking, listening and pronunciation are the skills and micro-skill with the highest level of priority. Vocabulary, writing and reading, according to students, are also important micro-skill and skills but not as much as the skills afore explained. Finally, there are two micro-skills that have the least level of priority, which are grammar and culture. The main finding is that students are aware of the importance that speaking and pronunciation have in the mastery of English.

**Table 1. Language Skills Sort by Priority According to Students' Perception**

Speaking	24	19%
Listening	24	19%
Pronunciation	21	16%
Vocabulary	15	12%
Reading	14	11%
Writing	13	10%
Grammar	10	8%
Culture	6	5%

Table 1. This information was taken from the needs analysis.

<sup>24</sup> See appendix 1



### **3.2 Learners' Perceptions of Specific Instruction of Pronunciation**

In this section, some of the responses to the needs analysis questionnaire provided by participant students are included in order to illustrate their perceptions about pronunciation and its teaching in their ESP courses.

#### **3.2.1 Students' perceptions of pronunciation teaching.**

In close question #7, tourism learners expressed how they considered the teaching of English in their major. As a result, most of the students, 22 out of 26, stated that studying English is necessary for them. This reveals that learners are aware of the relevance of the target language for their study purposes. Open question #8 was also related to the extent to which specific instruction for pronunciation is beneficial for students. Here the main variables or constructs identified from the responses were:

- better communication,
- better pronunciation,
- better oral expression,
- better job opportunities.

This represents that pronunciation learning represents a major concern for students to improve different areas.

#### **3.2.2 Students' perceived needs for improvement.**

When asked about the aspects that they had to improve regarding pronunciation (open question #9), four main variables were identified from the students' responses. Learners indicated that they feel the need to progress in several aspects, which are consonant and vowel articulation, pronunciation practice and fluency. This denotes that tourism students are aware of the need they have for the improvement of a series of pronunciation elements, one of them being consonant sounds.

Learners also answered open question #10: "What is your opinion about the specific study of pronunciation in the previous course you took?" which was English 3 for Tourism. They affirmed in most cases that it was either good or regular, but that it lacked practice, dynamism, creativity and variety of activities. A student complained that book-based activities were mostly used, which made the classes boring for him.

### **3.3 Learners' Perceptions about Learning Activities Used for Pronunciation**

In the needs analysis questionnaire, students were asked about the activities that had been more significant for the improvement of their pronunciation during previous courses. Answers were very varied but those with a higher frequency of appearance were the following:

- repetition of sounds,
- listening to pronunciation of sounds,
- conversations with partners focused on tourism issues,
- oral presentations,
- observation of the written representation of sounds (phonetic symbols).

Answers reflected that the specific study and practice of phonetic sounds through the activities mentioned above are a significant way in which learners could improve their pronunciation.

On the other hand, when asked about the activities that were not significant for them to improve pronunciation, students reflected that the use of the book as the only source of practice was not well accepted. Also, students demanded for more dynamic activities and routine activities were criticized. The lack of interaction with native speakers of English was another point highlighted. Some of the respondents' sample answers taken from questions #11 and 12 are provided to illustrate this point:

- "...we only had practice with the book, and we did not have conversations among students (*Needs Analysis Questionnaire*, own translation).
- "only the book was used as the course material" (*Needs Analysis Questionnaire*, own translation).
- "...classes were very routinary" (*Needs Analysis Questionnaire*, own translation).
- "...the 10 weekly hours of class are only taken in the classroom, we do not have the possibility to go to another place where we can practice and listen to English native speakers" (*Needs Analysis Questionnaire*, own translation).

### 3.4 Learners' Preferences in Activities and Materials

From a list of several materials, students were asked to rank the five ones they considered more useful to improve their pronunciation<sup>25</sup>. Number 1 represented their top priority and 5 their fifth priority. Table 2 shows the options that were ranked number 1 by the respondents. It is possible to observe that songs, movies and dialogues were more frequently ranked as the top priority. Books, tongue twisters and videos were first options as well. The same six materials were also ranked number 2 and 3 with high frequency, which reflects that they were definitely in the preference of the learners. The main finding here is that these are the types of materials that were more appealing to students; hence, researchers would design materials that responded to these preferences.

**Table 2. List of Materials Ranked #1 for Students to Improve their Pronunciation**

Songs	9	35%
Movies	7	27%
Dialogues	5	19%
Books	3	11%
Tongue twisters	1	4%
Videos	1	4%
Total	26	100

Table 2. This information was taken from the needs analysis questionnaire.

<sup>25</sup> See Appendix A question #14

### 3.5 Evaluation of Materials and Activities Designed

Through three different focus groups in which students volunteered to participate, different material and activities designed by the researchers were implemented for students to assess their usefulness and the level to which they really fulfilled their needs. Three different kinds of materials were tested during each focus group. At the end of each focus group, students answered an evaluation instrument<sup>26</sup>. The information displayed in Table 3 shows students' perception when they evaluated the materials and activities implemented in the three focus groups.

Students' opinions on the first assertion show that the materials and activities used to teach the different consonant sounds emphasized contributed to enrich their knowledge of their area of study. This is proved since, in 20 out of the 27 instruments collected, participants strongly agreed and the other 7 agreed with it. The second premise dealt with the extent to which activities and materials used helped learners to improve their consonant sounds pronunciation. In this regard, 6 of them agreed and 21 strongly agreed. In terms of students' preferences, their responses to assumption #3 illustrate this issue. In this case, 14 students strongly agreed, 10 agreed and only 3 partially agreed, which shows that the materials and activities used in the focus groups had a positive effect. Similarly, whether or not the activities and materials responded to students' needs was revealed by their answers to the fourth premise. 13 learners strongly agreed, 12 agreed and just 2 partially agreed, which means that their needs were addressed in the focus group. Finally, since 15 students strongly agreed, 9 agreed and just 3 partially agreed to premise #5, the materials and activities put into action in the focus groups were innovative and useful for students' learning. It is evident, according to learners' evaluation, that the materials and activities designed by the researchers had a positive impact on students' pronunciation learning and improvement.

**Table Students' Evaluation of Focus Groups Materials and Activities**

	SD ↓	D	PA	A	SA ↓
	1	2	3	4	5
1. The materials and activities implemented in this focus group contribute to the knowledge of my area of study: Tourism.				7	20
2. The materials and activities implemented in this focus group helped me improve my pronunciation of the sounds emphasized.				6	21
3. The materials and activities used in this focus group correspond to my preference and learning style.			3	10	14
4. The materials and activities used in this focus group respond to my needs regarding pronunciation.			2	12	13
5. The activities and materials presented during the session demonstrated to be innovative and useful for my learning.			3	9	15

Table 3. Information taken from the evaluation instrument for focus groups.

<sup>26</sup> See Appendix B

Other important responses were mentioned by students in the open ended questions included in the focus group evaluation instrument. Most of them reported that they had more preference for videos and songs<sup>27</sup>, and the listening and speaking activities that were designed by the researchers on the basis of those materials. In addition, they specified that what they liked from the activities and materials used in the focus groups in general terms was that they were dynamic, creative, varied, authentic and easy to understand. They also stated that those didactic resources allowed them to practice, participate in an oral way, and also gave them the chance to have listening practice.

#### **IV Conclusions**

Students are deeply aware of the importance that learning English has for their professional future. They clearly understand what they need the language for and what the main purposes for using the English language are. The main goal they see in the language classes is achieving oral proficiency. This implies that materials and teaching activities implemented in the classroom should be aimed at helping learners improve their English oral proficiency without leaving the other skills and micro skills unattended. Learners are aware of the importance that pronunciation has in learning and using English in real life situations in order to understand and be understood. This means that the teaching of pronunciation should be focused on addressing these students' needs.

Using videos, readings, songs from real life, not adapted to the course, is really useful because they motivate students. The reason for this is that they are in contact with the language as it is used in real life and as it is pronounced by native speakers.

Designing pronunciation teaching materials and activities based on a sound needs analysis and on students' preferences is very useful to raise learners' interest and to help them learn in a better way. Using teachers' inventiveness and creativity could perhaps lead to the creation of excellent teaching materials and activities.

The teaching materials available to teach pronunciation, though useful, do not necessarily satisfy students' needs and preferences because most of them are very general. Pronunciation teaching materials and activities should be designed to meet the context characteristics, particularities and requirements; otherwise, they will not be as useful and helpful to improve students' pronunciation as professors usually believe. They should also be dynamic, creative, varied, authentic and easy to understand, but most of all, they must allow students to practice, participate in an oral way, and give them a chance to have listening practice.

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<sup>27</sup> See Annex C for sample materials

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*Appendix A.* INSTRUMENTO 1. ANÁLISIS DE NECESIDADES PARA LOS ESTUDIANTES

**Queridos estudiantes:** El siguiente instrumento consiste en un análisis de necesidades que contiene tanto preguntas cerradas como abiertas para determinar las necesidades, carencias, y deseos de los estudiantes del curso Inglés IV para Turismo en relación a la enseñanza específica del componente de pronunciación en dicho curso. El estudio se enfoca en el material didáctico y actividades de aprendizaje utilizado para el mejoramiento de la pronunciación del idioma inglés.

La información suministrada será utilizada exclusivamente con fines de investigación y la confidencialidad será garantizada mediante el anonimato.

Por favor, siéntase libre de responder en forma amplia y honesta en cada pregunta que se plantea. La riqueza de sus respuestas en relación al tema beneficiará en gran medida este estudio.

1. **Sexo:** Femenino \_\_\_\_\_ Masculino \_\_\_\_\_
2. **Edad:** De 18 a 20 años \_\_\_\_\_ de 21 a 25 años \_\_\_\_\_ más de 25 años \_\_\_\_\_
3. **¿Por qué necesita el idioma inglés?**
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ Trabajo
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ Viajes
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_ Estudio
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_ Status
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_ otro: \_\_\_\_\_
4. **¿Cómo utilizará el lenguaje?**
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ Para comunicarse en forma oral
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ Para comunicarse en forma escrita
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_ Para leer información de distintas fuentes
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_ otras: \_\_\_\_\_
5. **¿Qué tan frecuentemente podría utilizar el inglés en su futuro?**
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ la mayoría del tiempo
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ frecuentemente
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_ algunas veces
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_ en muy pocas ocasiones
6. **¿Cuál de las siguientes habilidades y componentes del lenguaje serán de mayor utilidad para usted? Puede marcar más de una opción.**
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ Lectura
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ Escritura
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_ Expresión oral

- d. \_\_\_\_\_ **Comprensión auditiva**
- e. \_\_\_\_\_ **Gramática**
- f. \_\_\_\_\_ **Pronunciación**
- g. \_\_\_\_\_ **Vocabulario**
- h. \_\_\_\_\_ **Cultura**

**7. Basado (a) en su experiencia con el curso Inglés III para turismo, cómo considera usted la instrucción específica del componente de pronunciación.**

- a. **Necesaria**
- b. **Aburrida**
- c. **Difícil**
- d. **Importante**
- e. **Útil**
- f. **Innecesaria**
- g. **Fácil**
- h. **Otros**

: \_\_\_\_\_

**8. ¿Cómo puede la instrucción específica de pronunciación influir en su desempeño en el idioma inglés?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**9. ¿Qué aspectos de la pronunciación del idioma inglés considera usted que debe mejorar?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**10. ¿Qué le pareció el estudio específico de la pronunciación en el curso anterior?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**11. Desde su experiencia en el curso pasado, ¿qué actividades de aprendizaje fueron significativas para el mejoramiento de la pronunciación?**

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**12. Desde su experiencia en el curso pasado, ¿qué actividades de aprendizaje NO fueron significativas para el mejoramiento de la pronunciación?**

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**13. ¿Qué tipo de actividades considera de mayor utilidad para mejorar su pronunciación? Enumere las opciones según su preferencia. 1 corresponde a su primera preferencia y 4 a su cuarta preferencia.**

- a. Juegos \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Dramatizaciones \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Ejercicios de transcripción \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Ejercicios de repetición \_\_\_\_\_

**14. ¿Qué tipo de materiales considera de mayor utilidad para aprender a mejorar su pronunciación? Enumere las primeras cinco opciones de su preferencia. 1 corresponde a su primera preferencia y 5 a su quinta preferencia.**

- a. Libros \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Revistas \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Periódicos \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Cuentos \_\_\_\_\_
- e. Poemas \_\_\_\_\_
- f. Trabalenguas \_\_\_\_\_
- g. Diálogos \_\_\_\_\_
- h. Carteles \_\_\_\_\_
- i. Vídeos \_\_\_\_\_
- j. Películas \_\_\_\_\_
- k. Canciones \_\_\_\_\_

**15. ¿Qué otro tipo de actividades sugiere para el mejoramiento o la enseñanza de la pronunciación?**



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*Appendix B. MATERIALS AND ACTIVITIES EVALUATION INSTRUMENT*

**PART I. INSTRUCTIONS:** please write an “X” in the box that best describes your level of agreement with each of the following statements. Use the following table to decide your answer.

<b>SD= Strongly disagree</b>	<b>D= disagree</b>	<b>PA=Partially agree</b>	<b>A= Agree</b>	<b>SA= Strongly agree</b>
1	2	3	4	5

	<b>SD</b> ↓	<b>D</b>	<b>PA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b> ↓
	1	2	3	4	5
1. The materials and activities implemented in this focus group contribute to the knowledge of my area of study: tourism.					
2. The materials and activities implemented in this focus group helped me improve my pronunciation of the sounds emphasized.					
3. The materials and activities used in this focus group correspond to my preference and learning style.					
4. The materials and activities used in this focus group respond to my needs regarding pronunciation.					
5. The activities and materials presented during the session demonstrated to be innovative and useful for my learning.					

**PART II.** Complete the following ideas based on your experience during the focus group session.

6. The most useful activity for me to improve my pronunciation was:

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Why?

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7. The aspects that I liked the most about the activities presented were:

8. What I didn't like about the activities and materials implemented in the session was:



9. My recommendations to improve the materials and activities are:

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Appendix C. SAMPLE MATERIALS AND ACTIVITIES DESIGNED

**PART II. Video** Sounds / ð / / θ /

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Watch a video clip from the movie “Under the Sun of Tuscany.”

**Activity 1.** Before watching the clip, brainstorm some of the ideas that you have about Italy. You may talk about its geography, tourist sites or any other aspects.

**Activity 2.** Watch the video clip. After that, answer the questions below about it with a partner orally. When you answer, use the bold printed words from the questions.

<b>Questions</b>	
<p>1-What do you <b>think</b> about Tuscany?</p> <p>2-What type of tour is being portrayed in the scene? Are <b>there</b> tours like this in Costa Rica?</p> <p>3-Are <b>there</b> many attractions in Tuscany? Which ones did you see in the video?</p> <p>4-What are <b>three</b> aspects you really like about this place from what you see in the movie?</p> <p>5-What are <b>three</b> aspects that you dislike from this tourist site?</p> <p>6-According to what you saw in the video, how is people’s <b>health</b> in Tuscany?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Sample Answer</b></p> <div style="text-align: center;"> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> </div>

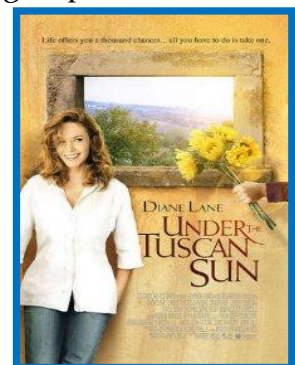
**Activity 3.** Read the following statement and complete it according to your perception from the video clip. Then, prepare for comments with the group.

***“I think Tuscany is the perfect place for***

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*a*

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.”

*tourist to...*

**Activity 2.** Introducing /ʃ/ and /tʃ/. Read the following tongue twisters out loud in order to practice the pronunciation of the sounds /ʃ/ and /tʃ/.

1. **Chester Cheetah chose Chicago as a tourist destination he should share with Sheila.**
  2. **What a shame such a charming ship crashed near the shore.**
  3. **A cheap ship? A cheap ship! This ship is a cheap choice.**
- \*Create your own using words containing /ʃ/ and /tʃ/.

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**Activity 3.** Learning How to Pronounce /ʃ/ and /tʃ/. Watch a video in order to learn how to pronounce the consonant sounds /ʃ/ and /tʃ/. Write and repeat the words you hear.

<p><i>/ʃ/</i></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p><i>/tʃ/</i></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
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- ❖ Remember /ʃ/ is voiceless and sounds like the quiet sound “Shhhhhh” and /tʃ/ is voiceless and sounds like a sneeze “Achoo”.

**Activity 4.** Watch a video in which minimal pairs using the sounds /ʃ/ and /tʃ/ are used.

**Part 1:** Listen and repeat.

**Part 2.** Write in the spaces below the word you hear under each sound symbol.

<p><i>/ʃ/</i></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p><i>/tʃ/</i></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
--	---

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**Part 3.** Listen to phrases containing the sounds /ʃ/ and /tʃ/ and repeat.

**Part 4.** Now listen to phrases in which the sounds /ʃ/ and /tʃ/ are linked and repeat.

**PART I. Song Sounds /ʃ/ /ʒ/**

INSTRUCTIONS: Listen to the song “Love Profusion” by the singer Madonna.

**Activity 1.** Complete the song lyrics with the words from the word bank.

**Activity 2.** Then, circle the sound corresponding to each of the words.



**Love Profusion**  
**Madonna**

There are too many \_\_\_\_\_ /ʃ/ /ɜ/

There is not one \_\_\_\_\_ /ʃ/ /ɜ/

There is no \_\_\_\_\_ /ʃ/ /ɜ/

There is so much \_\_\_\_\_ /ʃ/ /ɜ/

And the love \_\_\_\_\_ /ʃ/ /ɜ/

You make me feel  
You make me know

And the love \_\_\_\_\_ /ʃ/ /ɜ/

You make me feel

You make it \_\_\_\_\_ /ʃ/ /ɜ/

There are too many \_\_\_\_\_ /ʃ/ /ɜ/

There is no \_\_\_\_\_ /ʃ/ /ɜ/

I have lost my \_\_\_\_\_ /ʃ/ /ɜ/

What I want is an \_\_\_\_\_ /ʃ/ /ɜ/

And the love \_\_\_\_\_ /ʃ/ /ɜ/

You make me feel  
You make me know

And the love \_\_\_\_\_ /ʃ/ /ɜ/

You make me feel

You make me \_\_\_\_\_ /ʃ/ /ɜ/

You make me feel

You make me \_\_\_\_\_ /ʃ/ /ɜ/

You make me feel

I got you under my skin  
I got you under my skin  
I got you under my skin  
I got you under my skin

There is no \_\_\_\_\_ /ʃ/ /ɜ/

There is real \_\_\_\_\_ /ʃ/ /ɜ/

There is so much \_\_\_\_\_ /ʃ/ /ɜ/

What I want is a \_\_\_\_\_ /ʃ/ /ɜ/

And I know I can feel bad  
When I get in a bad mood  
And the world can look so sad  
Only you make me feel good



I got you under my skin  
I got you under my skin  
I got you under my skin  
I got you under my skin  
(twice)

And the love \_\_\_\_\_ /ʃ/ /ɜ/

You make me feel  
You make me know

And the love \_\_\_\_\_ /ʃ/ /ɜ/

You make me feel

You make me \_\_\_\_\_ /ʃ/ /ɜ/

You make me feel

You make me \_\_\_\_\_ /ʃ/ /ɜ/

You make me feel

I got you under my skin  
I got you under my skin  
I got you under my skin  
I got you under my skin  
(twice)

And I know I can feel bad  
When I get in a bad mood  
And the world can look so sad  
Only you make me feel good

**WORD BANK**

*explanation*  
*profusion (3 times)*  
*celebration*  
*resurrection*  
*confusion*  
*questions*  
*consolation*  
*vibration*  
*intention*

*illusions*  
*solution*  
*shine (5 times)*  
*destruction*  
*comprehension*  
*isolation*  
*options*  
*direction*

## **Authentic Readings: A Tool to Promote Critical Thinking, Cultural Sensitivity and Students' Autonomy in EFL Oral Communication Courses**

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**Resumen:** No todas las lecturas que los profesores eligen son útiles para desarrollarlas en los cursos de comunicación oral. Existe una necesidad urgente de evaluar gran parte del material de lectura de estas clases para así determinar su nivel de autenticidad ya que ésta debe llegar a ser una característica fundamental de este tipo de material. Las lecturas auténticas deben incitar al pensamiento cuando se utilizan con las técnicas apropiadas. Aunque sea una lectura corta el simple hecho de que se refiera a un evento real puede provocar una reacción personal en el estudiante. La investigación de acción que se presenta en este documento fue realizada con estudiantes de la carrera Enseñanza del Inglés de la Universidad Nacional, Sede Regional Brunca y busca identificar algunos de los efectos de incorporar lecturas auténticas en las clases de expresión oral y proponer un instrumento para definir el nivel de autenticidad de las lecturas seleccionadas así como también algunas técnicas para promover el pensamiento crítico, la sensibilidad cultural y la autonomía a través del uso de textos genuinos y realistas.

**Palabras clave:** Pensamiento crítico, autenticidad, autoconfianza, responsabilidad personal, sensibilidad cultural.

**Abstract:** Not all readings that teachers stumble upon are worth using in oral communication courses. There is an urging need to evaluate most of the reading material EFL classes are currently based on to determine the level of its authenticity. Authenticity must become a fundamental feature of readings used in the EFL classroom. Authentic readings might be thought provoking when handled with the appropriate techniques. Even if it is a short reading, the fact that it entails a real event or happening provokes a personal reaction in the student. The action research presented in this documented was conducted with students of the English Teaching Major at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension. It attempts at identifying some of the effects of incorporating authentic readings in oral expression courses and at proposing an instrument to define the level of authenticity of the readings selected as well as some techniques to promote students' critical thinking, cultural sensitivity and autonomy through the use of genuine and realistic texts.

**Key words:** critical thinking, authenticity, self-confidence, personal accountability, cultural sensitivity

## **I Introduction**

Teaching English is not an easy endeavor. On the one hand, its myriad components may make it an overwhelming goal for students. On the other hand, teachers might, consciously or unconsciously, overlook the importance of all the linguistic skills. Downplaying one linguistic skill or feature may disrupt the students' effective performance. From this standpoint, language needs to be assumed as a holistic system, all skills integrated, as delineated by the Communicative Approach. Although speaking and listening have been highly acknowledged due to the importance of oral communication nowadays, reading must not be separated from them. Reading can work as a springboard for students to jump to a better level of English competence and performance.

Undoubtedly, the use of readings may depend on how the teacher tackles the exercises. The preparation of the exercises has to be painstakingly schemed. It is worth noting that a language is successfully exceled from a more integrated approach. Thus, reading is better undertaken when any other linguist skill is integrated, for instance speaking. This fact coupled with authenticity makes the use of readings a really valuable element in the EFL oral communication courses. Furthermore, reading helps learners build a vast number of elements that are crucial to reach linguistic success. This study is aimed to promote strategies by incorporating authentic readings in order to strengthen critical thinking, cultural sensitivity and autonomy and build enough criteria to evaluate authenticity in texts.

## **II Literature review**

### **2. 1 Definition of Reading**

Reading, not long ago regarded as a passive skill, has evolved to become a more interactive skill. This interaction between the reader, the writer and the meaning of the text makes reading a unique learning experience. Alderson (2000) conceived reading as "...an enjoyable, intense, private activity, from which much pleasure can be derived, and in which one can become totally absorbed" (p. 28). Reading is a very purposeful activity that surrounds individuals and urges them to decode the written message. Whatever the aim of reading may be: learning, survival or pleasure, it is enveloped in everyday duties. Seen from this perspective, it is an essential part of individuals' lives that empowers them to interpret what is written. From a more instructional viewpoint, reading involves a real exposure to writing and provides "opportunities to study language: vocabulary, grammar, punctuation and the way [learners] construct sentences, paragraphs and texts" (Harmer, 1998, p. 68).

Readers decode the written meaning in two distinct ways: bottom-up and top-down processes. The selection of these processes depends on the purpose of the readers. Bottom-up processing helps the readers approach language from a more detailed form. The focus is on specific linguistic aspects that are tackled in isolation. The reader builds up meaning by "reading word for word, letter for letter carefully scrutinizing both vocabulary and syntax" (Sacha, 2006, p.61). Conversely, top-down processing exposes the reader to



an ample view of the language. This goes from discourse, utterances, sentences, phrases until getting to the smallest units of the language. Schema activation is required to favor the learners' proper guesses and interpretations of meaning. Unfortunately, neither of these two reading approaches may be ultimately successful for learners that are inclined towards a more balanced approach.

According to Alderson (1998) "the most comprehensive description of the reading process are interactive models in which every component in the reading process can interact with any other component combining elements of both bottom-up and top-down models" (p. 18). This integration of both approaches facilitates the effectiveness of the reading processes. The reader when faced with a new written text carries multiple expectations, ideas, beliefs, prejudices and inferences that are grounded on his or her background knowledge. This prior knowledge incites the learner to stop and think about his or her understanding of the separate linguistic units of the written message in order to test his or her hypotheses derived from this general or world knowledge. Unquestionably, these two complementary models are salient actions to consider when planning a successful EFL class.

#### 2.1.1 Reading in the EFL Classroom

Planning an EFL class involves an everyday struggle even for teachers who seem to have gained enough experience in the field. A successful lesson plan must integrate the linguistic skills as to promote students' efficient grasp of the target language. Upon dealing with the idea of integration, all four skills listening, speaking, writing and reading complement and interrelate with each other. Thus, reading lends itself to fulfill speaking objectives.

Depending on the nature and emphasis of the course, this integration may place higher importance on one of the four skills over the others. For instance, in high school contexts reading is treated for a more academic angle where reading skills are overemphasized. In other EFL settings, there is still an academic purpose where reading is tackled from a bottom-up approach. In university courses, and if English is the object and the means of learning, reading is seen from a more meaningful purpose where reading facilitates knowledge of the target language through a vast array of skill-integrated exercises. From this standpoint, a question arises, what are the most suitable reading materials to assist students on their way to successful language learning?

### **2.2 Authentic Materials and Authenticity: Wise Choices**

Although some experts agree that there are just two types of materials or sources, a third category can also be drawn. From this viewpoint authentic, non-authentic and authentic-simulated sources will be analyzed.

#### 2.2.1. Authentic or Non-pedagogical Sources

When selecting reading materials for the EFL class, several inquiries may come into play. One evident doubt accounts for the type of sources teachers must use: non-authentic or authentic materials. According to Nunan (1989) authentic materials are "any material which has not been specifically produced for the purpose of language teaching" (as cited in Macdonald, Badger & White, 2000, p. 19). These non-pedagogical materials are rich in

natural linguistic forms as they are used in real life, among the spoken ones such as TV commercials, films, news, weather forecasts, airport and station announcement, radio talks, interviews and debates. More examples of this type are recipes, articles, train/plane timetables, advertisements, brochures, poems, application forms, and instruction for the use of equipment can be listed. Authentic texts, specifically, are written for native speakers; thus, the language contained is “real” and representative of the purest use of it.

Based on Peacock’s (1997) idea, these types of texts are “materials that have been produced to fulfill some social purpose in the language community” (p. 2). In light of this assumption, authentic texts embody sufficient varied forms “whereas in a non-authentic text there is often one single structure that is repeated” (Neikova, 2005, p.2). This feature of texts makes them worth reading since the reader is hooked in a dual purpose: reading for life and reading for learning the language. The former purpose provides knowledge to the individual to comply with the routine tasks. The latter contributes to the linguistic formation of learners outside and inside the classroom if this type of material is believed to support the EFL class plan.

### 2.2.2 Non-authentic or Pedagogical Sources

Unlike authentic sources non-authentic sources are materials addressed to solve the needs of the learners in a realistic or, much of the time, in an artificial environment like the classroom. Neikova (2005) sustained that these types of sources “are usually over-explicit and that they say too much because they lack the natural redundancy of authentic ones; they abound with details, so, the students are not given the chance to make any inference” (p. 2). They are pedagogical sources devoid of linguistic “naturalness.” On the contrary, language forms have been modified to fit the students’ level, topic and sequence of a language curriculum. On this account, students are limited, not to say restricted, to the presentation of language according to an already-fit scheme based on a needs assessment analysis.

### 2.2.3. Authentic-simulated Sources

Teachers can even draw nearer authenticity by subtly tailoring texts that simulate an authentic one. Even though the idea is to make-believe that students are dealing with a non-pedagogical source, they benefit from this attempt in the sense that vocabulary and syntactical forms are derived from genuine settings. Harmer (1998) proposed this third category by establishing that

A balance has to be struck between real English, on one hand, and the student’s capabilities on the other. (...) We may want to offer texts, which, while being like English, are nevertheless written, or adapted especially for their level. The important thing is that such texts are as much like real English as possible. (p. 100)

This is the type of sources teachers can take advantage of as long as this adaptation occurs for the sake of the learners themselves. An adapted or abridged text can bring about a series of advantages as well. These sources may elucidate real examples of the target language and culture at a lesser level than authentic ones, but still be favorable for students to gain better linguistic performance in the long run.

#### 2.2.4 The Use of Authentic Materials in the EFL Classroom

The term “authentic” may sound pervasive to teachers drowned in a world where language textbooks govern. Many of them tend to reject the use of authentic materials due to the disadvantages these sources may bring. These teachers may show apprehensive about the use of authentic sources because elements such as lexicon and forms seem to be elevated and they may run the risk of not knowing the meanings.

There is a vast array of activities that can be devised for teachers to incorporate authentic materials in the class and for students to enhance their English performance. Even though the use of these materials may represent a challenge to teachers, there are ways by which they can be handled to suit the purposes of the class strategically. Senior (2005) highlighted the fact that the use of these materials must always have a purpose when brought to the classroom (p.71). The availability of authentic sources like TV commercials, films, news, weather forecasts, airport and station announcements, radio talks, interviews and debates, recipes, articles, train/plane/bus timetables, advertisements, brochures, poems, application forms, and instruction for the use of equipment help the teacher to diversify the activities and exercises in the classroom.

Nowadays, there is even a more powerful source that envelops a great deal of options: internet. This is a tool that has revolutionized the EFL world becoming a tall order in such a scenario. Its use must be tactfully planned to make the most out of all the advantages it may bring about. Upon mentioning all these types of authentic sources, it is worth mentioning that all these tools must be subjected to rigorous scrutiny based on thorough criteria for their selection and effective use.

#### 2.2.5. Criteria to Select Authentic Reading Materials

Although some authors suggest different criteria to select authentic reading materials, Lee and Nuttall stand out among many. Both authors agree on similar criteria such as exploitability and suitability of content. Lee (1995) listed two more criteria: textual authenticity and compatibility with course objectives. Nuttall (1996) added presentation and readability.

Exploitability refers to the flexibility of the text to be used in diverse activities and to what extent it promotes the use of different strategies or skills. Suitability of content evaluates how interesting, engaging and attention-grabbing the text is from the students' point of view. It includes the relevance and meaningfulness the text brings to students' lives. Textual authenticity encloses the manifestations of “real” and “natural” language that appears in the text and how representative of the target language the linguistic forms are. Compatibility with course objectives relates to how suitable the text content is for the goals of the language class. Presentation gauges how appealing the appearance of the text can be. Readability assesses the difficulty of the text according to the addressed students' level concerning structures and lexicon. It analyzes the number of times students may encounter new words or forms in the text. Further criteria like variety and novelty, natural language, text authenticity and text challenge can help build proper criteria to consider when selecting authentic readings.

2.2.6 The Advantages to Using Authentic Readings in Oral Courses

The use of authentic sources in EFL oral courses suggests text-based instruction where the selection of the texts depending on the students’ level, age, interest and goals may hinder or facilitate learning in the classroom. A number of contributions as well as some downsides can be drawn from using authentic readings in the classroom. The following table exhibits the main arguments for and against the use of these texts according to Richards (2001):

**Table 2.2.6.1 Arguments in Favor and Against the Use of Authentic Materials**

<i>Arguments for the use of authentic materials</i>	<i>Arguments against the use of authentic materials</i>
Positive effect on learner motivation	Often contain difficult language, unneeded vocabulary items and complex language structures, which cause a burden for the teacher in lower-level classes and demotivate low-level students
Authentic cultural information	Too culturally biased
Exposure to real language	Many structures are mixed causing lower levels to have a hard time decoding the texts
More closely to learners’ needs and interests	Its use is time-consuming for the teacher
More creative approach to teaching	May not expose students to comprehensible input at the earliest stages of acquisition
Provide a wide variety of text types, language styles not easily found in conventional teaching materials	
Continuously updated	
Positive effect on comprehension and learner satisfaction	

Note: The criteria cited in the chart account for the ones suggested by Richards (2006) as quoted in Berardo (2006).

**2.3. Critical Thinking Skills**

Upon the analysis of the positive and negative aspects of the use of authentic sources, teachers may find the need to enhance salient points of the advantages through the development of the activities they set in the classroom. Critical thinking is one of those points teachers can heighten throughout the lesson. Based on Paul and Elder’ assumptions (2008), critical thinking is acknowledged as

Self-directed, self-disciplined, self-monitored, and self-corrective thinking. It presupposes assent to rigorous standards of excellence and mindful command of their use. It entails effective communication and problem solving abilities and a commitment to overcome our native egocentrism and sociocentrism. (p. 4)

Undoubtedly, the management of these skills should be embedded in the distinct exercises properly scaffolded to get the students to develop effective reasoning. Lynch and Wolcott (2001) pointed out a series of steps that can efficiently help the teacher to scaffold students’ understanding to reach operative critical skills

- Step 1 — identify the problem, relevant information, and uncertainties;
- Step 2 — explore interpretations and connections;
- Step 3 — prioritize alternatives and communicate conclusions; and
- Step 4 — integrate, monitor, and refine strategies for re-addressing the problem. (p. 2)

By implementing these steps teachers get successful critical thinkers to manage the problem-solving exercises and cope with conflicts in an open-endedness way through a profound analysis of causes and consequences and deliberation of the results.

Bloom stressed the importance of higher and lower order thinking skills to develop reasoning. In the light of this division, “critical thinking itself is defined as having two components: 1) skills to generate information (lower order thinking) and 2) using those skills to guide behavior (higher order thinking)” (Sullivan, 2012, para. 4). These skills are also divided into six levels such as knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Helping the students to move up to a different level of cognition requires careful planning of the incorporation of these skills to the activities selected.

#### **2.4. Culture Sensitivity**

Another aspect teachers dealing with authentic reading sources must consider is culture sensitivity. Culture is a recurring element in genuine texts; these types of texts portray and resemble the target culture in its purest form. Although this element is easily spotted in authentic texts, it may be overlooked and not treated properly. Raising sensitivity towards the target culture is a significant role played by teachers in the EFL classroom. The reason why this aspect must be tackled is to guarantee students’ holistic formation of the target language. Learning a language implies knowledge about the system (systemic knowledge) and knowledge of the world (schematic knowledge). The latter signifies the knowledge represented by the individuals’ perspectives of the world, beliefs, assumptions, prejudices and stereotypes.

These two types of knowledge encapsulate the most successful way towards language proficiency. Stuart and Nocon(1996) shed light upon the importance of incorporating culture by stating that “learning about the lived culture of actual target language speakers as well as about one’s own culture requires tools that assist language learners in negotiating meaning and understanding the communicative and cultural texts in which linguistic codes are used” (p.432). McKay (2000) stressed the significance of the cultural component by stating that “it will foster learner motivation” (p.7). She supported the incorporation of a variety of cultural materials in the activities students perform to sensitize their appreciation of the target language group. Standford et all (1997) defined cultural sensitivity as “being aware that cultural differences and similarities exist and have an effect on values, learning, and behavior” (p.35). The more students get to know about the foreign language, the greater their understanding and tolerance towards it will be. Their willingness to participate and explore this community language group increases as well as their valuing diversity and lessening misconceptions. Therefore, cultural awareness heightens as the students develop this empathy.

#### **2.5. Learner Autonomy**

As students advance in their attempt to learn the foreign language, materials must be fraught with multiple factors to strengthen their instructional process. In this process of teaching a language, one of the utmost objectives of every single teacher is to empower the learners to become independent and accountable for their own learning. Learner autonomy, even though it is thought to be reached at higher levels of linguistic competence,

can be fostered since the very moment students set their learning strategies in the first stages of the process. Considering Little's (2004) definition of this element, learner autonomy is described as "learning how to learn intentionally" (p. 105).

Other authors have contributed to build a broader concept of autonomy by adding three main elements which are motivation (Ushioda, 1996, as cited in Reinders, p. 41), awareness (van Lier, 1996, as cited in Reinders, p. 41) and interaction (Kohonen, 1990, as cited in Reinders, p. 41). All these ingredients can be exploited through the use of authentic readings since students are encouraged and motivated to deeply explore the language from other angles and with their own capacities. Sometimes students' motivation is such that they keep up with their interest in the topic when being outside the classroom. Such motivation leads them to search for more information in other authentic sources.

### III. THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main aim of this study is to identify some possible effects of incorporating authentic readings in oral expression courses and to propose an instrument to define the level of authenticity of the readings selected as well as some techniques to promote students' critical thinking, cultural sensitivity and autonomy through the use of genuine and realistic texts.

#### 3.1 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The central research questions that this study aimed to answer are:

- 1) Are teachers currently using authentic readings in oral communication courses to promote students' critical thinking, cultural sensitivity and autonomy?
- 2) Which are the criteria of selection of readings followed by teachers?
- 3) Which are some possible effects of incorporating authentic readings in oral expression courses?

#### 3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

##### 3.2.1 *The Participants*

The informants in this study were twenty students of the English Teaching Major at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension. Ten of them were taking Oral Communication: Commerce and Economy in their third year of instruction while the other ten were taking Oral Communication: Social Issues in their second year. Their ages range from 20 to 25 years old. A random sampling method was used to select them. They were chosen from a list of 60 students enrolled in oral communication courses. Ten professors were also key informants in this study. All of them hold a master's degree and have taught in the program for more than four years.

##### 3.2.2 *The Instruments*

Two instruments were designed to gather data. One questionnaire was intended to gather key data about students' insights about the role of authentic readings in oral communication courses. The other instrument was a questionnaire for the teachers so that their impressions were collected.

3.2.3 Analysis and Results

An exhaustive examination of students’ responses and data gathered drawn the next analysis. Each of the research questions is answered in this section.

**Results and discussion of question 1- Are teachers currently using authentic readings in oral communication courses to promote students’ critical thinking, cultural sensitivity and autonomy?**

In order to verify language teachers are familiar with the concept “authentic readings”, they were requested to provide a definition. Their answers reveal that all of them have a clear understanding. They listed ideas such as *material created for other purposes than teaching a language, written material designed to inform and entertain not to teach and texts that were not written for teaching purposes*. Indeed, they even listed some examples like articles and information from newspapers and magazines, ads, songs and books. They all agreed that they prefer authentic readings over textbook passages. However, one informant stated that depending on the students’ level, this type of reading is not really effective in beginner students who struggle to grasp comprehension. In question seven, they mentioned the reasons behind this preference. The next graph shows the results of this multiple-answer question.

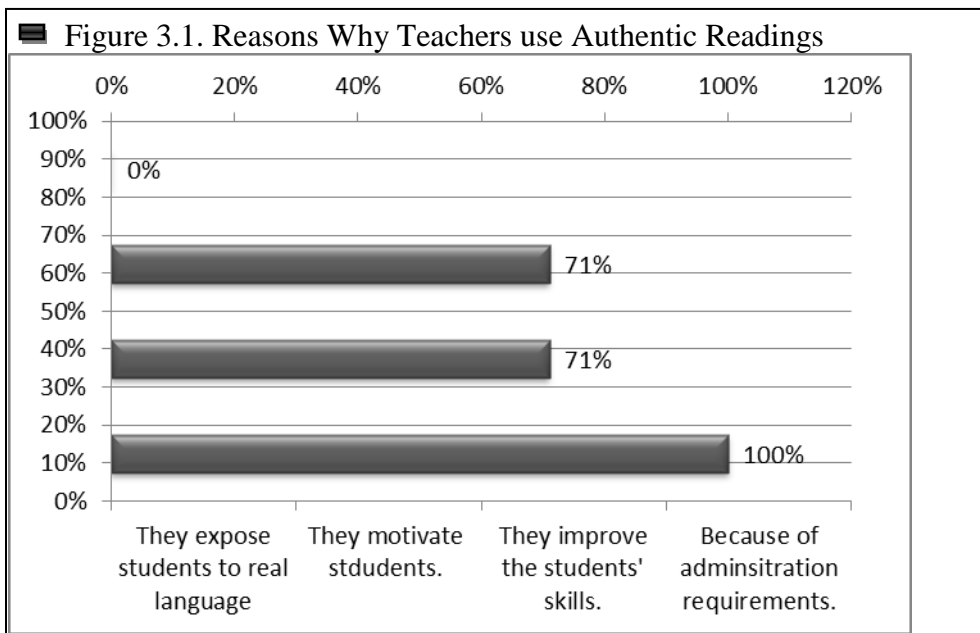


Figure 3.1. This figure displays data from a multiple-response question from the instrument *Questionnaire for the Teacher* administered in August 2012.

These answers reveal that teachers identified valid reasons to use these texts. However, one respondent stated that sometimes s/he does not use this type of readings because of syllabus constraints since topics and objectives limit this practice. Teachers listed some of the

exercises they commonly develop in the class with authentic readings. The majority of them mentioned interrogative questions, true/ false, discussion and debates. A small percentage provided students with projects and response papers in which critical thinking and autonomy are highly promoted.

### **Results and discussion of question 2- What are the criteria of selection of readings followed by teachers?**

Teaching material selection is an integral part of class planning. Consequently, language instructors should not underestimate the effect of careless practice. By keeping a sound criterion, programs and teachers are guaranteeing a high commitment while assuring effective classroom practice that will be reflected on students' linguistic achievement. The teachers in this study demonstrated to have a clear path to follow when choosing readings. They all agreed that authenticity of the readings is a priority. In fact, 100 % of the students questioned answered that their teachers always include readings from magazines and newspapers, and 95 % of them stated that those readings portray real-life events that help them confront what they learn in the class with what they face in real life. Teachers mentioned that aspects such as language level, course objectives and students' needs are over layout and currency (see table 3.2) which turn to be not important issues to consider. Indeed, only 30 % of the pupils affirmed that classroom readings are outdated which means that teachers usually take care when choosing the readings. Additionally to this, one teacher mentioned that the editor of the magazine or newspaper where texts are taken is a key aspect to consider as well.

Regarding the need to have specific training to use authentic material, 70 % of the teachers agreed that they would like to be part of training sessions while 30 % stated that they do not need this type of instruction. Informants who showed to be interested in training expressed they require particular training in both material design and material selection.

**Table 3.2**  
*Criteria of Selection of Readings*

<b>Criteria of selection of readings used by the teachers</b>	<b>Use</b>		<b>Percentage of cases</b>
	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	
Language level	7	26%	70%
Length of the text	5	19%	50%
Students' needs	6	22%	60%
Course objectives	7	26%	70%
Layout	1	4%	10%
Currency	1	4%	10%
Total	27	100%	270%

*Note: N= number of responses provided by the informants.*



Their responses brought to light that they do not possess sound criteria to select authentic readings. They put aside principles like textual authenticity, text challenge, natural language and exploitability.

### **Results and discussion of question 3- Which are some possible effects of incorporating authentic readings in oral expression courses?**

When researching the effects of authentic readings in oral communication courses, teachers identified specific ways in which they favor students' learning process. Their responses are summarized in the next table.

**Table 3.3**

*Possible Effects of Incorporating Authentic Readings*

<b>Authentic readings in the oral communication class benefit students'...</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Critical thinking</b>	90%
<b>Cultural sensitivity</b>	50%
<b>Autonomy</b>	80%

*Note:* informants provided this information in a multiple-answer question in which they ranked the benefits.

For teachers, critical thinking enhancement is the most recognized benefit. They actually identified levels of critical thinking skills promoted by authentic readings; they listed knowledge application, analysis, synthesis in a higher degree in contrast with evaluation and application. Autonomy was also categorized as an immediate benefit followed by cultural sensitivity. These same informants added that other effects are that students notice structures in context and acquire worldwide knowledge. Meanwhile, students identified two main positive effects. Indeed, 85 % of the pupils agreed that authentic readings make them feel engaged in the class while 80% responded that these types of readings give them the chance to present their opinions.

## **IV. Conclusions**

From the previous data analysis and the theoretical contributions examination, significant conclusions are drawn. First, it was put in evidence that the use of authentic readings in the EFL classroom is a common practice that deserves special attention to promote their proper and systematic use. Second, teachers are conscious about the many benefits this practice has on students' critical thinking, autonomy and cultural sensitivity which unfold the need to promote effective and systematic use of authentic sources in the EFL oral courses. Third, particular training on how to select authentic material is an unhindered need claimed by teachers. Consequently, the researchers identify the urge to design an instrument to define the level of authenticity of the readings to be used which is appended to this report. Finally, there exist vast sources of authentic materials in which the internet plays a key role. When one considers the practicality of this technological resource, it is inevitable to take advantage of it in daily classroom practice. Nevertheless, the selection of readings from internet merits a more sensible and deep analysis.

## 4.2 The Proposal

This proposal envelops two main contributions. First, the design of a set of techniques drawn from the main benefits obtained from authentic readings: critical thinking, cultural sensitivity and autonomy used as a bookmark. Each technique in the bookmark comprises a set of questions to help the student build understanding of these main contributions of authentic readings. Second, based on the needs identified in this study, a rubric to evaluate authenticity and usefulness of readings in oral expression courses was designed as an action plan to satisfy teachers' and students' needs in oral communication courses. This rubric is founded on theoretical references of experts in the field as Nuttall and Lee who established elements like suitability of content, exploitability, readability, presentation, textual authenticity, compatibility with class objectives, variety and novelty, text challenge and natural language to validate the usefulness and authenticity of texts.

### 4.2.2 First Proposal Contribution: Authentic Reading Techniques Bookmark

This is a creative design that teachers can also customize depending on the questions they want the students to be focused on. The bookmark encompasses the three different categories (critical thinking, cultural sensitivity and linguistic autonomy) containing a set of questions for each one. The idea is to provide students with a customized bookmark like the one given in the appendix and keep it handy in order to use it with any reading previously regarded as an authentic one by teachers. With a periodical use of this bookmark students are taken through the levels of critical thinking, are sensitized towards the target and other foreign cultures and develop curiosity for unknown words, pronunciation and phrases.

#### 4.2.2.1 Critical Thinking

The main levels according to Bloom for lower and higher order thinking skills are knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation and creation. To work out every reading teachers request students to use in the classroom a set of questions for each of the levels must be addressed. The following chart suggests some of the questions teachers may use:

**Table 4.2.2.1** *Bloom's Taxonomy of Lower and Higher Order Thinking Skills*

<b>Knowledge</b>	what, who, when, where, how
<b>Comprehension</b>	What about? What is the main idea of? What...show? How would you compare/contrast?
<b>Application</b>	How would you use...? What would be the result if...?
<b>Synthesis</b>	Why do you think...?What is the theme/moral?
<b>Evaluation</b>	What is your opinion of...?What would you recommend?How would you rate?
<b>Creating</b>	How would you improve? What is an original way for the...?

*Note:* The column on the left denotes the different thinking skills levels. The three first represent the lower thinking skills level and the other three the higher order thinking skills levels. Each level contains a set of questions used as examples for teachers to choose from and modify the bookmark when needed.

#### 4.2.2.2 Cultural Sensitivity

Being aware of existing cultures brings sensitivity to students' lives and modifies their mindset. For every reading teachers set to study in the classroom, a set of culture-oriented questions must be posed to raise awareness which, in turn, will help sensitize students:

1. What cultural group is portrayed in the reading?
2. What cultural differences might I encounter?
3. Would that be acceptable/prohibited in my culture? Why?
4. Why do I think he/she/they behave/think the way they did?



#### 4.2.2.4. Autonomy

Autonomy implies students to move beyond the techniques teachers customarily give them in the classroom. They behave independently and productively on their own outside the classroom. The idea is to lead students to acquire their own study habits by carrying out a set of out-of-the-classroom exercises on a daily/week basis. Vocabulary, idioms and pronunciation are the three major aspects that will be tackled in this proposal.

#### *4.2.5. Second Proposal Contribution: Rubric*

##### 4.2.5.1 Evaluation Rubric to Assess the Authenticity and Usefulness of Readings

This second contribution of the proposal is for teachers to evaluate the level of authenticity and usefulness of readings brought to students. Teachers analyze any reading by comparing its content with the aspects determined by the criteria in the rubric. They decide the score on a scale from 1 to 3. Important notes can be jotted down on the right column.

	<h2 style="margin: 0;">Authenticity and Usefulness of Readings</h2> <h3 style="margin: 0;">Evaluation Rubric</h3>		
<p><b>Objective:</b> This analytic rubric aims to evaluate authenticity and usefulness of readings in oral expression courses.</p>		<p>Score:</p>	
<p><b>Instructions:</b> A) Select a text B) Examine the following aspects and grade the text by choosing a score from 1 to 3. C) If the text scores less than 9 points, it is a non-authentic text. If it scores from 9 to 18, it is a partially authentic text. If it scores from 18 to 27, it can be acknowledged as an authentic text.</p>			
Category	Scoring Criteria	Points	Observations
Suitability of Content	Very interesting, thought-provoking, relevant to these students' needs.	3	
	Somewhat interesting, thought-provoking, relevant to these students' needs.	2	
	Not interesting, thought-provoking, relevant to these students' needs.	1	
Exploitability	Very useful to develop students' competence in distinct ways.	3	
	Somewhat useful to develop students' competence in distinct ways.	2	
	Not useful to develop students' competence in distinct ways.	1	
Readability	The combination of structural and lexical difficulty of a text is very suitable for these students' level.	3	
	The combination of structural and lexical difficulty of a text is somewhat suitable for these students' level.	2	
	The combination of structural and lexical difficulty of a text is not suitable for these students' level.	1	
Presentation	A very "authentic" and attractive presentation through the use of pictures, diagrams, photographs and the like.	3	
	A somewhat "authentic" and attractive presentation through the use of pictures, diagrams, photographs and the like.	2	
	Not an "authentic" and attractive presentation through the use of pictures, diagrams, photographs and the like.	1	
Textual	The text describes or narrates a very real and updated event.	3	

authenticity	The text describes or narrates a somewhat real and updated event.	2	
	The text doesn't describe or narrate a real and updated event.	1	
Compatibility with course objectives	The text lends itself to being studied or used to ask very good questions and developed very good tasks according to the course objectives.	3	
	The text lends itself to being studied or used to ask somewhat good questions and developed somewhat good tasks according to the course objectives.	2	
	The text doesn't lend itself to being studied or used to ask good questions and developed good tasks according to the course objectives.	1	
Variety and Novelty	The text contains very fresh and novel data in an appealing way.	3	
	The text contains somewhat fresh and novel data.	2	
	The text doesn't contain somewhat fresh and novel data.	1	
Text challenge	The text is very challenging to students' intelligence without making unreasonable linguistic demands.	3	
	The text is somewhat challenging to students' intelligence without making unreasonable linguistic demands.	2	
	The text is not challenging to students' intelligence without making unreasonable linguistic demands.	1	
Natural language	The written language is very representative of the natural usage of T2. The text is realistic and genuine.	3	
	The written language is somewhat representative of the natural usage of T2. It has been partially distorted.	2	
	The written language is not representative of the natural usage of T2. It has been distorted.	1	

*Designed by Olivares, C & Barrantes, L. (2012). with the contribution from the criteria stated by Nuttall (1996) and Lee (1995).*

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Cinthya Olivares Garita holds a Licentiate's degree in Applied Linguistics in English and a Master's degree in Second Languages and Culture from Universidad Nacional. She is currently working at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension in the English teaching major and the Associate's program in English. She has worked for thirteen years teaching students of all levels: primary, secondary and university. She has also worked for private and public institutions, participated in national and international conferences for teachers and been a trainer of several courses for in-service MEP teachers. She is currently one of the developers of CI-UNA (Centro de Idiomas Universidad Nacional) language program at SRB and the coordinator of CONLA UNA 2013.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Author's biography**

Lena Barrantes Elizondo holds a master's degree in Second Languages and Culture from Universidad Nacional. During her twelve years of teaching experience, she has taught in different areas. She has taught for the Ministry of Public Education as a primary school teacher and a teachers' trainer for in-service teachers. She is currently a professor at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension in the English teaching major and the Associate's Program in English, and coordinator of different projects in this institution.

Appendix 1 Authentic Reading Techniques Bookmark

**Authentic Reading Techniques**

**Critical Thinking**

1. What is the title?
2. What is the main idea of the text?
3. What would be the result if.....?
4. Why do you think.....?
5. What would you recommend .....to.....?
6. What is an original way for.....?

**Cultural Awareness**

1. What cultural group is portrayed in the reading?
2. What cultural differences might I encounter?
3. Would that be acceptable/prohibited in my culture? Why?
4. Why do I think they behave the way they did?

**Linguistic Autonomy**

Vocabulary Box:

Pronunciation Box:

Idiom Box:



Appendix 2: Reading Sample 1

# Authentic Reading Techniques

## E-mails: a sign of progress or of laziness?

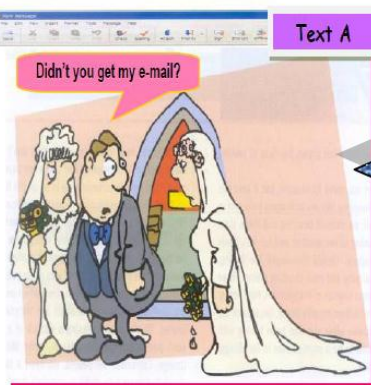
Ten years ago, e-mails were considered a very sophisticated method of communication. Nowadays, however, e-mail messaging has become a normal way of communicating, not only between working people but also between people at home. Text messaging and chatting on a mobile phone are still the most frequent methods of communication among teenagers, but e-mails are fast becoming more and more common in this age group.

This little flying yellow envelope on the screen changed the world of communication.

Words like stamps, post office or postman no longer belong to a teenager's vocabulary. New words are born: *e-mail, sent items, received items, recipient, attachment...* and symbols too. These words have replaced the old ones. Your pen friend, or should we say key pal, is only a click away.

Nevertheless, not everyone approves of the spread of e-mails. Teachers are in two minds. On the one hand, it is good that students spend a lot more of their free time exchanging e-mails and as a result get more practice at writing. On the other hand, there is very little attention to correct spelling, punctuation and grammar. What is more, e-mails tend to be very sloppy. Many older people, who are more used to formal business letters, feel also that the style of writing is too informal. For instance, it is quite common to use first names even though one has never met the person.

I would say that e-mails are a good invention although they will probably never replace either telephone calls or ordinary letters. As far as I am concerned, they are just another, very efficient, means of communication.



### Critical Thinking

1. What is the title?
2. What is the main idea of the text?
3. What would be the result if teenagers stopped using e-mails?
4. Why do you think teenagers use a phone code to text messages?
5. What would you recommend teenagers to improve oral communication?
6. What is an original way for teenagers to communicate in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?

### Cultural Awareness

1. What cultural group is portrayed in the reading?
2. What cultural differences might I encounter?
3. Would that be acceptable/prohibited in my culture? Why?
4. Why do I think they behave the way they did?

## Text Messaging :- ) or :- ( ?



The latest thing among British teenagers is text-messaging - sending little e-mails by phone to their friends.

96% of British students under 16 who have a mobile phone use their phones to send text messaging. "Texting" is great for teenagers who have pay-as-you-go phones because it's cheaper and more private than making calls. The craze has also produced its own language: **GR8 2CU** (Great to see you); **RUOK** (Are you Okay?); **THX** (Thanks); **:- (** (No) and **:' - (** (I'm sad)... Nosy parents or teachers can't understand it. For most adults this language is a code that only teenagers can handle. "Text messaging is cheaper so I use it

a lot more than phoning," says Rachel. "The coolest thing is that my parents can't read my messages. Isn't that XLNT and GR8? :-)"

Source: *In Focus and Cool Zone* (adapted)

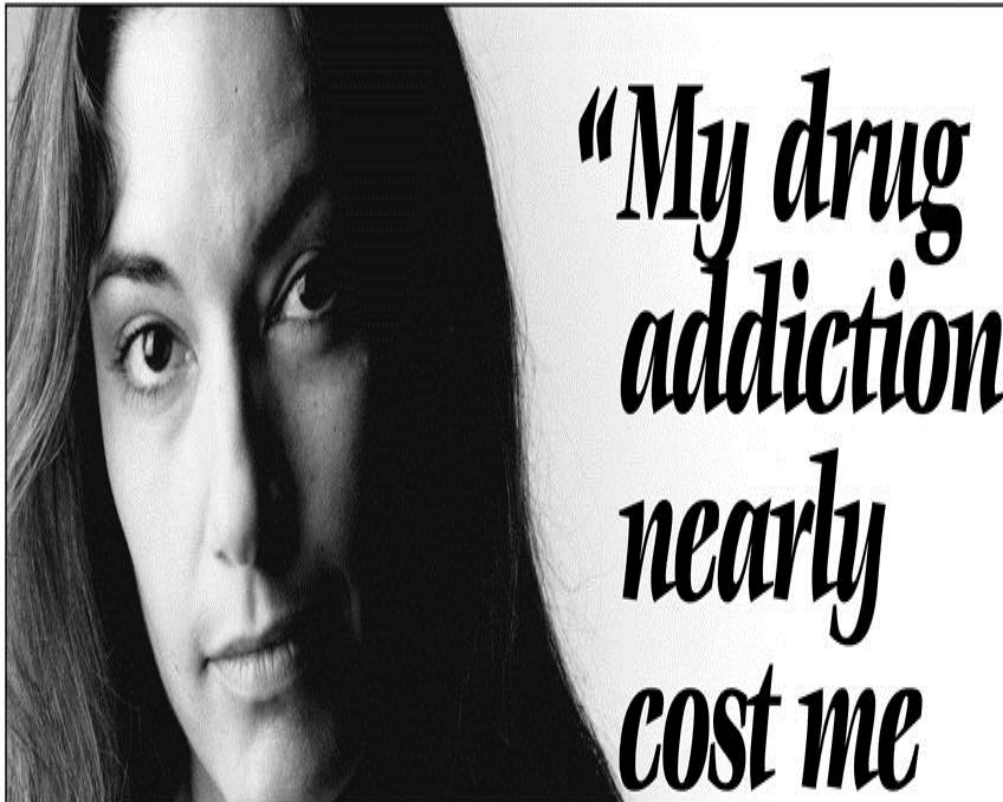
### Linguistic Autonomy

Vocabulary Box:

Pronunciation Box:

Idiom Box:

Appendix 3: Reading Sample 2



"My daughter needed me and I was too drugged to care," recalls Michelle, a 25 year old single mom.

She couldn't live with her addiction to methamphetamines and still be a good mom. After violently losing control with her daughter at the grocery store, the manager called the police. Michelle thought she had lost her child.

Michelle called the HelpLine. She received assistance with child care, parenting classes and spent time in an intensive drug treatment program. "I volunteer now to help other people who are hurting their kids with their addictions."

The Santa Barbara organizations that helped Michelle care for her daughter are all a part of our county's *United Way Network for Caring*. It makes a real difference in local people's lives. Won't you help us help others?

*Your United Way. Real lives. Positive solutions.*

**my child."**



Santa Barbara County's  
**United Way**  
www.unitedwaysb.org

This advertisement was made possible by Mark Oliver, Inc., and photographer Eliot Crowley.

**Authentic Reading Techniques**

**Critical Thinking**

1. What is the title?
2. What is the main idea of the text?
3. What would be the result if.....?
4. Why do you think.....?
5. What would you recommend .....to.....?
6. What is an original way for.....?

**Cultural Awareness**

1. What cultural group is portrayed in the reading?
2. What cultural differences might I encounter?
3. Would that be acceptable/prohibited in my culture? Why?
4. Why do I think they behave the way they did?

**Linguistic Autonomy**

Vocabulary Box:

Pronunciation Box:

Idiom Box:

## Speaking Clubs: An Alternative to Strengthen EFL Learners' Oral Production

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**Resumen:** Ha existido mucha incertidumbre en cuanto a cuales técnicas podrían acelerar la producción oral de los estudiantes de inglés como idioma extranjero. Definitivamente, el esfuerzo de los profesores para lograr este objetivo debería trascender el salón de clases. Algunas veces, aunque los profesores constantemente llenen sus estudiantes con ideas acerca de estrategias para cumplir este difícil objetivo fuera de las aulas, esto se vuelve una labor utópica. Una vez que los estudiantes salen del aula, rara vez algunos de ellos se mantienen en contacto con el idioma. Dependiendo de la variedad de estilos de aprendizaje, algunos estudiantes prefieren mantener contacto con otros compañeros para establecer comunicación y depurar su rendimiento lingüístico de forma oral. Este hecho al igual que los beneficios del uso de la tecnología para aprender un idioma extranjero destaca la importancia de la enseñanza del inglés a través de clubes conversacionales. Aspectos como reunirse en grupos con un mismo propósito, usar recursos audiovisuales para promover la conversación y aprender en un ambiente amistoso han garantizado a los estudiantes de un idioma extranjero un avance en el logro de este objetivo vital. Elementos distintivos de varias metodologías de enseñanza de un idioma tales como el método directo, desugestopedia, aprendizaje cooperativo, instrucción a base de tareas, enseñanza del lenguaje en comunidad y el enfoque comunicativo refuerzan la metodología de los clubes conversacionales diseñada para fortalecer la producción oral de los estudiantes. Esta investigación de acción comprende un análisis de las necesidades de los estudiantes del Centro de Idiomas, Universidad Nacional (CI-UNA) y de una propuesta para la implementación de clubes conversacionales como una herramienta para enriquecer la producción oral de sus estudiantes.

**Palabras claves:** producción oral, rendimiento lingüístico, audiovisuales, estilo de aprendizaje, desugestopedia, instrucción a base de tareas

**Abstract:** There has been much uncertainty as to what techniques could accelerate EFL students' oral production. Definitely, teachers' effort to attain this goal should transcend the classroom. Sometimes, although teachers constantly fill in students with ideas about strategies on how to fulfill this far-reaching objective outside the classrooms' walls, this turns out a utopic task. Once students leave the classroom, rarely do some of them keep in contact with the language. Depending on the variety of learning styles, some students do prefer to maintain contact with other partners to establish communication and polish their oral linguistic performance. This fact along with the benefits of the use of technology to learn a foreign language draws

the importance of teaching English through speaking clubs. Gathering in groups aiming at the same goal, using audiovisuals to prompt conversation and learning in a non-threatening atmosphere have guaranteed EFL students an advance in their achievement of a better linguistic performance. Distinctive elements of several language teaching methods and methodologies such as the Direct Method, Desuggestopedia, Cooperative Learning, Task-based Instruction (TBI), Community Language Teaching and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) underpin the speaking clubs methodology designed to strengthen learners' oral production. This action research entails an analysis of the needs of CI-UNA (Centro de Idiomas, Universidad Nacional) students in order to propose the implementation of speaking clubs as a tool to enhance students' oral production.

**Key words:** oral production, linguistic performance, audiovisuals, learning styles, desuggestopedia, task-based instruction

## I Introduction

The English language has reached great impetus and status in this new area of communication and information. Thousands of people struggle to learn it as a second or foreign language day by day. Approximately, around 375 million people speak it as a second language. It is estimated that over 1 billion people are currently learning English worldwide. The use of English, other than that of a native language, ranges from trading, doing ordinary life transactions to doing occasional business or having pleasures. Different countries have incorporated English to their educational curriculum. Costa Rica has not been the exception, and its educational institutions, public and private, have started programs and majors to prepare citizens in this area.

In this globalized era, the use of English has dramatically grown. Fortunately, the southern region of Costa Rica is a very representative example of the evolution of the demand for the English language, mainly in the tourism field. Citizens in this area have distinct characteristics as to what studies to initiate due to this demand. Business administration, English and tourism majors seem to be on the lead. Due to these citizens' specific needs Universidad Nacional has started language programs and projects to facilitate the learning of foreign languages, mainly English at a shorter time. Since the year 2010, approximately around August, the language program Centro de Idiomas Universidad Nacional (CI-UNA) opened its doors to Brunca Region citizens in order to enable them to learn a foreign language. In the course of 2011, after conducting some research about CI-UNA program, the implementation of more extra hours of continuous English practice was acknowledged as a top priority to maximize the efficiency of the courses. During the year 2012, specifically in the second bimester, the analysis of the data collected brought to light a new alternative in order to respond to this need. The following is a study of these students' needs along with a new proposal to enhance students' aural and oral abilities: the speaking clubs.

### 1.2 General Objective

To enhance CI-UNA students' oral performance through the implementation of speaking clubs

### 1.3 Specific Objective

1. To devise a new alternative for CI-UNA students to improve their oral and aural performance
2. To suggest a suitable methodology for CI-UNA students to be exposed to more quality time of interaction practice
3. To recommend materials for the improvement of students' oral performance

## II Literature Review

### 2.1 The Behaviorist and Mentalist Theories of Second Language Acquisition

Second language learning and teaching have been subject of investigation for more than fifty decades, and researchers and teachers still continue contributing through theories, models, and approaches. In the 1950s and 1960s the behaviourists claimed that in order to internalize a language system no more than “a stimulus-response connection” was needed. For them, “learning took place when learners had the opportunity to practice making the correct response to a given stimulus” (Ellis, 2012, p. 31). Nevertheless, in the 1960s the counterpart of the Behaviorist theory (the Mentalist) came to argue that “the human mind is equipped with a faculty [The Language Acquisition Device] for learning language” (p. 32). Therefore, all human beings are capable of learning a linguistic system only by means of receiving the appropriate input. On behalf of these two theories, different second language hypotheses have evolved providing participants of the learning process with significant information that enlightens the procedures employed for second language learning and teaching.

### 2.2 The Acquisition/learning Hypothesis

Krashen's *Acquisition/learning Hypothesis* has provided a clear view between these two routes of language development. For this researcher, there are two forms in which people can learn a language. The former is an subconscious process in which students are not aware of the fact that they are acquiring a language, being the procedure natural and similar to the one undergone when acquiring the mother tongue. The latter of these two refers to a conscious method in which learners are mindful of the process they are going through, knowing about the rules of the linguistic system (Krashen, 1986, p. 10). Subsequently, to acquire a language, a natural environment is needed. Otherwise, the only form in which a person can acquire the linguistic system is by being immersed in the target language. In this way, learners will be exposed to the comprehensible input ( $i + 1$ ) needed to construct their knowledge. As Krashen explained, learners acquire a language only when structures which are “a little beyond” student's knowledge are deployed. Once the input is understood, the output (productive skills) will start to emerge (Krashen, 1986, pp. 21-22). Nonetheless, providing that Spanish is the native tongue in Costa Rica, EFL (English as Foreign Language) classrooms are the most common means of learning the language. In other words, most learners, especially teenagers and adults who attend English classes, are aware of the process they are facing. For this reason, a meaningful learning environment embodies the successful internalization of the linguistic system.

### 2.3 Meaningful Learning

In EFL classrooms, meaningful learning is the key to internalize the language items and rules. According to Ausubel's *Subsumption Theory*, "learning takes place in the human organism through a meaningful process of relating new events or items to already existing cognitive concepts or propositions" (as cited in Brown, 2007, p. 91). To exemplify this theory, Ausubel added that "if we think of cognitive structure as a system of building blocks, then... meaningful learning is the process whereby blocks become an integral part of already established categories or systematic clusters of blocks" (p. 92). Therefore, if the learning process is meaningful, the target language items and structures will go to the long term memory rather than to the working memory (short term memory). In the long term memory, knowledge will be held permanently facilitating the information to be recalled at any moment. On the other hand, if the activities developed in the classroom are not meaningful to students, the information will be stored for a short period of time (Carroll, 2008, pp. 47-50). Consequently, making the learning process a meaningful experience as well as providing a collaborative learning environment may assure students the internalization of the language.

### 2.4 The Learning Environment in EFL Classrooms

In addition to meaningful learning conditions, the environment in which students attend classes plays a significant role in the route of foreign language learning. When analyzing human behavior, including the learning process, Rogers (1951) found a new concept "away from teaching and towards learning" called "transformative pedagogy" in which the "goal of education is the facilitation of change and learning" (Brown, 2007, p. 97). Rogers' *Humanistic Psychology* claims that "teachers must provide the nurturing context for learners to construct their meanings in interaction with others" (as cited in Brown, p. 98). Freire (1970) also agreed on these facts and added that "students should be allowed to negotiate learning outcomes, to cooperate with teachers or another learners in a process of discovery, to engage in critical thinking, and to relate everything they do in school to their reality outside the classroom" (as cited in Brown, p. 98). Hence, not only do these cases scenarios describe an environment which may provide students with the opportunities to achieve competence in the target language, but also they go hand in hand with some principles of teaching methods and approaches employed in the classroom.

### 2.5 Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching

Different approaches for language teaching have been developed for the purpose of accomplishing the English language teaching objectives. The *CLT (Communicative Language Teaching)*, for example states how "whenever possible, 'authentic language' — language that is used in a real context— should be introduced" (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. 17). According to this approach, teachers' responsibility is to establish situations to promote interactive communication which encourages cooperative relationships among learners and gives them the opportunities to negotiate meaning (p. 127). In addition, the *CLL (Community Language Learning)* explains that "language is for communication" and that "building a relationship with and among students is very important" (pp. 94-95). *The Direct Method* also provides some principles of language teaching. First, no translation is

allowed in the class. Therefore, “the meaning is to be conveyed *directly* in the target language through the use of demonstration and visual aids [like videos and songs]...” (Diller, as cited in Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. 23). Finally, in this method, the class is based on situations or topics so that students can employ the language in real-life like situations. Consequently, the *CLT*, *CLL*, and *The Direct Method* are three contributions to language teaching.

The Desuggestopedia Method has also contributed to the process of teaching a foreign language. This method has been developed so that “learning is facilitated in a cheerful environment” (p. 79), ‘desuggesting’ the barriers in the learning process by means of songs and games in the classroom. In the *Task-based Instruction*, learners are provided with “a natural context for language use. As learners work to complete a task, they have the abundant opportunity to interact, [and] such interaction is thought to facilitate language acquisitions as learners have to understand each other to express their own meaning” (p. 144). Lastly, *The Cooperative Learning* involves working hand in hand with students, teaching them social skills so that they can work together more effectively, and asking students to work in groups for them to learn from each other (p. 164). As a result, *Desuggestopedia*, the *Task-based* and the *Cooperative Learning* approaches foster not only students’ learning but also teachers’ instruction to merge them and create a unified relation between both parties for the purpose of achieving communicative competence in the target language.

## 2.6 Communicative Competence and Performance

If the learning environment and the approaches for education are appropriate, students will gain accuracy in their performance becoming competent in the language. To go further in these concepts, Savignon (1997) established the difference between competence and performance defining the first as “a presumed underlying ability... what one knows” while the second would be “the overt manifestation of that ability... what one does” (as cited in Omaggio, 2005, p. 4). Therefore, when students are going through the learning process, their main goal is not only to attain competence but also to be accurate while performing. Accuracy refers to the [degree of] acceptability, quality and precision in the message conveyed (Swender, as cited in Omaggio, 2005, p. 15). For students to be accurate, they must be fluent in the target language, master the grammatical items and structures, pronounce in the appropriate form, possess the vocabulary, create cohesive and coherent ideas (pragmatic competence), and finally, hold the ability to be understood (sociolinguistic competence) (p. 15). Subsequently, second language learning is aimed not only at gaining the knowledge about the language but also at being able to use it appropriately, and during the process itself certain factors such as students’ multiple intelligences must be taken into consideration.

## 2.7 Multiple Intelligences

In order to help students achieve competence and proficiency in the target language, teachers must provide equal learning opportunities in the classroom. Howard Gardner’s *Multiple Intelligences Theory* presents a new form of seeing students’ route to language development. According to Gardner (2011), “all [people] possess... seven or eight

intelligences... [and] no two people—not even identical twins—possess exactly the same profile of intelligences” (p. VX). Since students possess different intelligences, each student learns differently from the others making each learning process unique. For this reason, classroom work must be set in a way that students’ profiles of intelligences are taken into consideration. Activities developed during the class must embrace students’ intelligences and learning styles. Therefore, videos and pictures may be implemented for those visual students, songs may be useful for those pupils with a musical intelligence, problem solving may encourage logical mathematical learners, games may be appropriate for those kinesthetic students, readings and oral exercises may motivate learners with an orientation towards the linguistic intelligence, and group work may be established for those an interpersonal intelligence, while intrapersonal learners must be allowed to work alone. As a result, considering the multiple intelligences may contribute to making the learning process more meaningful and accelerating the development of the linguistic skills, especially speaking which is students' main objective in FLL (Foreign Language Learning).

### **2.8 Strengthening Oral Skills**

Speaking in the foreign language is the main goal for students learning English or any other foreign language. As Lazaraton (2002) stated, “the ability to speak a language is synonymous with knowing the language since speech is the most basic means of human communication” (p. 103). Nevertheless, becoming accurate in the speaking skill requires practice and time. Bailey and Savage (as cited in Lazaraton, 2002) added that, “speaking a foreign language has often been viewed as the most demanding of the four skills” (p. 103). For this reason, the more contact hours students have with the linguistic system, the more fluent and accurate they are going to become. Based on a survey research, Ferris and Tagg (as cited in Lazaraton, 2002) suggested that “what academic ESL students need most is extensive authentic ESL practice in class participation, such as taking part in discussions, interacting with peers and professors, and asking and answering questions” (p. 105). Accordingly, activities for oral communication such as role plays, speeches, song/video discussions, board games, and conversations may be developed in the classroom for the purpose of strengthening this linguistic skill. In addition, culture may be incorporated in the classroom so that further discussion about different topics is developed by the participants.

### **2.9 Incorporating Culture in the Classroom**

Culture is a key element in second language teaching. According to Peterson and Coltrane (2003), “language is not only part of how we define culture, it also reflects culture” (para. 1). Therefore, it is almost impossible to study a language without taking into consideration the target language culture since “the forms and uses of a given language reflect the cultural values of the society in which the language is spoken” (para. 5). In addition to Peterson and Coltrane’s words, some approaches of foreign language learning/teaching also agree on this fact. The Direct Method for example, establishes that “learning another language also involves learning how speakers of that language live” (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. 28). Consequently, some instructional strategies for teaching culture must be implemented in the classroom. Authentic materials constitute a fundamental source of both language and culture. Moreover, working with proverbs or idioms in the classroom may present an



overview of some of the main beliefs and values shared in the target culture. Another strategy to be developed in class is role playing inasmuch as students may act out cultural differences between the mother and the foreign culture. Lastly, teachers may invite native speakers of the foreign language to come to the classes so that students are provided with direct contact with the language and the culture (Peterson & Coltrane, para. 11-18). Therefore, culture is central in FL classrooms, and it contributes to learners' understanding of the foreign language.

### III Data Analysis

#### 3.1 THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to identify CI-UNA students' needs in order to suggest an alternative strategy as well as a methodology and materials to enhance their oral and aural skills.

#### 3.2 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the skills from CI-UNA courses that need reinforcement?
2. What are appropriate activities to enhance CI-UNA students' oral performance?
3. What is a suitable methodology to provide CI-UNA students with more quality time of interaction practice?

#### 3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

##### 3.3.1 *The Participants*

Centro de Idiomas Universidad Nacional (CI-UNA) has approximately two hundred students. This language program was designed to teach eleven different levels. Students may begin in CI-UNA Starter and move to CI-UNA 1, 2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9 until reaching CI-UNA 10. Currently, there are only eight distinct levels (until CI-UNA 7). For the development of this study, a group of 30 students was randomly selected from the eight levels that are opened at the present time. The following chart evinces the distribution of the students selected:

Table 3.3.1 Students Selected to Gather Key Data

Level	CI-UNA Starter	CI-UNA 1	CI-UNA 2	CI-UNA 3	CI-UNA 4	CI-UNA 5	CI-UNA 6	CI-UNA 7
<b>Number of students</b>	5	3	3	3	3	4	4	5

Note: The number of students selected per course was congruent with the total number of students enrolled.

Furthermore, five teachers from this language program were selected to fill in one questionnaire. These five informants have been part of CI-UNA body of teachers for, at least, one year. They have ample experience working with these students, which gives them the opportunity to identify weaknesses and strengths of the language program.

##### 3.3.2 *The Instruments*

Two different questionnaires were designed to collect reliable data. The first questionnaire was directed to current CI-UNA students, specifically thirty. This instrument consisted of

three different sections. The first one aimed to record personal information, the second one to gather insights about the methodology of CI-UNA courses in order to detect weaknesses and strengths in a multiple-choice item, and the third one was designed to compile students' impressions in an open-ended item. The second instrument was the teachers' questionnaire. It was intended to amass their insights about CI-UNA language program and its students' needs.

### 3.3.3 Analysis and Results

An in-depth analysis of students and teachers' answers was carried out to fulfill the goals of this study. The following graphs and chart reveal the main aspects that will lead the researchers to devise a proposal in order to enhance students' aural and oral abilities.

#### 3.3.3.1 Skills that Require Reinforcement from the Students' Viewpoints

Figure 3.3.3.1 Skills that Require Enhancement

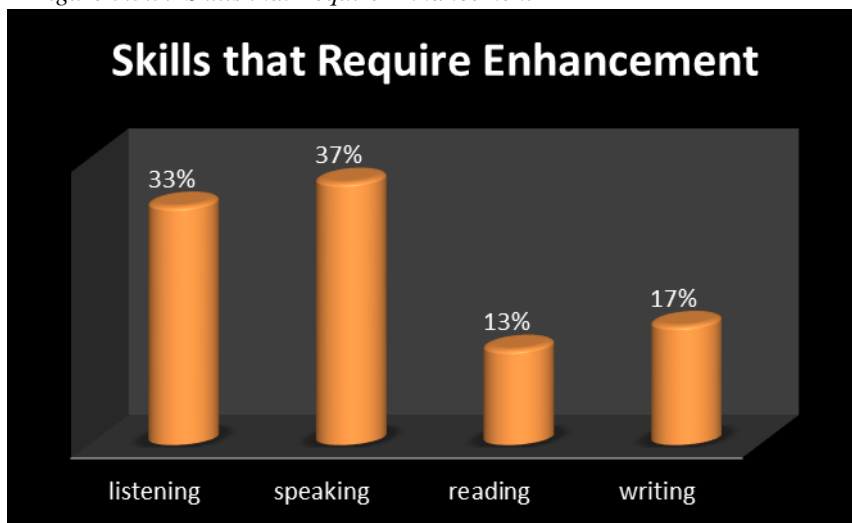


Figure 3.3.3.1 This figure shows data collected through a multiple-response question from the instrument *Questionnaire N1 Students' Impressions* administered in July-August 2012.

The analysis of the graph above shows the distribution of the percentages according to CI-UNA students' insights about the skills they need to reinforce more. Speaking leads the list resulting in 37% followed by listening 33%. Writing and reading are the skills that they consider need less reinforcement; each one scored 17% and 13% respectively. Both oral and aural skills seem to be the skills students acknowledge as the most important, or the ones they feel they must emphasize more on.

Even though CI-UNA regular courses are highly conversational, students believe that they need more time than the one allocated in weekdays or weekend sessions to spend time in order to interact and strengthen listening and speaking. Writing and reading time devoted in the regular courses seem to suffice students' expectations. This result may be caused by the goals students have set since the beginning. Their immediate needs are dictated by the market place which has imposed demands on customer service, business

management and tourism. They need to command an acceptable level of English to apply for any of these types of job positions.

### 3.3.3.2 Skills that Require Reinforcement from the Teachers' Points of View

Figure 3.4.3.2 Skills that Require Enhancement

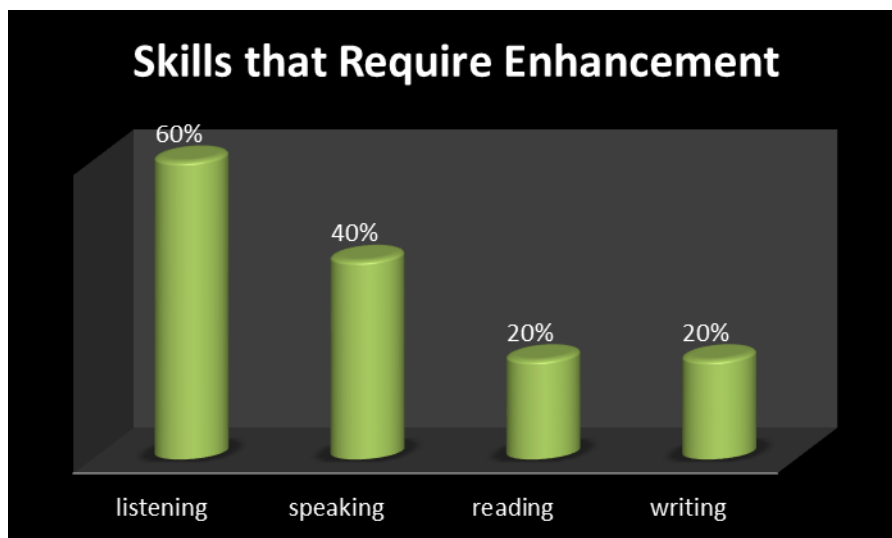


Figure 3.3.3.2 This figure shows data collected through a multiple-response question from the instrument *Questionnaire NI Teachers' Impressions* administered in July-August 2012.

This figure gives evidence of the distribution of percentages of the linguistic skills that teachers believe need more reinforcement. Listening and speaking are still on top 60% and 40% respectively, followed by reading and writing with the same percentage each, 20%.

The graph throws light upon the difference in determining which skills need more reinforcement from the teachers' and students' perspectives. According to the information displayed in the previous graph students consider that speaking needs a higher emphasis; however, teachers do assume that, based on the performance during classwork and the results of ordinary evaluations, students need to strengthen the listening skill more. Although there is a slight gap in importance between the listening and speaking skills, teachers still consider that both listening and speaking must receive a stronger focus, and that students must attend this by making a greater effort inside and outside the class.

### 3.3.3.3 Activities to Enhance Students' Oral Production

Table 3.3.3.3 Activities to Enhance Students' Oral Production

Activities	Use		Percent of cases
	N	Percent	
Role-plays	5	16%	48%
Direct questions	2	7%	21%
Comments about video clips and songs	6	20%	60%
Picture description	2	7%	21%
Group discussion	7	24%	72%
Games	5	16%	48%
Board games	3	10%	30%
Total	30	<b>100%</b>	300%

The previous table illustrates the activities students acknowledge as the ones they must perform to enhance their oral production to a higher level. Group discussion and commentaries about video clips and songs are the ones that amounted the greatest percentage, 24% and 20% respectively. Then, role plays and games that were given 16% each occupy the third and fourth place correspondingly. Board games amounted 10% and direction questions and picture description were given 7% each. It is worth mentioning that the successfulness of a class boils down to whether students feel comfortable performing the activities designed for them. This list in order of preference suggests teachers the ideal activities to include in an alternative methodology and still guarantee its effectiveness.

### 3.3.3.4 A Methodology to Boost Oral Production Effectively

Figure 3.4.3.4 A Methodology to Boost Effective Oral Production

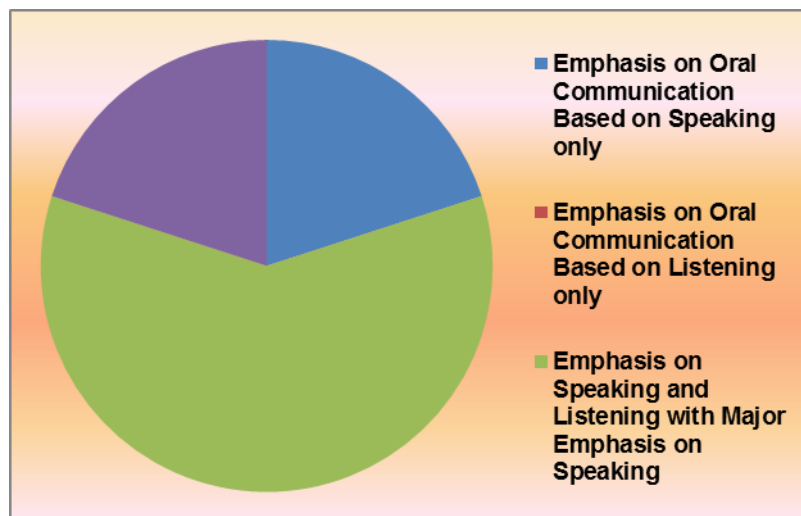


Figure 3.3.3.4 This figure shows data collected through a multiple-response question from the instrument *Questionnaire N1 Teachers' Impressions* administered in July-August 2012.

In the graphs that pointed out the skills teachers and students believe that an alternative methodology must emphasize on, speaking and listening were the ones given more prominence. The pie graph above shows the emphases on listening and speaking for an alternative methodology. The emphasis on speaking and listening with a major load in speaking received 60%. The emphasis on oral communication based on speaking only and the emphasis on speaking and listening with a major emphasis on listening received equal percentages 20%. The choice that received zero percentage was that of the emphasis on oral communication based on listening only.

Definitely teachers did agree on the fact that listening and speaking must be the backbone of an alternative to enhance the students' linguistic level. Nevertheless, teachers conceive speaking as the most powerful skill over the other ones, followed by listening. Both skills together constitute the two drivers that ensure the effectiveness of students' oral performance.

### 3.4 The Proposal

The analysis of the data previously examined brought to light the need to devise an alternative to help CI-UNA students strengthen their oral production. The information was painstakingly scrutinized and suggested three different contributions. The first contribution deals with the implementation of three different speaking clubs, the second one the methodology to incorporate to these conversational clubs and the last one relates to suitable materials to favor the enhancement of oral and aural skills.

*3.4.1 First Contribution: Speaking Clubs*

CI-UNA language program, specifically of English, is taught in four different modules along two years. The analysis of the information gathered contributed to the design of three different speaking clubs. From CI-UNA Starter until CI-UNA X all courses have been grouped into three speaking clubs. In order for all students to have equal opportunities to attend, these three speaking clubs will be imparted once a week. Students must attend the one designed for their level. The following chart illustrates the division suggested for CI-UNA students:

Table 3.4.1 Recommended Division of CI-UNA Students to Attend Speaking Clubs

Club	Elementary Speaking Club	Intermediate Speaking Club	Upper-intermediate Speaking Club
CI-UNA regular courses included	CI-UNA Starter	CI-UNA III	CI-UNA VII
	CI-UNA I	CI-UNA IV	CI-UNA VIII
	CI-UNA II	CI-UNA V	CI-UNA IX
		CI-UNA VI	CI-UNA X
Time	6 months	8 months	8 months

Note: The first row on top delineates the name of each speaking club. The columns specify each CI-UNA level that the speaking clubs are intended to.

Every speaking club is planned to be taught paralleled to the other regular CI-UNA courses. The shortest speaking club is the Elementary one that groups students from CI-UNA starter, I and II in a period of six months. The other two speaking clubs are longer and last eight months each. Based on each of CI-UNA course programs, the topics for each speaking club were painstakingly selected to favor students’ linguistic growth, and still keep congruency with what students’ were studying at the moment. The next chart evidences the topics selected for each speaking club.

**Table 3.4.1.2** Topics Selected for Each Speaking Club

SP Topic per week session	Elementary Speaking Club	Intermediate Speaking Club	Upper- intermediate Speaking Club
1	Celebrities and Fame	Dating	Television Influence
2	Family ties	Media and entertainment	Friendship
3	Feelings	Going green	Teenage World
4	Being on a diet	Appearances	Crime
5	Your health	Addictions	Job Market
6	Vacationing	Body Image	The American Dream
7	Fashion	The News	Medicine miracles
8	Homelessness	Happiness	Natural Devastation
9	Music	Advertising	Money
10	Sports	Smoking	Technology Craze
11	Holidays	Cyber dating	Fitness and wellness
12	Seasons	Pet Peeves	Alcoholism
13		Bullying	Shopaholism
14		Weddings	Superstitions
15		Lies, dishonesty, cheating	Robberies
16		Traffic Accidents	Child Abuse/Child Labor

**Note:** SP stands for speaking club. The first column on the left denotes the number of the session in which the topics will be developed.

### 3.4.3 Second Contribution: Methodology

The methodology undertaken in these proposed speaking clubs is rooted in an eclectic approach. Various methods and approaches give origin to the methodology designed for the speaking club sessions. Methods such as the Audiolingual, Desuggestopedia, Community Language Teaching, Direct Method, Total Physical Response, Task-based Instruction and Communicative Language Teaching offer a set of principles that add the sessions purpose and effectiveness.

Every session is organized into four different stages pre-listening, while listening, after listening and consolidation of the day. This organization is highlighted by an alternative model stemmed from the Task-based methodology. Each session is oriented towards the attainment of oral proficiency; thus, the dynamics of the stages guarantees skill-getting and skill-using tasks, mostly determined by a heavy focus on speaking through

listening with pre, while and post stages. In the pre-listening stage, students' ears are finely-tuned to comprehend further input. They are exposed to as much vocabulary as possible during this stage. Students are also given opportunities to activate their schemata by providing ideas and impressions on the topics. In the while-listening stage topic-specific audios are selected to address students' listening comprehension level and a bit beyond. In this way, the Input Hypothesis is deployed ( $i+1$ ). In the after-listening stage students are free to actively interact individually or with one another by undertaking highly communicative activities as talk shows, debates, information gap, interviews, role-plays, simulations, board games and the like. In the consolidation of the day stage the lesson is brought to an end by facilitating more opportunities to produce more. Learning has been scaffolded to help learners reach this point. In one week the topic is first introduced and in the next week an expansion unit is taught. In this lesson students explore the topic once more to consolidate it.

From the three different types of evaluation (summative, diagnostic and formative) the latter corresponds to the one used during the development of these speaking clubs. Formative evaluation heightens students' motivation, boosts participation and positive reactions. There is no fear to fail while participating. Students take risks more freely. They are not apprehensive and reserved since the atmosphere invites them to interact.

#### *3.4.4 Third Contribution: The Materials*

The materials suggested for the development of these speaking clubs are either a set of samples compiled from useful websites or creations and adaptations by one of the developers of CI-UNA language program. These materials are sequenced according to the topics and the different stages pre/while/after stages. Three different booklets were designed for the three different clubs. They contain material adapted, created and compiled and are used only by the instructors of the conversational clubs. The appendix shows one sample designed for the unit eighteen of the Intermediate Speaking Club Booklet.

## **IV Conclusions**

After conducting this research study, various conclusions were drawn. First, oral production, in any particular EFL course, regardless of the focus of it, must be enhanced and boosted in the classroom. Second, alternative and supporting ideas like the ones provided here must be considered to strengthen oral and aural performance in any conversational course. Third, listening and speaking are the skills students and teachers strongly believe must receive high prominence. The command of these two skills will later help students find more profitable jobs related to customer service, business management and tourism. Fourth, speaking clubs promote the integration of the skills and even the sub skills in the session activities. Fifth, this alternative generates a sense of community since students, without pressure of failing, construct their knowledge and interaction in small groups every week. Sixth, students benefit more from a non-threatening environment where the main focus is to practice the language without fear. Seventh, a fluency-to-accuracy approach is better tackled from the development of activities such as group discussions, commentaries about video clips and songs and role plays.



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In 2008, Verónica Brenes Sánchez enrolled in the English Teaching Major at Universidad Nacional with high expectations of becoming an outstanding English teacher. During her major, she joined the Students' Association (ASEUNA) representing students from Brunca Extension in the University Board of Directors. She also participated in the project called "Team UNA Amistad" which consists of free English tutorials for high school students. She graduated on May 2012 and got a bachelor's degree, and in July of 2012 she started taking a Licentiate's degree on Applied Linguistics at this same university. Now, she is working as an English instructor for Universidad Estatal a Distancia (UNED) in a special program for senior citizens. Besides this, she works at Centro de Idiomas at Universidad Nacional (CI-UNA) and teaches learners through CI-UNA speaking clubs.

**Appendices**

# Unit 14 Superstitions

## Contents: Opinions, disbelief, amazement

### **1. Pre-listening:**

#### **Activity 1 Power Point Presentation**

- A. Project the power point presentation about the origin of some superstitions.
- B. Encourage the students to talk about it and exchange their ideas and impressions about it.

#### **Activity 2 Matching Pairs**

- A. Distribute the cards among the students.
- B. Ask them to read the card.
- C. Explain to them that that is one part of one superstition.
- D. Ask them to walk around and look for the partner whose card is the half of the one they hold.
- E. Once students match one part of the superstition to the other, ask them to either agree or disagree with it.
- F. When they are done, ask them to approach the teacher to give them more strips of paper with the half of one superstition. They must start the process once again.
- G. This activity was adapted from [http://en.islcollective.com/worksheets/worksheet\\_page?id=27689](http://en.islcollective.com/worksheets/worksheet_page?id=27689)

### **2. While-listening:**

- A.** Play the video clip of the song “Superstion” at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rhw\\_zbvxb4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rhw_zbvxb4)
- B.** Have the students report the examples of superstions they saw in the video.
- C.** Play the song again and have the students do the exercises
- D.** This activity was taken from [http://en.islcollective.com/worksheets/worksheet\\_page?id=34196](http://en.islcollective.com/worksheets/worksheet_page?id=34196)

### **3. After listening:**

#### **Activity 1 New Year’s Superstions**

- A. Distribute the cards about New Year’s Resolutions around the world among students.
- B. Ask them to sit in pairs.
- C. The students in the pair talk about the superstions they were assigned.
- D. Once they are done, ask them to pass on the superstions and get more.
- E. This activity was adapted from <http://busyteacher.org/9806-weird-new-year-traditions.htm>

#### **Activity 2 Role Playing**

- A. Divide the students in groups.
- B. Assign them one of the role cards to each member.
- C. Have them to take turns to perform the situations.
- D. This activity was adapted from <http://busyteacher.org/2746-silly-superstitions.html>

### **4. Consolidation of the day: Let’s Talk about Superstions Cards**

- A. Stick the little cards on the board and a newsprint sheet on the opposite wall to the board.
- B. Have the students line up in groups facing the board.
- C. Provide them with a marker.
- D. Ask them to run to the board and grab one card to the sign given.
- E. Have students discuss the answer to the question written on the card picked with the group and run to write the answer on a newsprint sheet given by the teacher as fast as they can.
- F. The group with the most correct answers wins.
- G. This activity was adapted from [http://en.islcollective.com/worksheets/worksheet\\_page?id=4137](http://en.islcollective.com/worksheets/worksheet_page?id=4137)



# Superstition

By Stevie Wonder

<i>thirteen</i>	<i>broke</i>	<i>devil</i>	<i>strong</i>	<i>bad</i>
<i>ladder</i>	<i>save</i>	<i>superstitious</i>	<i>believe</i>	<i>wash</i>

Very ....., writing's on the wall  
 Very superstitious, ..... about to fall  
 ..... month old baby, ..... the lookin' glass  
 Seven years of ..... luck, the good things in your  
 past

When you ..... in things that you don't understand  
 Then you suffer  
 Superstition ain't the way (chorus)

Very ....., ..... your face and  
 hands  
 Rid me of the problem, do all that you can  
 Keep me in a daydream, keep me goin' .....  
 You don't wanna save me, sad is my song



Chorus + yeh, yeh  
 Very ....., nothin' more to say  
 Very ....., the  
 ..... 's on his way  
 ..... month old baby,  
 ..... the lookin' glass  
 Seven years of ..... luck, good things  
 in your past  
 Chorus + no, no, no



<b>If you meet a black cat</b>	<b>you will have good luck</b>
<b>If you touch wood</b>	<b>you will have good luck</b>
<b>If you walk under a ladder</b>	<b>you will have bad luck</b>
<b>If you spill salt on the table</b>	<b>you must throw it over your shoulder or you will have bad luck</b>
<b>If thirteen people sit to eat at a table</b>	<b>one will die</b>
<b>If you break a mirror</b>	<b>you will have seven years bad luck</b>
<b>If you catch a falling leaf in autumn/fall</b>	<b>you will have good luck the next year</b>
<b>If you put shoes on the table</b>	<b>you will have bad luck</b>
<b>If you kill a spider</b>	<b>you will have bad luck</b>
<b>If you cross your fingers</b>	<b>you will have good luck</b>



The single women of **Ireland** wait desperately for the New Year's night because it is the night that can bring them the love of their life. They place **mistletoe leaves** under their pillow hoping to catch their future husband. It is also believed in Irish culture that it helps them get rid of bad luck.



A strange and weird New Year tradition in **Denmark** is **breaking the dishes** at neighbor's door. Strangely this makes them happy instead of annoying them. The family with the hugest tower of broken plates, glasses, cups and other crockery is considered to be the luckiest one because it means that they have lots of loyal friends.

<p>You believe that if you shake hands with three people in a row without <i>them</i> saying anything, it's extremely lucky. You spend large parts of your day trying to achieve this, but it's very difficult because people always want to talk to you.</p>	<p>You believe that it's good luck if the door of the room you are in is open by a few centimeters because then any bad luck is not trapped in the room with you. If someone closes it, you always open it again so that the bad luck can escape.</p>
<p>You believe that it's extremely lucky to tap people on the shoulder three times, so you always try to do this wherever you go. Not only will this bring you good luck, but you believe that it will make you rich too.</p>	<p>You believe that it's extremely unlucky to wear shoes or sandals of any kind. Moreover, you believe that the people wearing shoes and sandals around you will give you bad luck, so you always try to convince them to remove their footwear. If they won't then you try to do it for them.</p>
<p>You believe that winking your right eye when you are talking to someone is very lucky, so you always wink when you meet people.</p>	<p>You believe that if you step on any cracks or lines in the floor, you will have some very bad luck, so you are always very careful not to step on these wherever you go. People always complain that you stare at the floor when they talk to you.</p>
<p>You are very superstitious and believe that tapping seven times on different surfaces (walls, windows, desks, etc) will bring you lots of good luck.</p>	<p>You strongly believe that if you see someone wearing glasses, you must try them on because this allows you to understand the person better. You will use any excuse to have a look though someone else's glasses although occasionally you have to force the person to let you do this</p>
<p>You believe that it's very unlucky to say words that are of more than <u>three</u> syllables. If you accidentally do this, you must to the YMCA actions to counteract the bad luck.</p>	<p>You believe that it's very unlucky to be touched by another person. Whenever this happens, you must shout "GIB GOB GIB" as loudly as possible to scare away the bad luck.</p>



# Let's talk about SUPERSTITION



**Superstition:** a belief not based on reason or fact, but on old ideas about luck and magic

Are you superstitious?  
If so, give examples.  
If not, explain why.

Who's the most superstitious person you know?  
Talk about him or her.

Have you ever visited a fortune teller?  
What did he or she predict?

What's your star sign?  
How many signs of the zodiac do you know?

Do you read the horoscope?  
Do you believe in it?  
Has it ever come true?

Which sign of the Chinese zodiac were you born under?  
How many do you know?

Do you believe in astrology?  
What are lucky or unlucky numbers?

Have you ever eaten in a Chinese restaurant?  
Did you get a fortune cookie?

Do you believe in ghosts?  
Have you ever seen one?  
Talk about it.

What's the strangest thing that has ever happened to you?

Has a dream ever come true?  
Can dreams predict the future? Talk about it.

What's a lucky charm?  
Give examples.  
Do you have one?

What are things that are considered unlucky?  
Explain.

What are things that are considered lucky?  
Explain.

Do you believe in UFOs?  
Are we alone in the universe?  
Give your view.

Do you believe in *fate* (= power believed to control all events)?  
Why or why not?

Do you believe in *reincarnation*? (= born in another body after death)  
Why or why not?

What's the strangest *old wives' tale* you've ever heard? (= a superstitious belief or story belonging to traditional folklore)



## Sustaining Students' Attention and Interest throughout the EFL Lesson

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**Resumen:** Lograr la excelencia en el desarrollo y enseñanza de la clase de idiomas es para muchos instructores todo un desafío. Aún cuando una clase parezca fluir efectivamente hasta cierto punto, esta impresión puede de repente desvanecerse ante los mismos ojos del profesor. Alcanzar el clímax de una clase se logra con una mezcla de emoción y cognición, en primera instancia, y solo permanece en tanto que la inventiva y la habilidad del profesor lo permita. La razón por la cual la atención y el interés de los estudiantes fluctúa frecuentemente responde a las necesidades y características específicas de los estudiantes. Además de un plan de lección bien preparado, los profesores deben construir tácticas de enseñanza especiales para progresar efectivamente a lo largo del desarrollo de la lección. Después de realizar una investigación de campo en la Universidad Nacional, Sede Regional Brunca acerca de los desbalances en una lección debido a la falta de motivación y la disminución del interés, se desarrolló un análisis completo de las medidas para solucionar el impacto de estos factores durante la clase. Se utilizó una muestra al azar para seleccionar a los informantes así como también dos cuestionarios para recolectar la información. Este análisis detalla diferentes alternativas para que profesores de la enseñanza del inglés como idioma extranjero logren mantener el interés, la motivación y el vínculo de los estudiantes en el transcurso de la lección independientemente de la etapa, el tema o la actividad desarrollada así como también una descripción de un formato para la atención de los estudiantes durante el desarrollo de las actividades.

**Palabras claves:** vínculo, motivación, interés, ideas prácticas para la clase

**Abstract:** Attaining excellence in language class management and teaching is, for most instructors, a complete challenge. Even though a class seems to flow smoothly or beautifully, to a certain extent, this impression may fade away in the very eyes of the teacher all of a sudden. To reach a lesson climax, it is necessary to mix emotion and cognition, and it only lingers as far as the resourcefulness and the skillfulness of the teacher allow it. The reason why learners' attention and interest throughout a lesson frequently fluctuates responds to the very specific needs and features of the students being taught. Besides the well-prepared lesson plan, teachers must build special teaching tactics and moves to progress along the lesson effectively. After doing action research about lesson breakdowns due to some factors like the lack of motivation and interest decline, a thorough analysis to improve the impact of these factors was drawn. A randomized sampling for the selection of informants was used along with two questionnaires for the data collection. This analysis depicts different alternatives for EFL teachers to maintain students' interest, motivation and engagement throughout the lesson no matter the

stage, the topic or the activity carried out included in an engagement and attention frame.

**Key words:** engagement, motivation, interest, practical classroom ideas

## 1. Introduction

Engagement, motivation and attraction are pegs on which the lesson plan must hang. These are elements that, irrespective of the diversity in a class, will always be inherent to every learner in a classroom. Then, the key to a successful EFL class is merely placed on those three fundamentals. The way the teacher struggles to maintain these elements alive during the whole lesson is really a matter of skillfulness and resourcefulness. Students are unpredictable recipients. Their concentration span varies depending on distinct factors. Interestingly, the generation to whom teachers are addressing their classes is becoming more demanding in terms of techniques and strategies. This type of generation, or the so-called Gen Y, has challenged teachers to devise new ways to retain concentration, interest and engagement in the classroom activities.

Although these types of factors may be founded on learners' internal as well as on external aspects, the nature of the classroom activities and the transition moves from one stage or activity to the other play a striking role. These transitions, when planned properly, may do the trick. If a graph of the ups and downs of a lesson were charted, English lessons would look like a cardiac monitor, with its high, low or steady peaks.

Teachers must be aware of the different stages of the lesson, and above all, of how to sustain the students' enthusiasm and interest throughout every specific block of it. This goal should be achieved without deviating from the prearranged scheme, though. In the light of this premises, the following study is founded on action research carried out at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension to provide illuminating insights on how teachers, regardless of the course or activity, can sustain students' attention and engagement in order to maximize English learning.

### 1.3 General Objective

To promote the use of a series of techniques to sustain students' attention, interest and engagement during the development of all the phases of an EFL class

### 1.4 Specific Objectives

1. To determine the factors that disrupt students' attention and interest in the activities performed during class
2. To design a frame of practical classroom ideas to help teachers retain students' interest and engagement in the class activities

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Methods and Approaches to the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

Teaching English has progressively evolved to incorporate a broader array of methods, approaches, strategies and techniques since it was first undertaken in the classroom. The Grammar Translation method, the Audiolingual and the Direct Method have almost ignored the communicative function of the language, but succeeded in imparting knowledge of

language forms and rules. In other words, the students could acquire linguistic competence mostly. Currently, instructors have been mindful of the needs of students in a world where international communication is the key. Considering this, they are aware of the need to help learners aim to acquire communicative competence. Consequently, more dynamic and communicative methods such as Community Language Learning (CLL), Total Physical Response (TPR) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methodology along with the Task-based Instruction (TBI) arouse as the latest trends to contribute to the teaching of English language in a more productive note.

More recently, eclectic approaches have gained impetus in today's EFL classrooms to fulfill the students' needs and expectations. According to Larsen-Freeman (2000) and Mellow (2000) eclecticism describes a desirable, coherent, pluralistic approach to language teaching. They pointed out that

Eclecticism involves the use of a variety of language learning activities, each of which may have very different characteristics and may be motivated by different underlying assumptions. The use eclecticism is due to the fact that there are strengths as well as weaknesses of single theory based methods. (p.32).

The choice of which method or approach to select is dictated by the theory of language and the theory of language learning in conjunction with the type of syllabus used. Brown's words (2002) exemplified the arduous job teachers exert when selecting the elements for their practices as follows

The complexity of the second language acquisition process warrants a multiple-treatment, multiphase approach to a language course. It is the teacher's task to carefully and deliberately choose among these many options to formulate a pedagogical sequence of techniques in the classroom. And this is where a teacher's choices must be 'principled'." (p.45)

Nowadays, in today's context the Communicative Approach serves as an umbrella term under which Communicative Language Teaching and the TBI lie.

### *2.1.1 Communicative Language Teaching*

In 1972, Communicative Language Teaching was aimed at communicative competence, the goal of language teaching. It stemmed in a functional and eclectic approach that nullled the accumulation of grammatical items and structures and enhanced what the learner needed to understand and express through the target language.

Most teachers agree on the fact that English teaching has become an art in itself. Among many other elements a well-crafted plan may ensure the success of a language lesson based on Community Language Teaching. Activities and exercises founded on a CLT basis must target at developing communicative competence in learners so that they become effective communicators in the target language. This is a learner-centered methodology in which meaning is pursued in all the activities rather than linguistic forms. The process of internalizing language is subconsciously undertaken. The goal is to set in full interaction in order to enable learners to develop language automatically and spontaneously. Furthermore, all the four language skills- listening, speaking, reading and writing – are central.

### 2.1.2 *Task-based Instruction (TBI)*

Task-based language learning (TBLL), also known as task-based language teaching (TBLT) or task-based instruction (TBI), has grown steadily in popularity is a renewed version of a communicative methodology; it envelops current methodologies with current theories of second language acquisition. It was popularized by prof. Prabhu, who concentrated on tasks as activities that urge learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning, to attain an objective (Bygate, Skehan and Swain, 2000, p. 76). Task-based instruction throws light upon learner-to-learner interaction in the classroom as an ultimate goal to achieving linguistic success (Richards and Rodgers, 2002, p.25). Furthermore, as Larsen-Freeman (2000) put it TBI engages “students in learning other subject matters, tasks or in problem-solving around issues in their lives“ (p. 144). TBLL is a further refinement of the CLT approach, emphasizing the successful completion of tasks as both the organizing feature and the basis for assessment of language instruction.

## 2.2 **The Phases of a Language Lesson**

Planning a lesson is a seemingly daunting experience. For novice teachers, it turns into a very dramatic duty. For more seasoned teachers, it is a very practical backbone to the teaching process that becomes, in time, easily manageable. The plan determines the direction of a class throughout the different stages of it. The stages of a lesson are delineated by the methodology employed.

There are various types of models for a language class. In the beginning, since the focus was primarily on grammar “lessons followed the pattern grammar explanation followed by exercises, or what came to be known as presentation and practice” (Thornbury, 1999, p.128). Providing that much attention was given to accuracy during the development of those two stages, a downside of the model emerged. The lack of opportunities for learners to elaborate and use the language was being neglected. Consequently, a third element was drawn: production which sparked the importance of fluency. The model with its three stages was later acknowledged as the PPP model: presentation, practice and production. In this model the teacher introduces a situation which contextualizes the language to be taught. The practice stage incorporates the language using accurate reproduction techniques such as choral repetition, individual repetition, and cue-response drills. In the production stage students are ready to use the language forms in contextualized situations.

According to the specific characteristics of the language class and its methodology, the teacher can implement other models. An alternative model to the previously described ignites a process of fluency-to-accuracy sequence. In Thornbury’s words (1999)

Proponents of the communicative approach proposed a fluency-first model of instruction that is called task-based: first the learners perform a communicative task that the teacher has set them; the teacher then uses this to identify language features learners could have used in order to communicate their intentions more effectively.

The model comprises three stages: task, teach, task. (p. 129)

Proponents of the Task-based Instruction have clearly established the different stages to be covered in depth by this methodology. Jane Willis (1996) referred to three basic stages of

TBI: pre-task (introduction to topic and task), task cycle (task, planning and report) and language focus (analysis, practice).

### **2.3 Affective Factors in Learning a Foreign Language**

The success of a language lesson hinges on the management of the multiple factors that come into play when teaching. Besides the ordinary linguistic and social factors that students have to learn to cope with, the affective factors seem to be deterrent. Ensuring effective learning involves tactful considerations when dealing with students and the myriad emotional factors they bring into the classroom. Teachers must aim to develop all human capacities through the class activities devised regardless of these factors. Considering that language learners are all “distinct worlds,” different backgrounds, needs, learning styles and goals to learn the language must be given high importance to optimize the learning process. Nowadays, it is really difficult to get students involved in their own process since they are not motivated enough to embrace it in a relevant way.

#### *2.3.2 Motivation*

As part of the affective factors, motivation stands out as one significant aspect teachers must consider to scheme the direction of a language class. Based on Madrid and Perez' words (2001) “the term motivation is usually defined by psychologists as the set of processes which involve the arousal, direction, and sustaining of behavior (conduct). It is employed to indicate, for instance, a subject's persistence and his/her pervasive work on certain tasks and not on other activities” (p. 321). This salient feature learners carry within themselves may hinder or facilitate the effectiveness of the language class. This paramount implication that motivation exerts on learning outcomes is a tall order in EFL scenarios. It must be neither neglected nor deemphasized. Madrid and Perez (2001) concluded that

the study of motivation in connection with FL learning in formal classroom contexts compels us to focus on the topic in a more restricted manner, taking into account the main factors in the teaching-learning process of the FL/L2, namely, the students, the teacher, the curriculum, and the teaching-learning processes which develop when implementing it. (p.321)

In this regard, teachers must help learners devise their own affective strategies to struggle falling into a state of demotivation. This urge sparks the reason why all classroom activities must be geared towards increasing and sustaining motivation in the classroom.

#### *2.3.3 The Role of Motivation in Language Acquisition Theories*

Although the issue of motivation seems to be difficult to tackle, it has historically being addressed to explain students' behavior in the classroom. On this premise, countless researchers have acknowledged the meaningfulness of this element in the rate of acquisition and learning. As a clear result of this struggle to understand the role of motivation in EFL contexts several theories have been drawn. One of these that has clearly stood up among many is Krashen's Monitor Theory (Dulay, Burt, and Krashen, 1982). It includes the Affective Filter Hypothesis that throws light upon the emotional factors and motivation as key elements which control language. Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982) stated that

When a student is exposed to a new language, the first internal hurdles are posed by the individual's emotional state and motivations ... filtering sources are the individual anxiety levels, peer identification, and general motivation to learn a language. Together, they make up what we have called the "Affective filter" or simply "Filter". The Filter acts to control entry to further mental processing. (p.4)

This filter when heightened blocks the effective development and performance of the students in the classroom. Due to this fact, the lower the affective filter, the more receptive and willing to learn the students will be.

Another theory that reinforces the prominent role of motivation in learning a second language is Carroll's conscious reinforcement model (1981). He concluded that reinforcement acts as an efficient motivating resource which facilitates learning through successive habit formation. Based on Gardener's viewpoint (1985) "reinforcement involves an increment to an individual's perception of the appropriateness of the behavior to a specific context" (p.128).

### 2.3.3 *Emotional Quotient (EQ)*

Most recently, theorists have dugged into the field of people's intelligences and emotions. Daniel Goleman (1995) introduced the term emotional quotient to refer to "the ability or skill to understand, evaluate and manage emotions of one's self and others"(Riaz, nd, p.1). Riaz went on to propose the difference between IQ and EQ by stating that

I.Q. is said to be set in stone, no matter when you take an I.Q. test you will receive, basically the same score. E.Q. however, is not set in stone. You can take E.Q. tests at different points in your life and find out that it has increased or decreased significantly. The basic reason is that the strength or weakness of emotions is affected by the age factor and environment.

The age factor as well as the environment could become learners' friends or foes in the sense that they can cause success or failure in the performance of the learning activities. These two factors, when analyzed deeply can help the teacher provide better learning scenarios. The theory of multiple intelligences by Howard Gardner which also embraces the emotional intelligence among many others, has contributed greatly to understand and manage students' behavior in the classroom.

The analysis of this type of intelligence facilitates teachers to control and comprehend students' sudden behavioral changes by bringing into light proper tactics. Knowing that different emotions are aroused at various stages of the learning process, teachers can become more sensitive and implement sensible strategies to raise to the students' expectations for the lessons. At first, the class can be exciting, and in the early stages of the lesson it can be quite enjoyable, but as students' emotions are affected by internal or external factors, the class may drift away and become chaotic. Undoubtedly, by analyzing learners' previous reactions to a certain type of activity, exercise or time of the day, teachers can anticipate and preplan better classes by making informed decisions.

### 2.4 **Attention Span: Valuable Remarks**

Granted, there are factors that block students' effective learning of a language. Besides the emotional factors previously stated, another factor that may heighten the affective filter is

students' age regarding the extent to which attention can expand. Most university classes last more than hour, which exceeds the attention span of a typical learner. In Bunce, Flens and Neiles's words (2010)

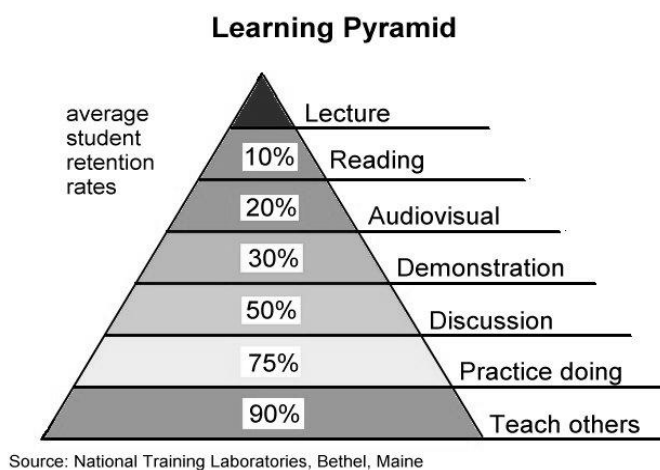
Sustained attention varies widely, and the quality of attention depends on several factors, including time of day, motivation, emotion, and enjoyment. Instructors use a variety of strategies to increase student's attention during class—from incorporating demonstrations or visuals to requiring student participation, asking students to turn off cell phones and laptops, and waking up the occasional sleeper.

The goal of every language teacher, among many, should be to facilitate students' attention making it more undivided and rapt which, in turn, may result in more memorable retention and meaningful classes. Although no probable evidence of how long learners' attention lasts, various researchers pointed out that the average attention span lapses from 10 to 15 minutes. It is noteworthy to say that insterspersion class content with various techniques to hook students during a period of more than 90 minutes is key to the success in learning the target language. Most recently, research has shown that students retain about five percent of what they hear in lectures; however, five percent is decreasing after the first 20-25 minutes.

Not surprisingly, teachers in this century are at an open battle for capturing students' full attention in the classroom. This fierce battle anchors in the way media and technology have bombarded students' minds. Text messaging, social networks, blogs, podcasts, music and the latest apps have taken over learners' attention in a great manner. However the situation may be, teachers find themselves at a crux in order to gain students' increased attention day after day.

#### 2.4.2 Learning Retention Rates

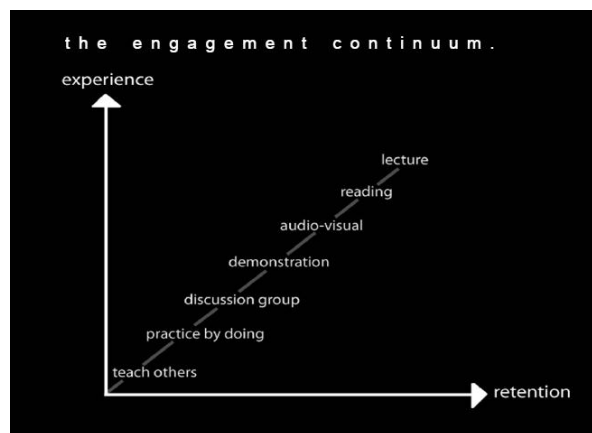
Although controversial it may seem, the learning pyramid has served to better understand the way students process and retain information during the different types of class activities.



This visual distribution of the percentages of the amount of information retained by learners during the development of the activities helps teachers reflect upon the necessary time they must allocate in their classes for students to carry out activities of the nature shown.

Moving down the pyramid, students become more involved in the learning process, and retention increases. The method at the bottom of the pyramid involves having the students teach others or use the new learning immediately. ... We have known for a long time that the best way to learn something is to prepare to teach it. In other words, whoever explains, learns.” (Sousa, 2011, p. 26)

This analysis guarantees teachers to switch from one type of activity to the other with more accurate moves and tactics. Recently, Abraham (2010) has given a more precise approach of students’ engagement by deconstructing the learning pyramid and arriving at a conclusion that all the processes happen when experience and retention meet depending on the activity executed. He went on to call this model “The Engagement Continuum”



Unfortunately, reality mirrors a different story for those teachers that tend to replicate the way they were “successfully” instructed: just by being passive agents in the classroom. Notwithstanding, a new generation of students has risen and needs immediate techniques to be engaged in the learning process. How to do this depends widely on teachers’ sage decisions to optimize learning in the classroom.

#### 2.4. Multiple Intelligences

The contribution of the Multiple Intelligences theory to the field of teaching has been greatly acknowledged to shape learning for the sake of the students’ achievement. Howard Gardner initially formulated a list of seven intelligences in 1983. The first “two have been typically valued in schools; the next three are usually associated with the arts; and the final two are what Howard Gardner called ‘personal intelligences’” (Gardner, 1999, p.41-43). The following is the list of the first seven intelligences Gardner discovered:

- Linguistic intelligence: sensitivity to the meaning and order of words.
- Logical-mathematical intelligence: ability in mathematics and other complex logical systems.
- Musical intelligence: the ability to understand and create music. Musicians, composers and dancers show a heightened musical intelligence.
- Spatial intelligence: the ability to “think in pictures,” to perceive the visual world accurately, and recreate (or alter) it in the mind or on paper. Spatial intelligence is highly developed in artists, architects, designers and sculptors.



- Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence: the ability to use one's body in a skilled way, for self-expression or toward a goal. Mimes, dancers, basketball players, and actors are among those who display bodily-kinesthetic intelligence.
- Interpersonal intelligence: an ability to perceive and understand other individuals -- their moods, desires, and motivations. Political and religious leaders, skilled parents and teachers, and therapists use this intelligence.
- Intrapersonal intelligence: an understanding of one's own emotions. Some novelists and or counselors use their own experience to guide others.(as cited in Guignon, 2000, para. 6)

### 2.5 Generation Y: The Millennials

Teaching the English language these days has become a challenging endeavor. Students in the information and communication era are surrounded by technological distractions that when properly handled can turn into productive tools. This generation of students has been given different names, including Net Gen, the Millennials, and Generation Y (McCrimble Research, 2006, p. 56). Lancaster and Stillman (2002) identified different types of generations by analyzing their behavior, needs, characteristics and expectations. They divided them as follows

1. The Baby Boomer generation (1946– 1964). This large generation was due to the many soldiers who returned home after World War II and started families. More people were born in this twenty-year period than at any other time in United States history.
2. Generation X (1965–1980). This generation was much smaller than the Boomer generation. Gen Xers have been generally characterized as hard working, independent, and skeptical.
3. Generation Y (1981–1999). This generation came into being during the last two decades of the 20th century. Its members are identified as confident and technologically advanced, and they come with a sense of entitlement.
4. Generation Z (2000–present). This name refers to those born since 2000, a group that has received little attention (as cited in Reily, 2012, p.3).

Gen Yers make up a significant part of the world's population—20 percent, according to NAS Recruitment Communications (2006). The Gen Yers have different expectations and needs that the educational system seems not to satisfy since it was not designed to teach them. It is obsolete and need immediate arrangements.

Today's generation has quickly adapted their lifestyles to computers and the Internet, and therefore sees information technology as an integral part of their lives. Among the many e-tools that learners easily dominate are wikis, blogs, social networks and chat rooms. Oblinger (2003) concluded that this generation seeks immediate information and understanding from the web and videos, not by looking through a textbook (as cited in Reily, 2012, p.5). This characteristic makes the teaching of English, mainly of more theoretical courses, hard to attain.

The role of EFL professionals nowadays is to accommodate to these students' distinctive features. If technology is what lures this generation into learning, then teachers must conceive “useful ways to bring new technology into the classroom, including creating

wikis; using WebQuests; implementing video-based activities through sites such as YouTube; incorporating video games and blogs; and making use of instant messages” (Reily, 2012, p.6). According to Faust et al. (2001) “teachers need to get highly visual reading material that focuses on modern-day issues into their students’ hands” (as cited in Reily, 2012, p. 6). Using more PowerPoint or, even more current, Prezi presentations, YouTube videos can alleviate the thirst for technology that these students have.

Therefore, if teachers claim for better quality in their students’ attention during the development of their classes, an analysis of what attracts this generation must be carried out in order to expect positive outcomes when planning the class.

### **3 Data Analysis**

The following section comprises the results obtained after undergoing critical examination of the data collected through the instruments designed for this purpose.

#### **3.2 The Purpose of the Study**

The ultimate goal of this study is to determine the factors that decline students’ attention and engagement as a consequence of the way teachers prepare activities for every stage of the language class.

The following research questions are premium to this analysis:

1. What factors wane students’ attention and engagement during the class period?
2. What are the most difficult phases for teachers to maintain students’ interest in the activities?
3. What techniques can teachers implement to engage students in the development of the whole class?

#### **3.3. Research Methodology**

##### **3.3.1 The Participants**

For the analysis of the results, two groups of informants were designated. Firstly, a group of students from the English Teaching Major and the Associate’s Program in English was randomly selected from the total population (around 80 students) that this group represents at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension. This group consisted of 15 students, 8 females and 7 males. Their ages range from 20 to 24 years, ages that clearly represent the type of generation they belong to. Secondly, a group of teachers from high school and university backgrounds contributed to the completion of the instruments. This group consisted of 15 teachers with ample experience in teaching university students.

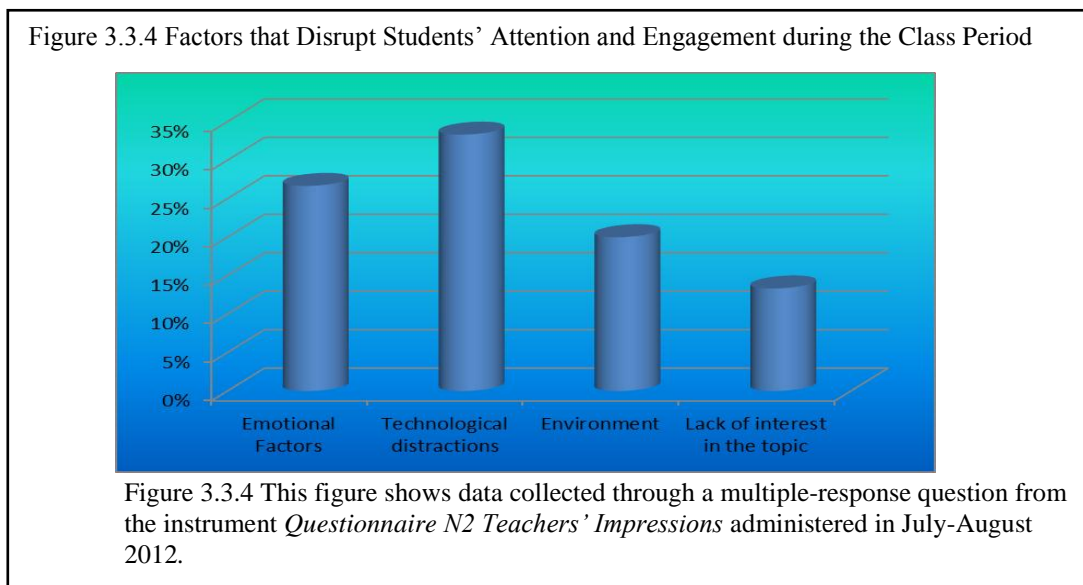
##### **3.3.2 The Instruments**

For the garnering of the research data, two questionnaires were designed. One questionnaire is addressed to obtaining students’ insights about the different phases of the lesson, their interest in the activities developed in each stage and the reasons why they prefer one phase over the other. The second questionnaire is aimed to gather teachers’ impressions about the stages of the lesson, why they think students’ attention wanes and the actions they take to bring students’ attention back.

### 3.3.3 Analysis and Results

The following graphs and the table depict a thorough analysis of salient information gathered through the data collection instruments.

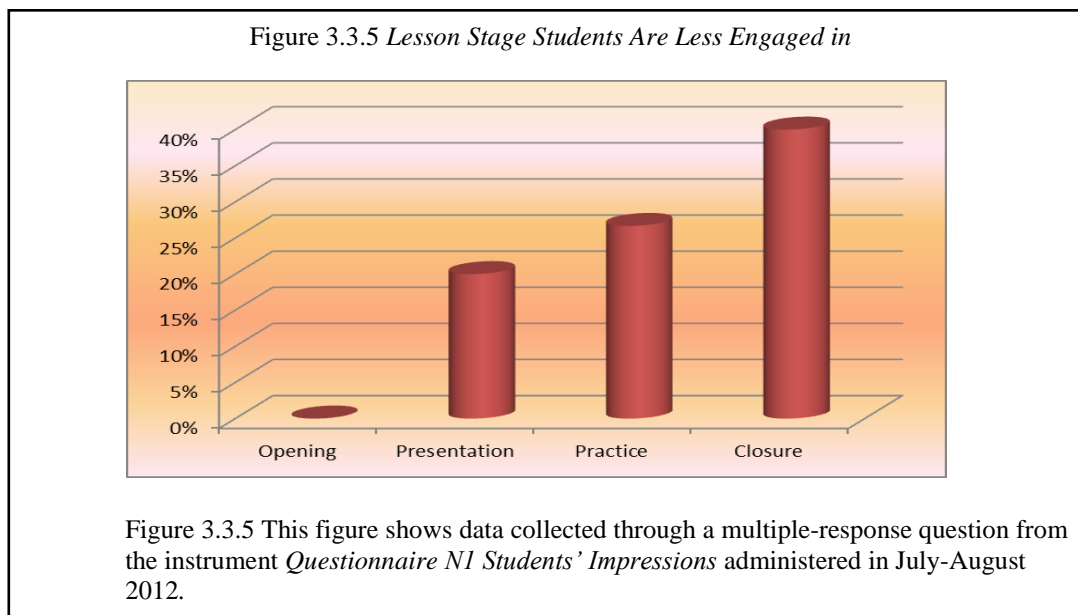
### 3.3.4 Factors that Disrupt Students' Attention and Engagement during the Class Period



The graph above shows the four most distractive factors in the EFL class according to EFL teachers. It evinces a major influence of technological devices on students' attention. This factor rises to 33% over the other factors followed by affective or emotional factors that amount 27%. The classroom environment as well as the lack of interest in the topic are the least chosen with 20% and 13% respectively. The theoretical references support the fact that this type of students' generation is enclosed in a world where technology reigns and learning happens within it. There is no escape of technology and the information gathered shows that even though students attend classes and seem to be physically in the classroom, they are all technologically "plugged in."

This distractor appears in the form of phone-text messages, e-mails, social network posts, phone calls and the like. With regard to the emotional or affective factors, teachers signaled lack of motivation, anxiety and stress as the ones at the top of the list. Depending on the nature of the course, students exhibit disinterest and lack of concern about what is happening in the classroom. Concerning the environment, the classroom atmosphere was pointed out as one of the most implicational factors in the quality of attention students paid during the activities. These results evidence that the topic is the least influential but still part of the list of the factors that disrupt students' attention and engagement in the activities.

### 3.3.5 Lesson Stage Students Are Less Engaged in



Regardless of the various names teachers have given to the different stages of the lesson, the opening, presentation, practice and closure are the ones that prevail. The graph above depicts the stage in which students declared to be less engaged in or less connected to what is happening in the lesson. Their attention and interest seem to decline as they reach the end of the lesson. The students' choices showed that the closure or consolidation, which amounted 40%, is the one they find more difficult to be in tune with.

At this point, they have lost interest and focus, and fidget while waiting for the “go home” sign. The top second choice is the practice stage which resulted in 25%. Students provided reasons for this and claimed that teachers plan lengthy activities that make the learners' attention wander off and divert. Oftentimes learners find themselves doing nothing waiting for the peers to finish, or the teacher to take the lead again. The presentation stage is the third in the sequence. Students' attentiveness seems to be more focused and sustained during this stage since students' curiosity makes them yearn for what is to come. During the opening, better known as the warm-up, students' full attention is on the first activities that are covered here.

### 3.3.6 Actions Teachers Take to Revive Students' Interest

Table 3.3.6 Actions Teachers Take to Revive Students' Interest

Actions	Use		Percent of cases
	N	Percent	
Kinesthetic activities	3	20%	30%
Short Jokes	2	13%	20%
Real life examples	2	13%	20%
Songs	2	13%	20%
Review to consolidate knowledge	1	8%	10%
Games	2	13%	20%
Taking a break	3	20%	30%
Total	15	<b>100%</b>	150%

*Note:* The information in this table was taken from the *Questionnaire N2 Teachers' Impressions* which was administered in November, 2012.

The table reflects the choices teachers have equated to solve the learners' inattentiveness issue during the development of the class. From the ones given, two actions, with 20% each, were the most preferred when teachers felt students' attention was fading away; one was kinesthetic activities and the other one giving them a break. Having learners sharing jokes, providing them with real life examples, playing a song and performing a game were also selected the same number of times, 13%. The least option chosen to bring students' attention back was recapitulating the information to consolidate their knowledge.

## 4 Conclusions

The information gathered and previously analyzed led to draw various conclusions. Regarding the factors that ignite inattentiveness in the classroom, technological devices take the lead. As a result of this finding, teachers must stop resenting students' apparent hostile attitude and get on with the commitment to devise alternatives to engage them. Teachers must give a positive twist to this by responding to the need to incorporate technology in the lesson stages and hook students into a "virtual reality." Engaging and motivating Gen Yers is not rocket science. This type of learners is visual and involves learning by doing. Students prefer kinesthetic and visual learning activities over traditional teacher-centered and text-based tasks. The results support the notion that it is important to "break-up" classes with periods of active learning. The learning pyramid suggests the need to keep learners active by incorporating more hands-on activities in order to turn learning into a more memorable experience. Furthermore, teachers must mix up class activities with *visual, intrapersonal, interpersonal, proactive and energetic* (hands-on) techniques of delivery in order to satisfy students' needs and sustain students' attention.

#### **4.2 Proposal: The Engagement and Attention Frame**

The results of the previous analysis substantiated the basis of this proposal. Four main aspects will be considered for teachers to keep students awake, attentive and on the alert whatever the stage of the lesson is. These aspects comprise four multiple intelligences: visual, intrapersonal, interpersonal and kinesthetic (hands-on). They account for the four axes of this frame that will be strictly used for each stage of the lesson or move.

The main cross-sectional ingredient will be technology due to the immediate need of this Gen Y. Based on the analysis of the typical student's attention span, the activities during the transitional move must be swapped every certain number of minutes. Additionally, it is worth saying that the aim of this frame is to sustain students' attention and interest throughout all the stages improving their attentiveness and performance until they leave the classroom.

##### *4.2.2 Understanding the Stages of the Engagement and Attention Frame*

The following is a frame of practical ideas for teachers to implement regardless of the age of the students or the nature of the course. As previously described, this particular generation that universities are currently teaching have specific needs and features. If teachers are really concerned about enlivening their lessons and maximizing students' achievement, these elements must be tackled.

Unquestionably, every lesson goes through three important stages that will be summarized as follows:

##### **OPENING MOVE:**

The procedure the teacher uses to bring students into the mood of learning and experiencing the English language. For this move teachers can use visual aids, short games, anecdotes or jokes.

##### **TRANSITIONAL MOVE**

This second procedure is the core of the lesson. It must contain all the possible shifts to ensure the success of the lesson. It is in this stage where teachers must make sage decisions and sensible swaps. These changes must be congruent with the different activities and objectives of the lesson. How each move within this stage is sequenced and paced helps a lesson maintain its "momentum and communicate a sense of development" and achievement. This stage must include very interactive activities to prevent inattention lapses or interest declines.

##### **CLOSING MOVE**

This stage endorses techniques to help close the lesson effectively such as summarizing, reviewing, relating the lesson to previous or further lesson objectives, linking the lesson to students' real world needs, and praising students for what they have accomplished during the lesson. These techniques along with the activities shown in the chart help to remedy the inattentiveness of students to the class duties.

#### 4.2.3 Activities for the Engagement and Attention Frame

The following chart displays the activities selected to help teachers engage and capture students' attention to a desirable level. The four multiple intelligences are activated throughout the different stages of the lesson since there is a minimum of one activity per intelligence.

##### Opening Move

1. *VIP agenda*: For learners that like to be in tune with every step in the class and to help the rest keep track of the activities, a visible agenda must be either written or pasted on the board of the classroom's walls. This will make students feel a sense of achievement once they have completed one of the activities scheduled.

2. *Direct questions*: For more intrapersonal learners, questions about previous topics or personal information or routine questions can keep students interested in the other peers' answers and set an instant rapport between the teacher and the students by using students' own input. The teacher can throw in a higher level thinking question that is related to previous or the new lesson to challenge students to keep their brain in gear.

3. *Chin-wagging*: For interpersonal learners asking students to turn around and face a partner to the right, left, behind or in front in order to ask a given question or one of their own helps build a sense of community since the very beginning. Questions could be related to the topic or personal life questions.

4. *Short games*:

This stage of the lesson should be "gamified" to keep students absorbed since the very first moment they start the class. Let us remember that the equation: game plus education results in positive learning. Game-based learning will keep students on their toes and without uttering a peep. Their sense of engagement is boosted when game-like tasks are used. In the appendix section there is an repertoire of short games that can be played during this stage. It is advisable not to last more than 10 minutes as the students soon lose interest and verify the level of difficulty since a too easy exercise or activity will disengage them, or too hard will provoke the same result.

##### Transitional Move

1. *Blogging/Mobile Learning*: It will be very interesting to have every teacher open a different blog according to the course taught. Students at this point can post comments about their expectations about the topic the teacher just presented. The chain of comments or questions can start at the beginning of the lesson and be tackled right away or at the end of the class.

Mobile learning can be fun and helpful to enhance students' motivation and engagement, for instance. Activities such as competing to surf the web for information, recording or creating memos in the phone, accessing digital textbooks, creating podcasts, interviewing people, downloading learning staff, taking videos of class presentations and experiments, playing EFL games, communicating inside and outside the classroom, accessing social networks, creating and sharing documents, listening to EFL audios and watching EFL videos.

2. *Soft ball tossing:* Keeping students on the alert is an ultimate goal, so teachers may use this activity to awake students at any time of the class. When the teacher feels students' attention is waning, he/she tosses the ball unexpectedly to any student. The student who catches it answers one question about the topic. This is something teachers can try out to keep track of students' understanding during the development of the lesson.
3. *Popcorn reading:* This is another technique teachers can employ to keep reading sessions alive. This guarantees students' follow the reading since they must be attentive to not lose their turn. As one student reads, the other ones follow the reading. Whenever the student reading wants to stop, yells out the word "popcorn" and another student's name. That student must start reading right where the previous student stopped. The flow of the reading must not be broken. Teachers and students must struggle to keep the flowing going.
4. *Quotations:* Writing important portions of a text related to the topic or compiled quotes on strips of paper may help teachers to sustain students' attention. Once teachers perceive inattentiveness, they can distribute these strips and ask students to comment upon the quote or portion selected.
5. *Tossing a die:* After holding a discussion about a topic or reading, the teacher selects students at random to toss a die at them. The die includes the question, plus and minus symbols on each face of it. The question symbol indicates students must construct a question when the die lands on this face. The plus symbol signifies that students must make up an affirmative statement. The minus symbol represents that students must say a negative statement. Everything has to be related to the topic under study.
6. *Customizing a Prezi/Powerpoint Presentation:* Teachers must be hand in hand with technology. This generation hungers for a technology touch in the classroom. There are tools that conform to these students' needs by giving them the chance to put summaries of the topics such as Prezi or PowerPoint presentations. The final work can be later shared during class time or by an e-mail for further study.
7. *Virginia's Reel:* Given that students love to be on the move, kinesthetic activities result in a very practical solution. This activity is charged with lots of movement and interaction. The teacher can throw a question or bring a list of questions ready. The questions must be rooted in the target topic. The teacher divides the students into two groups, asks the groups to stand up in two separate lines with one member of the opposing group facing. To the sign given, the teacher asks one of the groups to move to their right so that they have the chance to practice or question a different member of the other group.
8. *Graphic Organizers:* Students could use graphic organizers such as a web, Venn Diagram, or T-charts to present the main information. A rule of thumb is that more than getting the students physically connected, they must be intellectually connected too.

### Closing Move

1. *Recap sheet:* The teacher keeps a sheet pasted on the wall or board. Here, the main points of the lesson have been written for students and the teacher to recap the information. This should be very visible for students to even stand up during the previous stage and jot down notes. The teacher can ask different students to read the points and go over each one.
2. *Emailing/Blogging:* Although technophobic or ICT-intimidated teachers may be reluctant to use technological devices in the class, they must admit that technology must be



made an allied and not an enemy these days since the target population is the Gen Yers. Students can use these last minutes of the class to brush up on the topic by writing an email to the teacher, a peer or to themselves. This could be a bright idea to keep track of their learning in the cyberspace.

2. *The Human Computer*: A student is given a defined amount of time to recall, at a fast speed, what he/she remembers from the information studied. Another student “records” and repeats. This second student could be selected by the teacher or the previous student. The teacher can decide between forming a chain or just having some students participate at random.

3. *Graffiti Time*: The teacher pastes some newsprint sheets on the classroom’s walls. Students are given markers for them to write the main highlights of the lesson. They use either letters, words or drawings to enclose their ideas. Before departing they are asked to explain in a nutshell what the graffiti represent.

The following chart represents the Engagement and Attention Frame containing the four multiple intelligences plus the activities suggested for each stage.

Table 4.2.3 The Engagement and Attention Frame

	<b>Visual</b>	<b>Intrapersonal</b>	<b>Interpersonal</b>	<b>kinesthetic</b>	
<b>Opening Move</b>	VIP agenda	Direct questions	Chin-wagging	Short games	swap every 2 minutes among activities ( if possible)
<b>Transitional Move</b>	Blogging/Mobile learning	Soft ball Popcorn reading Tossing a die	Customizing a prezi or powerpoint presentation	Virginia’s reel	swap every 10 minutes among activities ( if possible)
<b>Closing Move</b>	Recap Sheet Graphic Organizers	E-mailing Blogging	The Human Computer	Graffiti Time Flyer	swap every 5 minutes among activities ( if possible)

Note: The row on top contains the four multiple intelligences by Gardener that this frame entails. The other rows represent the different activities for every move or stage that are placed on the column on the left. The first column on the left specifies the different moves throughout the lesson. The last column on the right specifies the time allocated or the intervals at which teachers are suggested to swap from one activity to the other.

The “magic formula” is to have students always on task, physically and intellectually connected, in tune with the topic and the teacher to avoid deadtime.

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**Appendix 1****Booklet of A Compilation of 25 Deinhbitizers and Ice breakers**

1. **Weekend:** 5 words from each student to describe last weekend.

2. **Anagrams:** cheater (teacher) - admirer (married) - listen (silent) - below (elbow) - beak (bake) - to hum (mouth) - team (meat)

3. **Coffee-pot game (coffee pot substitutes a verb):** Do you coffee-pot every day? Do you like coffee potting?

4. **Flashing**

You can flash any of the following for a brief moment: picture mounted on card or in a book; a text on a strip of card; a book cover; a newspaper headline; an object. The students then identify and/or describe what they saw. Encourage differences of opinion and don't confirm or reject any ideas. Flash several times to promote attempts at identification and discussion. In the end, show the text, picture or object.

5. **Oral cloze**

Read a story or prose a passage, which can be from your course book. Stop occasionally before a key word and get the students to guess what it is going to be: they can either volunteer the word orally, or write it down. If the passage is one they have worked on recently, this can function as a review exercise of key vocabulary.

6. **Recalling words**

Write on the board between 15 and 20 words the students have recently learned, or that you think they know. Make sure all the words are understood. Give a minute for everyone to look at them, then erase or conceal them. Individually or in pairs or groups, the students try to recall as many as they can and write them down. Find out who remembered the most (and spelt them correctly).

7. **Remember when...**

Tell your participants that you are going to be taking a trip back in time. Type out random dates on the computer and cut them out. Place the dates into a hat or bowl and have each person draw one. Each person has to write a short blurb about something that happened to him or her in that particular year. Afterwards, everyone shares his/her story from the time period drawn. Include yourself in the activities; it makes the participants feel more comfortable. Finding a flashing light to set off and pretending it's from the "time machine" before you arrive at each year will always get some laughs.

8. **Why have you got a monkey in your bag?**

Empty a bag -yours or one of the students'. Go up to one of the students, give him or her the bag and ask: Why have you got a monkey in your bag? The student has to think of a convincing or original reason why there is a monkey in his or her bag. After giving the reason and answering any questions from the rest of the class, he or she then takes the

bag and goes up to another student with the same question, only this time using another object, for example: Why have you got an axe in your bag? And so on. This is a good activity for lighthearted relaxation: after exams, for example, or at the end of term.

#### **9. You write next**

Each student has a sheet of paper, at the top which he or she writes a sentence: it can be a simple statement of fact or opinion, or a question. For example: It's very cold today. This is passed to a neighbor, who adds an answer, comment or further question and passes it on someone else. The activity can, of course, be done in pairs rather than by passing around the group.

#### **10. All those wearing...**

Simple game where everyone is seated in a circle and the leader stands in the middle. When the leader says "all those wearing blue change" everyone wearing the colour blue must change seats; the leader will also try to find a seat so that one person will be left without a seat standing in the middle. Start the game focused on clothing e.g. all those wearing jumpers change, then combine items of clothing with colours, all those with blue bras etc.

Alternatives: all those with two sisters, all those with a dog, all those who like pizza, all those who have been to Paris, etc are another option.

#### **11. Word Circle – alphabet**

This is an elimination game. Players form a circle. To start the game, one player says a word beginning with A, the next player must say another word beginning with A, and so on round the circle. A player may begin a new letter any time. Players are eliminated if they cannot think of a word, or if they fail to notice that the first letter has been changed and they say a word from the previous letter. The game continues until there is only one player left. The game can begin slowly, but soon, players should be given only a couple of seconds to come up with a letter.

#### **12. Questions/No Questions**

Two players are chosen to start. The group establishes the who and where of a scene and the two players must produce a dialogue consisting of questions only. The first player to hesitate for too long or to answer with a statement must sit down and be replaced by another with the same situation or a different one, depending on consensus.

#### **13. Double Talk**

Students work in groups of three. Player one sits facing players two and three. Player One's objective is to listen and respond fully to each of the simultaneous conversations from players two and three. Player's two and three's objective is to command 100% of Player one's attention at all times. Each may say or do anything short of physical contact to hold P1's attention. Run for two minutes. Player 1 decides which of the two held his attention best. Rotate Player One

**14. Word Association**

The teacher starts the game by saying a word, such as "Hotel".

For example:

*Teacher: Hotel*

Student A: Bed

Student B: Room

Student C: Service

Student D: Food

As you can see, any association is ok. If the student can't answer (5 second limit) he or she must stand up. The last student seated is the winner. If the association is not obvious, the student is asked to explain the association.

**15. Chopsticks Race:** Make two teams. Have a student name a flashcard and then let her/him try to pick up and transfer a sweet from the bowl to the team's cup. The team which will transfer more sweets wins!

**16. Hot seat:** A student seats with his/her back to the board or to the teacher. The teacher displays a word or flash cards. Other students describe the card to enable the student guess what it is.

**17. I spy:** T says "I spy with my little eye something that begins with B". Ss try to guess the object (e.g. "book"). Colors are a good alternative for younger Ss ("... my little eye something that is red").

**18. Monkey/Banana Game:** Prepare one big dice with pictures of monkey heads on some sides and bananas on the others. Students answer question and then roll the dice for their team. If bananas they get the number of bananas shown on that side of the die. If it is the monkey, the monkey eats some of their team's bananas/points.

**19. Hangman (<http://www.manythings.org/hm/>)**

Hangman is an excellent choice for use in the ESL classroom. You can use it to practice any type of English vocabulary or phrase and most students are familiar with the game. Still, some schools don't allow ESL hangman games because the idea of killing the stick figure is too violent. If this is the case for your school, you should turn to alternatives to the hangman image, playing the game the same way, but using a different image.

**20. Traditional Hangman**

In the traditional hangman game, you start by drawing the gallows. Think of a word or phrase and place a small line to represent that letter. Students must try to guess the letters in the word. If they guess correctly, you place the letter in the correct position. If they guess incorrectly, you draw a new body part hanging from the gallows, starting with the head. If the students make enough incorrect guesses for you to draw a full man, he "dies" and they lose.

**21. Happy Face**

If the traditional hangman image is too gruesome for your students, use something a little tamer. Start by drawing a funny face on the board, complete with ears, hair and

other details. If students make a bad guess, you erase one feature. If you erase the entire picture, the game is over. This works best when you are guessing simple vocabulary words and short phrases.

## 22. Shark Reef

For a longer game, you can play the shark reef version of hangman. Draw a hill with a cliff. At the bottom of the cliff, you can draw water with a shark waiting. Place a stick figure at the bottom of the hill. As students make wrong guesses, you erase the stick figure and draw him

a little further up the hill, eventually falling off the cliff and into the mouth of the waiting shark. As the man approaches the cliff, be sure to draw a funny, scared face as he sees what awaits him. This version of the game works well because there is no definite ending to the game. If students make several bad guesses, you can simply make the man walk a little slower up the hill. You can take as long as you want and the character never actually has to reach the shark.

23. **Fair Cup:** Write each student's name on a Popsicle stick and put the sticks in a cup. To keep students on their toes, pull a random stick to choose someone to speak or answer a question. Important: When you begin using your fairness cup, prepare a range of questions, some of which all your students can successfully answer. This strategy allows the bottom third of your class to get involved and answer questions without being put on the spot.

## 24. Meeting Conversation Reschedule Dice Game

Select two speakers, one blue and the other black. The speakers move through the list alphabetically. They throw a dice for each letter and then speak the line that corresponds with the number. After they finish, another couple start. When everyone has finished, compare how different the conversation was in content but how similar in context.

25. **Shiritori:** Students will be able to think of words that begin with a specific letter. The teacher says a word and the children must think of a word that begins with the last letter of the previous word. This continues until a child is unable to think of a word in which case, they skip two turns.

*Activities compiled from eslprintables.com and islcollectives.com*

## Enhancing Oral Communication Skills in EFL Learning through Short Stories

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**Abstract:** The study herein explores the relation between reading short stories and learners' centeredness, self-confidence, and positive attitudes towards reading in EFL oral communication courses. To this end, 22 INA (Spanish for Instituto Nacional de Aprendizaje) students were immersed in a reading project where the communicative activities were set up around the content of short stories and their connection with the learners' own experiences. Results suggest that student centeredness, self-confidence, and positive attitudes towards reading increase by using short stories for oral communication in EFL; all this while a milestone is set towards the cultural competences that today's multicultural world demands.

**Key Words:** student centeredness, self-confidence, oral communication, short stories, attitudes

**Resumen:** El presente estudio explora la relación entre lectura de historias cortas y el impulso de la centralización del estudiante, la autoconfianza y actitudes positivas hacia la lectura en cursos de comunicación oral dentro del contexto de inglés como Lengua Extranjera (EFL). Para ello, 22 estudiantes del INA (Instituto Nacional de Aprendizaje) participaron en un proyecto de lectura donde las actividades comunicativas se realizaron alrededor del contenido de las historias. Los resultados sugieren una relación entre la lectura de historias cortas y el desarrollo de los tres componentes estudiados; todo ello mientras se da un paso hacia la educación cultural que nuestra sociedad multicultural demanda.

**Palabras Clave:** centralización del estudiante, autoconfianza, comunicación oral, historias cortas, actitudes

### I. Introduction

One of the most significant current discussions in language teaching is the need for multicultural communication. Curricular authorities and researchers agree that geographical, political, and ideological distances need to be shortened between cultures so that "the various issues of our diversified society [are solved]" (Youngdal, 2011, p. 1). Arguably, a great volume of literature in the past decades has outlined the need for consensus on how to reach this goal. One of the largest obstacles, however, may be the uncertainty in regards to the best methods to achieve this, and also that multiculturalism is a relatively new philosophy. In fact, an increasing number of academics are today discussing



the challenges it poses in education (e.g., King, 2011; Safia, 2011; Stambach, 2011; Youngdal, 2011). Carter and Nunan (2001) assert that the many questions emerging in this direction are only starting to be answered, and the much remains to be done before intercultural communication becomes a success.

Besides these already-significant challenges, education and research also need to direct efforts towards the development of cultural and linguistic proficiency of learners. In the particular field of applied linguistics, researchers have started to show great interest in the role of literature at both linguistic and cultural levels in second and foreign language learning. For instance, literature has been said to play an essential role as a compensatory device for promoting engagement in the classroom, and as a tool to “extend [students] language use”, encourage of tolerance, and to promote creativity (McKay, 1982, pp. 192-193). But despite its many benefits, selecting the right literary genre is often complicated for teachers; and not only that, but they may lack methodological expertise to use literature effectively for communicative purposes.

In recent years, nonetheless, there has been an increasing interest in the use of short stories for oral communication. As stated by Parkinson and Thomas (2000, p. 60), short stories “generally require less contextualization than longer fiction [...] and they are generally less linguistically complex than poetry” (as cited in Sevilla & Rodríguez, 2012, p. 2). Further, they offer learners contextualized language, which, according to research, can be comprehended effectively through the use of interactive classroom dynamics (Bhuvanewari & Jacob 2011, p. 156).

This paper explores the extent to which reading short stories promote learners’ centeredness, self-confidence, and positive attitudes towards reading in oral communication courses. Taken together, findings suggest that these increase significantly by using short stories in EFL contexts. They also indicate that cooperation, vocabulary growth, reading rate increase, and social skills enhancement can be achieved through this learning model. This study assists our understanding of how to use short stories for effective oral communication, as it also sheds light on how to fortify learners’ cultural literacy; a central requirement within the scope of every multicultural communication setting.

## II. Literature Review

As the world struggles for multiculturalism, a number of challenges need to be met, particularly in the direction of multilingualism as a tool for international communication. In Costa Rica, for instance, the government recently launched a plan called Costa Rica Multilingüe, in which concern on the need for better linguistic competences in English is strongly emphasized. However, the government has assured that the efforts made during the last two decades have proven “insufficient” and that more efforts are therefore needed in this direction (Presidencia de la República, 2007, p. 2). Ever since the program came into action back in 2008, a great deal of investments have been made, many of them in teacher-training programs that would enhance MEP (Ministry of Public Education) teachers’ linguistic competences so that they would acquire a better language command for better teaching. Unfortunately, the running of the plan not always reflects a change in teaching practices that would meet its objectives (Gamboa and Sevilla, 2012). Overall, Costa Rica Multilingüe’s goal is to:

*Dotar al país de una población con las competencias comunicativas que le permitan un mayor desarrollo personal y profesional, aumentando sus posibilidades de acceso al conocimiento universal y a empleos de mayor remuneración (Gobierno de la República, 2007, p. 3).*

Clearly, this is a big and somehow ambitious goal. If the country is to achieve it, then significant changes in English teaching need to be introduced.

Second and foreign language teaching has been a concurred area of research in the last decades worldwide. At the heart of new teaching trends is *Communicative Language Teaching* (CLT), which stresses the need for a classroom scenario where language can be used as meaningfully and authentically as possible (Brown, 2000; Carter and Nunan, 2001; Nunan, 1989; Richards, 2001). Among the most salient constructs within the scope of CLT are student centeredness and student’s self-confidence, arguably because they are crucial determiners of language learners’ success. In essence, the former has to do with ways to make students become the core of learning through communication opportunities that allow them to exploit their linguistic competencies (Sevilla and Méndez, 2012); the latter, for the purposes of this paper, is seen as the state of “being able to communicate in the L2 in an adaptive and efficient manner” (Macintyre et. al, 1998, p. 551).

Another element that has recently been granted great importance in second and foreign language learning is that of literature. Sandra McKay, for instance, assures that it may “extend [students’] language use”, along with a number of related benefits such as the encouragement of tolerance, the promotion of creativity, and the increase in reading proficiency (1982, pp. 192-193). However, there is also a vast body of literature pointing out weaknesses in its correct implementation in the language curriculum. For the most part, traditional methods, especially those dealing with the literal comprehension of the text (i.e., efferent reading, in McKay’s words) have long proven to be ineffective. A change in paradigm is, as stated elsewhere in this paper, therefore paramount in language learning and teaching.

As for short stories, they have proven effective in second and foreign language teaching since, as argued previously, they do not need as much contextualization as do other literary genres, and they are not as linguistically complex as poetry or drama (Parkinson and

Thomas 2000). Moreover, they “provide opportunities for focused attention” of learners and they offer an opportunity for language use in a contextualized fashion, which the teacher may take advantage of if s/he comes across the right classroom dynamics (Bhuvanewari & Jacob, 2011, p. 156). It follows that, if short stories are used with the right methods, they may be used as a platform for language learning through which the gap between the world’s multicultural demands and the Costa Rica’s government plan on better communicative practices can finally be filled.

This correlational study looks into the relation between reading short stories and promoting learners’ centeredness, self-confidence, and positive attitudes towards reading in oral communication courses. In so doing, the theoretical principles of Schema Theory and the Interactive-compensatory Model of Reading Fluency were combined, along with empirical experience of the researchers.

Schema Theory is based on the assumption that reading is an interactive process, where the reader transacts with the text by connecting it to his/her personal experiences (Nunan, 1989). As for the Interactive-compensatory Model, it assumes that “incoming textual data is processed (bottom-up)” during the reading process, which activates existing knowledge (top-down) that the reader will use to give the text a “coherent interpretation”. This is interactive in that the reader makes sense of the text by “decoding” its linguistic features; then, she/he will relate it to his/her background experience. It is compensatory in that a reader’s weak linguistic knowledge will be “compensate[d]” through his/her background knowledge and vice versa. In this sense, what the reader discovers in the text is “as important as what he finds there” (Bock 1995, p. 154). Both Schema Theory and the Interactive-compensatory Model provided important insight into the completion of the paradigm proposed in this paper.

### **III. Methodology**

This study explores the correlation between the use of short stories in oral communication courses and the enhancement of student centeredness, self-confidence, and positive attitudes towards reading in EFL contexts. This quantitative correlational study was conducted during the first semester of 2012 at INA, Centro de Formación Profesional Ciudad Quesada, San Carlos, Costa Rica.

To that end, 22 students aged between 17 and 32 years old taking a conversational English course for customer service were selected. Thirteen were female and nine were male, all of them Costa Rican and with an intermediate proficiency level. The majority of them were full-time students; that is, they had no job or family commitments that would interfere with their academic endeavors, except for three of them who worked part time and were taking the course at the same time. Lastly, all the participants had completed secondary school.

#### **3.1 Instruments**

The instruments for data collection in this study included: a) *an ordinal scale* (see appendix 1) on students’ attitudes towards reading in general and towards reading short stories, b) a *classroom dynamics observation checklist* to measure student centeredness (see appendix 2), and c) a *checklist* to measure self-confidence evolution throughout the course (see appendix 3). Additionally, a self-assessment scale was used as support for the procedure. This scale sought to provide the participants with a tool for measuring their classmates’ commitment and overall progress as the paradigm evolved. All these instruments derive

from theoretical insights discussed in the review of the literature section. Below is a description of each one of them:

### 3.2 Description of the Instruments

The attitudes scale comprised twenty questions grouped into two parts, and it was administered at the beginning and at the end of the procedure. The first part, *Students' Views about Reading and about Reading Short Stories*, gathered information as to general opinions regarding the two components. It included statements like *reading in English helps be build tolerance and respect towards other cultures and subcultures*, or *reading short stories in English helps build self-confidence while speaking in the classroom*, which the students had to rate as: *fully agree, agree, partially agree, disagree, or fully disagree*. The second part, *Students' Practices and Attitudes towards Reading and about Reading Short Stories*, inquired on practices and attitudes towards reading short stories. It included statements like *I read newspapers, books, short stories, comics, etc. in my spare time*, or *I believe short stories are an important complement in the process of learning English*, which the students rated the same way they did in the first part.

The classroom dynamics observation checklist comprised a total of fourteen questions measuring the degree of achievement of the classroom dynamics of the model proposed; and it was administered three times during the completion of the study. The degree of achievement for such questions was ranked as *yes, no, partly, or NA (non-applicable)*. This checklist was divided into three subsections: a) *classroom atmosphere*, which looked into the degree to which the mood and the planning of the class allowed for a friendly and stress free interaction; b) *students' role*, which sought to gather information as to whether the learners were given a role where they would interact as the center of learning, and c) *learners' attitudes*, which measured the participants' overall response to the treatment applied.

The self-confidence checklist collected data about the participants' self-confidence levels while conducting oral communication tasks, and it consisted of fourteen statements related to anxiety, stress, nervousness, self-esteem, and other self-confidence-related factors as devised by previous research. The instrument included items such as *I find it intimidating to work in groups*, *I feel insecure about the ideas I am trying to express*, *I get nervous when someone asks questions about what I just said*, or *I avoid risk-taking because I fear making mistakes while speaking English*. The participants ticked the statements that applied to them when speaking English in the classroom.

Three artifacts were used to facilitate the completion of the model, but not for purposes of data collection. The first one was a *peer-assessment* form including a series of statements describing the participants' performance during the communicative activities. The students in the group—or in the pairs—rated according to criteria given (*always, almost always, often, sometimes, almost never*). At the bottom of the form, the rater was given space to provide feedback, thus fostering linguistic awareness and commitment while carrying out the communicative activities. The second artifact was a *story map* which the participants used for the completion of while-reading stage (see procedure section). Finally, a *critical reflection form* was handed out to the participants for them to write a short paragraph reflecting on the process they had been immersed in. All these artifacts were crucial for the successful completion of this study.

### 3.3 Procedure

The procedure in this study comprises three main stages as described below. Each one of them was equally important for the successful completion of the model.

**Stage 1: Teaching elements of a short story:** This model was not aimed at analyzing or explaining elements in a short story; however, these were taught because they would provide learners with an ampler understanding of the content and thus more successful communicative tasks in class would ideally be carried out. These had to be taught and discussed beforehand as a way to equip students for the upcoming while-reading tasks. By conducting in-class short story analyses with the learners, elements such as *setting, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution, characters, point of view, plot, tone and style, conflict, irony, theme, etc.* were made clear from the onset. This was done during the first two weeks of class. Afterwards, the second stage took place.

**Stage 2: Running the model:** The running of the model covered the following ten sessions, and participants had to read one short story per week. Here, a series of steps were put into practice in a sequential fashion, for, according to literature reviewed, they would yield more positive results.

**a) Selecting the stories:** The short stories were selected based on two criteria: the students' proficiency level and the cultural richness present in the stories; that is, they could not be too difficult to read, and they had to offer enough cultural input for the establishment of connections with current cultural realities.

**b) Pre Reading:** The stories were read out of class. However, before students did so, they were asked to do research on the author's biography, the story's sociocultural background, or any related information that would give them contextual input before they read. This background information was brought to class and shared with classmates and the instructor before reading started. When required, the instructor provided contextual and lexical feedback to the students. Thus, they were equipped to go home and read.

**c) While Reading:** The while reading stage comprised the completion of two activities. As students read, they had to search unfamiliar words and create a glossary with definitions of them, and they had to complete a story map provided by the instructor. The story map was intended to help participants gain better understanding of the stories, and it included the identification of elements studied during the first two weeks, as well as a section where they would give their personal criticism about the story.

**d) Post Reading:** Once students had read the stories at home, they were ready for communicative activities. The post reading stage constituted the most important element in the procedure of this study. Once the pre and the while-reading stages had been completed, communicative tasks were set up around the content of the short stories. Prior to this, the story maps were peer-checked as a way to double-check on content comprehension and to eventually provide a chance for warming up before conducting the communicative tasks. These tasks included solving a hypothetical problem through round tables, debating about the psychology or the ethics of a character in the story, establishing connections between the stories and one's lives or, between the setting of the stories and today's society, making decisions about hypothetical situations set up by the instructor, creating a piece of art to express personal criticism about the story, and a number of other tasks used to elicit communication among the participants. On average, these tasks lasted from 60 to 70

minutes. Finally, students were given the chance to interact with more than one group as a means to expose them to diverse worldviews and experiences. At the end of the session, students received feedback on their oral performance from one another (using the peer assessment form).

**Stage 3: The Wrap-up:** One week after they completed the ten stories, the participants were asked to write a short critical reflection about the reading process they had taken part in. This was aimed at giving them a chance to reflect on their own progress, as suggested by literature on student centeredness. In such reflection, the participants were asked to point out positive as well as negative aspects of the learning model and, if desired, to provide recommendations for the future implementation of similar projects.

### 3.4 Analysis

The data gathered were analyzed through tables and graphs accompanied by verbal descriptions of them. The results of the *reading attitudes scale* were analyzed in the form of percentages and expressed in tables for each one of the categories inquired. Similarly, the *self-confidence checklist*, results were expressed in the form of percentages through two tables in the results and analysis section. Finally, data coming from the *classroom dynamics observation checklist* were analyzed by means of degree of achievement of the three categories inquired; and they were summarized in a graph displaying the data collected from the three observations carried out.

## 3.5 Results and Analysis

### 3.5.1 Reading Attitudes Scale

This section analyzes the results from the ordinal scale on reading attitudes. The findings will be analyzed in light of the two parts of the instruments: *a) students' views about reading and about reading short stories* and *b) students' practices and attitudes towards reading and towards reading short stories*.

Regarding the students' views about reading and about reading short stories, results indicate that by the end of the treatment, the participants had developed more positive views about the two components. For instance, while at the beginning only 27, 27% of them fully agreed that reading helps them to improve their oral skills inside and outside the classroom, 90, 90% indicated to believe so by the end of the treatment. Likewise, while at the beginning only 36, 36% of the subjects fully agreed that short stories helped increase vocabulary and grammatical structures, a total of 81, 81% believed so by the end of the model. These numbers depict a general improvement of views towards reading and reading short stories from the beginning to the end of the implementation of this model.

The students' practices and attitudes towards reading and towards reading short stories showed an important improvement as well, but the main escalation can be seen in the area of reading short stories. For example, only 22, 72% of the participants reported to always read stories as part of their learning process before the application of the treatment, while 100% reported to do so at the end of the treatment. Similarly, few (31, 81%) participants reported to believe short stories are a good source of discussion in the classroom before the treatment, as opposed to 90, 90% who reported to believe so after the application of the treatment. The same as with the views about reading and reading short

stories, results indicate important improvement in students' attitudes and practices towards reading and short stories after the implementation of this model. Results from both sections of this instrument suggest that the students see positive results after partaking in it. Tables 1 and 2 below detail the numbers herein explained.

**Table 1: Students' Views about Reading and about Reading Short Stories:**

FA: Fully Agree      A: Agree      PA: Partially Agree      D: Disagree      FD: Fully Disagree

CATEGORIES		DESCRIPTOR				
		FA	A	PA	D	FD
<b>A. Students' General Views about Reading</b>						
1- Reading in English is important while learning a foreign language.	Before	36.36%	36.36%	18.18%	9.09%	0%
	After	81.81%	18.18%	0%	0%	0%
2- Reading in English helps improve my oral communication skills inside and outside the classroom.	Before	27.27%	18.18%	54.54%	0%	0%
	After	90.90%	9.09%	0%	0%	0%
3- Reading in English helps gain general knowledge and a better understanding of other cultures.	Before	27.27%	63.63%	9.09%	0%	0%
	After	81.81%	9.09%	9.09%	0%	0%
4- Reading in English helps build tolerance and respect towards other cultures and subcultures.	Before	18.18%	45.45%	22.72%	13.63%	0%
	After	31.81%	22.72%	45.45%	0%	0%
5- Reading in English makes one a better critical thinker.	Before	18.18%	27.27%	27.27%	27.27%	0%
	After	36.36%	40.90%	13.63%	9.09%	0%
<b>B. Students' Views about Reading Short Stories</b>						
1- Reading short stories in English helps increase my vocabulary and grammatical structures.	Before	36.36%	63.63%	0%	0%	0%
	After	81.81%	13.63%	4.54%	0%	0%
2- Reading short stories in English helps build self-confidence while speaking in the classroom.	Before	9.09%	36.36%	36.36%	18.18%	0%
	After	54.54%	18.18%	22.72%	4.54%	0%
3- Reading short stories in English is a useful source of vocabulary for oral communication in a foreign language.	Before	22.72%	54.54%	22.72%	0%	0%
	After	77.27%	13.63%	9.09%	0%	0%
4- Reading short stories in English allows one to better understand other cultures.	Before	22.72%	54.54%	22.72%	0%	0%
	After	63.63%	9.09%	18.18%	9.09%	0%
5- Reading short stories in English helps improve one's reading rate.	Before	45.45%	45.45%	9.09%	0%	0%
	After	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%

**Table 2: Students' Practices and Attitudes towards Reading and towards Reading Short Stories:**

A: Always      AA: Almost Always      O: Often      S: Seldom      N: Never

CATEGORIES		DESCRIPTOR				
		A	AA	O	S	N
<b>A. Students' Practices and Attitudes towards Reading</b>						
1- I read newspapers, books, short articles, comics, etc. on a regular basis.	Before	86.36%	13.63%	0%	0%	0%
	After	90.90%	9.09%	0%	0%	0%
2- I read newspapers, books, short articles, comics, etc. in English	Before	31.81%	13.63%	9.09%	22.72%	22.72%
	After	68.18%	18.18%	0%	13.63%	0%
3- I am able to read and understand materials in English.	Before	40.90%	18.18%	13.63%	27.27%	0%
	After	77.27%	9.09%	13.63%	0%	0%
4- When I read material in English, I am interested in what I read.	Before	45.45%	22.72%	9.09%	4.54%	22.72%
	After	54.54%	13.63%	22.72%	4.54%	4.54%
5- In general, I find reading interesting and productive.	Before	45.45%	22.72%	13.63%	18.18%	0%
	After	77.27%	13.63%	9.09%	0%	0%
<b>B. Students' Practices and Attitudes about Reading Short Stories</b>						
1- I read short stories as part of my learning process.	Before	22.72%	9.09%	0%	13.63%	54.54%
	After	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
2- I read short stories on a regular basis outside the English classroom.	Before	0%	0%	22.72%	9.09%	68.18%
	After	31.81%	13.63%	18.18%	9.09%	27.27%
3- I believe short stories are an important complement in the process learning English.	Before	36.36%	9.09%	9.09%	13.63%	31.81%
	After	63.63%	22.72%	0%	13.63%	0%
4- I think short stories can be a good source for discussion in the English classroom.	Before	31.81%	22.72%	9.09%	18.18%	18.18%
	After	90.90%	0%	0%	0%	9.09%
5- In my opinion, short stories should be used more as a way to improve oral communication skills of the students.	Before	36.36%	22.72%	9.09%	22.72%	9.09%
	After	50%	9.09%	27.27%	0%	13.63%

### 3.5.2 Self-confidence Checklist

This section depicts the results from the self-confidence checklist administered before and after the treatment. As shown in table 3, the most significant progress was made in risk-taking willingness while communicating (item 10). Before the treatment, 50% of the participants reported to avoid risk-taking in oral activities, while the number declines to 22,72% after the treatment. A similar improvement is recorded in students' insecurity to express ideas. Twenty seven point twenty seven percent of students reported to feel insecure about the ideas they were trying to communicate, while none of them informed to do so after the treatment was applied. These numbers suggest that, the same as for reading attitudes, participants' self-confidence levels improved after implementing this model. Table 3 below shows all the data recorded through the checklist.

**Table 3: Self-confidence Checklist results before and after the treatment:**

When speaking in class, I ...

Percentage		Statements
Before	After	
22,72%	4,54%	1. Find it intimidating to work in groups.
36,36%	13,63%	2. Take a generally passive role in group discussions.
31,81%	9,09%	3. Find it hard to express an opinion because I do not have enough information about the topic.
27,27%	0%	4. Feel insecure about the ideas I am trying to express.
36,36%	4,54%	5. Feel anxious about interacting with my classmates in group discussions.
31,81%	13,63%	6. Experience discomfort while expressing ideas in English only.
27,27%	9,09%	7. Believe that my classmates have better English skills than I do.
31,81%	13,63%	8. Worry about being criticized or judged by my classmates.
36,36%	9,09%	9. Feel stressed if being corrected by either my classmates or my teacher.
50%	22,72%	10. Avoid risk-taking because I fear making mistakes while speaking English.
27,27%	0%	11. Get nervous when someone asks questions about what I just said.
36,36%	0%	12. Have feelings of discomfort while asking others questions about what they just said.
27,27%	4,54%	13. Prefer not to express an opinion because I feel I do not have enough vocabulary to do it.
68,18%	18,18%	14. Find it difficult to apply the vocabulary that is read in short stories.

### 3.5.3 Classroom Dynamics Observation Form

This section displays the results from the three classroom observations done by one of the researchers to the instructor of the course. Each observation is analyzed in light of the total score that resulted from adding up all the aspects in the instrument.

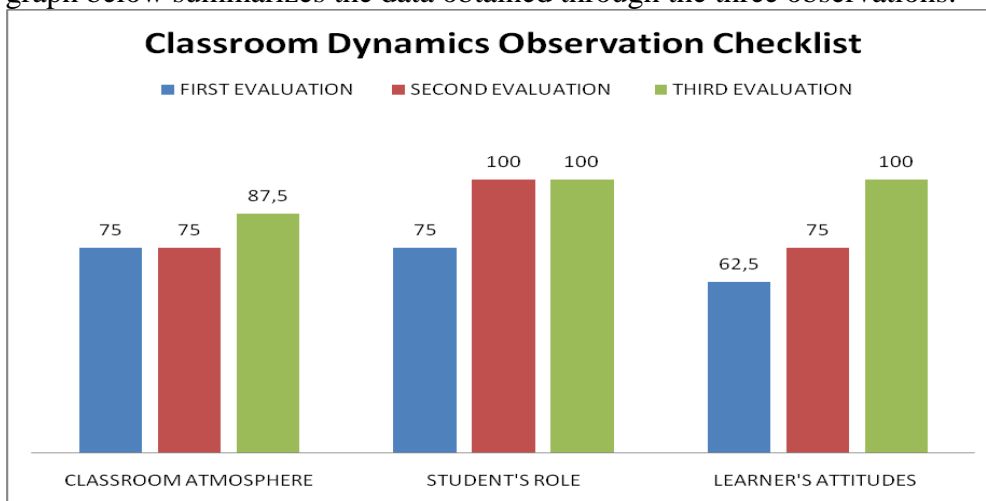
The total score for the first observation is 71% out of a 100%. Results show that classroom atmosphere is generally appropriate for the learners, while the students' confidence and comfort do not appear as appropriate. The students' role is generally appropriate as well, though some weaknesses were observed in the maximization of student-taking time, the development of leadership, and student-to-student interaction. Learners' attitudes were recorded as the weakest aspect in the observation. By and large, results display a need for improvement in students' respect, commitment, and interest in the subject matter. Although some weaknesses were recorded in this first observation, the dynamics generally conform to the desired outcomes of the model.

The total score in the second observation is 85% out of 100%; the interaction among students increases significantly. The tasks assigned to the groups allow students to take the



central role as the teacher-talking time is minimized. Still, some participants do not show a positive attitude and commitment towards the dynamics. Confidence and comfort while carrying out the tasks seem to be a challenge for the class; consequently, there is an important gap in the classroom atmosphere that needs to be filled.

The last observation shows great improvement in terms of students' attitudes and commitment towards the tasks performed. Significant progress can also be observed between the first and the last observation's score; that is, 71% and 95%, 6, respectively. It should be noted that the classroom atmosphere was also enhanced, probably due to the improvement in attitudes and commitment. Lastly, a high degree of confidence was not fully accomplished. Nonetheless, this may have occurred because the participants' language command was not fully developed as to allow full involvement in the speaking tasks. The graph below summarizes the data obtained through the three observations.



#### IV. Discussion and Conclusions

This correlational study looked into the relation between reading short stories and the promotion of students' centeredness, self-confidence, and positive attitudes towards reading in English in oral communication courses. Findings showed that, by using short stories as a platform for learning, these three elements can be enhanced significantly. In the case of student-centeredness, it can be achieved by providing students with enough opportunities for authentic communication, as proposed by current theory on language learning. Findings also indicated that learners' self-confidence can be improved by exposing them to interactive dynamics such as debates, round tables, and group discussions around the content of the short stories studied. Likewise, they showed that positive attitudes towards reading can be fostered by allowing learners to bring their own experiences into the classroom. All this was achieved as the result of combining theoretical principles—in this case the Compensatory Model and Schema Theory—that allowed for communicative learning scenarios during the implementation of this model.

There are, however, some limitations that teachers and researchers in the area must be aware of. First, the model's success depends, to a large extent, on the teacher's commitment to guiding the completion of the tasks. It also depends on the teacher's knowledge of literature and, in particular, of short stories. Second, a careful selection of the texts needs to be done in order to achieve positive results, for, as stated in the method

section, it is imperative that the lexical complexity of the stories match the students' proficiency level. Another limitation is lack of reading habits on the part of students. If they are not used to reading on a regular basis, an extra challenge will need to be solved. Lastly, a high level of cultural literacy is needed on the part of the teacher if cultural competences are to be enhanced. Despite these limitations, improvement can be done if the teacher is resourceful enough and considers potential obstacles beforehand.

Future research should be oriented in three directions. First, a similar study could be run by integrating different literature genres (i.e., poetry, drama, short stories, etc.) into a model like the one herein proposed. This would provide insights on the appropriateness of different literature genres in EFL teaching, as it would inspire replication that confirms the validity of the model. Second, a correlational study can be conducted so that the link between reading short stories and the promotion of critical thinking skills is determined. Finally, research should look into the relation between short stories and the development of cultural awareness in the EFL classroom. This would, no doubt, contribute to meeting the demands that today's multicultural and multilingual world has posed to twenty first century societies.

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## VI. Appendices

### APPENDIX A: ATTITUDE SCALE

**Part A: Students' Views about Reading and about Reading Short Stories:**

**Instructions:** tick (✓) the box that best applies to you according to: a) your general views about reading in English and b) your views about reading short stories in English. Below are the abbreviations for your performance descriptors.

**FA:** Fully Agree

**A:** Agree

**PA:** Partially Agree

**D:** Disagree

**FD:** Fully Disagree

CATEGORIES	DESCRIPTOR				
	FA	A	PA	D	FD
<b>A. Students' General Views about Reading</b>					
1- Reading in English is important while learning a foreign language.					
2- Reading in English helps improve my oral communication skills inside and outside the classroom.					
3- Reading in English helps gain general knowledge and a better understanding of other cultures.					
4- Reading in English helps build tolerance and respect towards other cultures and subcultures.					
5- Reading in English makes one a better critical thinker.					
<b>B. Students' Views about Reading Short Stories</b>					
1- Reading short stories in English helps increase my vocabulary and grammatical structures.					
2- Reading short stories in English helps build self-confidence while speaking in the classroom.					
3- Reading short stories in English is a useful source of vocabulary for oral communication in a foreign language.					
4- Reading short stories in English allows one to better understand other cultures.					
5- Reading short stories in English helps improve one's reading rate.					

**Part B: Students' Practices and Attitudes towards Reading and towards Reading Short Stories:**

**Instructions:** tick (✓) the box that best applies to you according to: a) your practices/attitudes towards reading in English and b) your practices/attitudes towards reading short stories in English. Below are the abbreviations for your performance descriptors.

**A:** Always  
Never                      **AA:** Almost Always                      **O:** Often                      **S:** Seldom                      **N:**

CATEGORIES	DESCRIPTOR				
	A	AA	O	S	N
<b>A. Students' Practices and Attitudes towards Reading</b>					
1- I read newspapers, books, short articles, comics, etc. on a regular basis.					
2- I read newspapers, books, short articles, comics, etc. in English during my spare time.					
3- I am able to read and understand materials in English.					
4- When I read material in English, I am interested in what I read.					
5- In general, I find reading interesting and productive.					
<b>B. Students' Practices and Attitudes about Reading Short Stories</b>					
1- I read short stories as part of my learning process.					
2- I read short stories on a regular basis outside the English classroom.					
3- I find short stories to be an important complement in the process learning English.					
4- Stories are a good source for discussion in the English classroom.					
5- Short stories should be used more as a way to improve oral communication skills of the students.					

**APPENDIX B: CLASSROOM DYNAMICS OBSERVATION CHECKLIST**

Observation N° \_\_\_\_/

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

CRITERIA	DEGREE OF ACHIEVEMENT			
	YES	NO	PARTLY	N/A
<b>A. CLASSROOM ATMOSPHERE</b>				
1. Does the class exhibit a friendly and comfortable atmosphere for learners to participate naturally throughout the tasks?				
2. Do learners show a high level of comfort and ease while carrying out the tasks?				
3. Is the class planned in a way that it allows for an appropriate development of the tasks?				
4. Does the sitting arrangement of the class favor effective oral communication skills?				
<b>B. STUDENTS' ROLE</b>				
1. Are the students the primary discussion leaders?				
2. Do students work in pairs or groups?				
3. Is the student-talking time sufficient enough as to allow interactive communication?				
4. Are students given the opportunity to assess their own progress?				
5. Do activities and classroom dynamics promote cooperation?				
6. Is there a predominantly interactive atmosphere during in the classroom?				
<b>C. LEARNERS' ATTITUDES</b>				
1. Do students show a positive attitude while carrying out the tasks?				
2. Is there a respectful mood among the participants throughout the tasks?				
3. Do learners show commitment towards keeping discussions going and asking/answering questions?				
4. Do learners appear interested in the topics being discussed?				

**GENERAL CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS**

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**A. CLASSROOM ATMOSPHERE:**

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**B. LEARNERS' ROLE:**

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**C. LEARNERS' ATTITUDES:**

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**APPENDIX C: SELF-CONFIDENCE CHECKLIST**

**Objective:** to collect information about to the students' self-confidence levels while conducting oral communication tasks.

**Instructions:** Read the statements below. Tick (✓) the boxes that are true for you.

When speaking in class, I ...

	find it intimidating to work in groups.
	take a generally passive role in group discussions.
	find it hard to express an opinion because I do not have enough information about the topic.
	feel insecure about the ideas I am trying to express.
	feel anxious about interacting with my classmates in group discussions.
	experience discomfort while expressing ideas in English only.
	believe that my classmates have better English skills than I do.
	worry about being criticized or judged by my classmates.
	feel stressed if being corrected by either my classmates or my teacher.
	avoid risk-taking because I fear making mistakes while speaking English.
	get nervous when someone asks questions about what I just said.
	have feelings of discomfort while asking others questions about what they just said.
	prefer not to express an opinion because I feel I do not have enough vocabulary to do it.
	find it difficult to apply the vocabulary that is read in short stories.



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## **Plenarias**

## Service Learning in English for Engineering: Improving Teacher Excellence through Community Outreach

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**Abstract:** This presentation suggests that teacher excellence can be improved by incorporating service learning and team-based, interdisciplinary experiential learning projects in English for Specific Purposes classrooms. I will describe a class in which experiential service learning was used at a Midwestern U.S. university. In this class, graduate-level engineering students co-constructed knowledge about how to analyze and synthesize data and present that data in a client report. While working with the content, students also learned local societal knowledge and strengthened and improved their oral and written English-for-engineering skills. From a teacher's perspective, the benefits of working with a community-based organization on a class project were abundant. Students were more engaged with their learning process, which made my job more interesting. By using student-focused teaching methodologies that have been shown to be beneficial in Technical Communication and in English for Specific Purposes, I was able to experience cross-disciplinary teaching and learning. I was also able to improve my own teaching by conducting a short student survey to get feedback about student perceptions of this project. This type of project could be implemented in a variety of ESP classrooms. Teachers can give back to their communities, improve their own teaching, and increase student engagement by facilitating collaborative service-learning projects.

### I Introduction

I think I have a fun job. I teach Technical Communication in the Purdue School of Engineering and Technology at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI). According to our website, "IUPUI is Indiana's premier urban university...and a campus renowned for service learning and civic engagement" (IUPUI, 2013). We have about 30,000 students from 122 countries. The Purdue School of Engineering and Technology (E&T) has students from more than 60 countries ([enr.iupui.edu](http://enr.iupui.edu)). Because we are located very close to downtown Indianapolis, Indiana, we have access to opportunities with many local businesses.

The fun part of my job is that I get to work with engineers to help them learn to communicate effectively in writing and in oral presentations. This is not as easy as it might sound. Many engineering students hold the misconception that there will be very little writing in engineering careers (Steiner, 2011). Thus, these students do not often value communication classes during their university time. On the contrary, engineering professionals have been shown to agree that communication skills are critical (Reave, 2004). Engineers spend approximately 64% of their time writing and speaking (Sageev & Romanowski, 2001). Engineers in the workforce have been shown to have insufficient communication skills (see, for example, Reave, 2004; Steiner, 2011). Therefore, finding ways to help engineering students learn these skills before graduation is very important.

My background in Applied Linguistics/TESOL allows me the opportunity to connect the disciplines of Technical Communication (TCM) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in a unique way. One of my favorite TCM classes to teach is a communication class for engineering and technology graduate students who are non-native English speakers. In this class, students learn writing and speaking skills relevant to both graduate-level academic work and professional work. As far as ESP goes, it doesn't get much more specific than that. The engineering students in this class have diverse backgrounds and experiences. Some of the students are taking this class as a substitute for a class in the English for Academic Purposes program. Others need help improving their advanced English communication skills because they are preparing to write a thesis. While teaching this class is definitely fun, it also presents some challenges. One of the most challenging aspects is getting the students excited about the class. Most students do not get excited about writing or giving presentations, regardless of the content.

IUPUI has a center on campus called the Solution Center, which acts as a liaison between the local community and the university. In this way, partnerships can be created and distributed to appropriate areas around campus with ease. The community organizations have one point of contact, and the Solution Center places their project in the appropriate school, department, and program on campus. I had previously expressed interest in working with the Solution Center to incorporate real-world projects into the TCM classes. In January of 2012, the IUPUI Solution Center provided us with a project that was perfect for this particular Technical Communication class. The client, a non-for-profit agency devoted to helping the local homeless population, needed someone to go through a large amount of qualitative data, synthesize the information, and make a recommendation for future action based on that data. To maintain anonymity, the client's name will not be used here. This project may have provided a scaffold for the students to begin to think differently about data analysis, synthesis, and writing, while giving them an opportunity to learn societal knowledge and get excited about serving the community in which they lived.

In this paper, I will present some of the research that has been done on using service learning in classes for both English for Specific Purposes and Technical Communication. I will discuss how I implemented service learning in this class to promote student engagement while giving non-native English speakers opportunities to acquire local societal knowledge. I will also present some of the data from a post-course survey. Finally, I'll discuss the implications of projects like this for teacher excellence.

## **II Theoretical Framework**

Sociocultural theory, based on the research and theories of Russian psychologist and semiotician Vygotsky (1978), has been shown to be a useful framework to analyze second language acquisition (SLA) research (Lantolf, 2000). Vygotsky's research included the idea that both social and cultural contexts influence development (Wertsch, 1985). Much of the sociocultural research in SLA demonstrates how authentic interaction and collaboration can be beneficial for language learning (Ohta, 2000; Swain, 2000; van Lier, 1996; Watanabe & Swain, 2007). The idea of providing a "scaffold" for students to help them connect new knowledge with already existing knowledge is not new (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). According to Vygotsky, as the students gain new information and connect it to their current knowledge, they can perform more complex mental tasks than they could have performed alone (1986). Eventually, that knowledge

can be transferred to other tasks so they are able to independently do what they could previously do only in the group (Vygotsky, 1986).

In my teaching, I try to incorporate meaningful, authentic activities as often as possible. I want students to have collaborative interactions where they will have many opportunities to use English to solve problems and eventually be able to transfer that knowledge to independent learning tasks. However, designing a class in which students can work on authentic projects can be challenging (Bourelle, 2012).

For that reason, service learning is an excellent way to have students work with authentic content where their writing will have consequences beyond their grade (Huckin, 1997). According to Jacoby, “Service learning is a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities designed to promote student learning and development” (1996, p. 5). Service learning has been said to promote student engagement through active learning (Bordelon & Phillips, 2006; Gascoigne Lally, 2001). Many technical communication programs have been using service learning to increase motivation and engage students (Scott, 2008). Service learning has also been widely used in language learning (Grim, 2010; Heuser, 1999). In addition to helping students become more competent in the target language, it can also help students improve their cultural understanding (Heuser, 1999). So, by incorporating service-learning into this class, I was able to bring social and cultural elements in an authentic project that would help students learn how to analyze and synthesize data while strengthening and improving their English skills.

### III Methodology

I met with the client representative by phone the first week of class to find out exactly what the organization was looking for and see if it was something that could be completed within the scope of our class. The client had multiple files of transcribed interviews and email responses to questions they had sent to community stakeholders so they could find out how to improve their efforts toward helping the local homeless population. They were looking for patterns in the data so they could decide what direction to take their organization’s strategic plan over the next couple of years. They wanted the students to read through all of the interviews and two other reports that had been previously completed, synthesize the content, and present a report summarizing the most important areas of need so they could then focus on those areas in their strategic planning process.

This class meets only once per week for two hours and forty minutes. I presented the request to the class during the first class session, and all seven students agreed that it sounded like a beneficial and interesting project. I explained that this would have to be completed in addition to the normal class work, but that I would give them 20 minutes per class to work on it.

Because of the ill-structured nature of the data, I approached this activity using problem-based learning (PBL) methodologies in the classroom. PBL has been shown to help medical students learn to synthesize data (Wilkerson & Gijsselaers, 1996). It has also been used in EAP to help students learn strategies for improving their language use while solving the problem at hand (Barron, 2002; Wood & Head, 2004). It has even been shown to be useful for service projects (West & Simmons, 2012). PBL is a student-centered approach to learning that fosters critical thinking. In PBL, a problem is presented, and the students must collaborate to figure out how to

solve it. Teachers intervene only when necessary and must determine how much assistance is just enough to provide a scaffold so the students can construct their own knowledge. From a sociocultural perspective, this is a meaningful, authentic interaction where learning is likely to occur. When students construct their own knowledge, they are more likely to improve their self-directed learning process, which can transfer to other learning situations.

In PBL, students must be able to think metacognitively about their work (Wilkerson & Gijsselaers, 1996). This is often done by having students create a list of what they know, what they need to know, and how they are going to get the missing information. With a little prompting, the students in this class began by doing just that. They made a list of what types of data they had, did a needs analysis based on what the client wanted the end product to be and when they needed it, and created a list of additional questions for the client to clarify confusing elements. The students decided what they would do, how they would do it, who was going to do which parts of this project, and when each part would be due. They created a project plan and timeline for completion. They included individual work and some work that they could do with a partner (one team of three and two teams of two). The individual work involved reading the previous reports that the client had provided so that they could all with the same amount of background information about what had been done previously. They separated the interview data into three parts. Each team took one set of data to read through and summarize. During this process, they initiated their own research to help them learn what they did not know about data analysis and synthesis. They used their textbook and other online sources to learn more about how to conduct data analysis, what to do when synthesizing that data, and how to write a report. They then came back together as one large group to synthesize the summaries. As the students interacted, I was able to guide them by asking questions, while allowing them the freedom to approach the problem with their own self-directed learning strategies.

Once they completed the report, I took class time to do an instructor-mediated, collaborative text editing session. I displayed the document on the overhead projector, and we went through it as a group. I allowed students to find errors in their writing and make comments when they thought something might need to be changed. Students did the majority of the editing, although if they missed something important, I was able to ask questions to guide them until they found the error.

### **3.1 Discussion**

Eventually, by the due date, students had analyzed over eighty interviews of community stakeholders, synthesized the data into appropriate categories, and written a report to the client outlining their recommendations for future work to help the homeless population. The client was thrilled and wrote a thank you letter to the students and me explaining how useful the report would be for their future. The students were thrilled because they were able to help the community, and they interacted with authentic language while learning more about data analysis and synthesis that they would soon have to do in their own research projects. For their final project in this class, they had to conduct their own primary research, analyze and synthesize their own data, and write a research paper about that data. My hope had been that this service-learning project would teach them the skills they needed to transfer to their final project.

After the class ended and final grades were submitted, I sent the students a brief 6-question survey using Survey Monkey to see if their perceptions of the project were favorable

and if they thought that project helped them learn more about data analysis and synthesis so they could apply the information to their own research project. Four of the seven students responded to the survey. All four students agreed that the project helped to prepare them for future data analysis and synthesis work. One student commented, “It was a great experience. I have to look at all the raw data and filtered it out, producing a sweet summary. Overall it was a great practice.” All four students agreed that the project was interesting and challenging, a good learning experience, and that it enhanced the course. All four agreed that their analysis and synthesis skill levels improved after completing the project. When asked what they found to be valuable, students stated that they were pleased with learning to develop teamwork skills, learning about homelessness and the homeless population, helping those in need, learning more about data analysis and synthesis by working through raw data and writing a report. They also agreed that working with this non-for-profit client gave them a sense of belonging in the local community and helped them feel like they were contributing to the process of solving a local problem.

#### **IV Conclusions**

This project may have provided a scaffold for students in this class to begin to think differently about data analysis, synthesis, and writing, while giving them an opportunity to learn societal knowledge and get excited about serving the community in which they lived. By working on this project, these students felt as though they were able to help people in the local community who were in need. Many non-native speakers who are here in the U.S. for a limited time, especially those who are students, have little time to interact with native-speaker authentic language. This project provided the opportunity for students to use the target language and to interact with authentic discourse. Students also learned self-directed learning strategies. When students can take control of their learning process, they are more engaged and will learn more. This service-learning PBL project turned out to be a great option for teaching engineering graduate students how to think about data analysis and synthesis, how to communicate with a real client, and how to learn more about social responsibility.

This project also taught me, the instructor, several things. First, I learned that I can do community service work by incorporating it into the classes that I teach, which can help to engage the students (and makes my job more interesting). By incorporating service learning, I was able to overcome the challenge of finding interesting content to help students learn more about data analysis and synthesis. In addition to providing a positive, engaging learning environment, I was able to help my local community. I experienced cross-disciplinary learning by using student-centered methodologies grounded in sociocultural theory that have been successful in Technical Communication and in English for Specific Purposes. Using PBL has always been a positive experience for me. But using it in context with a service-learning project made it even more rewarding. I was also able to improve my own scholarship of teaching and learning by conducting a short survey after the class so I could find out what student perceptions were.

This type of project could be used in any type of ESP class. The most important elements include creating a student-centered environment where the instructor can guide the learning process and foster collaborative activities using authentic content. The benefits for both students

and instructors are abundant.

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## Audiovisual Translation and Language Learning Dubbing as a Powerful Tool to Enhance Multiple Language Skills

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**Abstract:** Dubbing-based exercises are believed to influence multiple language skills. The objectives of the study are thus to determine whether dubbing is a power tool to acquire new L2 vocabulary, i.e. slang, colloquial register, idiomatic expressions or cultural references. It was also designed to examine the areas of language skills students had an opportunity to practice. To investigate this issue twelve Polish students took part in the project. Firstly, students were asked to translate selected scenes of the computer animated comedy *Gnomeo and Juliet* from the dubbed Polish version back into English. Secondly, they were to record their voices as a new soundtrack to the film with the help of *Windows Movie Maker*.

**Keywords:** audiovisual translation, dubbing processes, video-dubbing exercises, dubbing project

### Introduction

The proliferation of modern technologies has heightened the need for elaborating on the relatively new field of translation studies, i.e. Audiovisual Translation and its influence on the learning acquisition process (Diaz Cintas, 2008; Orero, 2004; Chaume, 2008). Over the last few years, researchers have shown an increased interest in innovative methods of language education, i.e. learning languages via subtitles in particular via intralingual, interlingual and reversed subtitles (Diaz Cintas, 2008; Sokoli, 2006; Čepon, 2011; Danan, 1992). Much less attention, however, has been paid to the other mode of audiovisual translation, dubbing, which has also gained in popularity as an effective tool in second language acquisition (Danan, 2010; Burston, 2005; Bilbrough, 2007; Kumai, 1996; Chiu, 2012). In contrast to subtitling, dubbing is believed to give a wide array of possibilities to practice all areas of language skills, i.e. writing, reading, listening, speaking (Burston, 2005), because it entails “not only the construction of more or less parallel texts, but also a process of reception and production of linguistically and culturally complex objects, enriched with extra verbal elements” as Heiss suggested (2000, p.183). As a result, students may practice various language skills; if they participate in this process themselves (Danan, 2010).

### Dubbing and Synchronization Process

Before the actual pedagogical values of dubbing-based exercises on the language acquisition process will be discussed, a general overview of the dubbing-creation stages will be presented. The whole process begins when a dubbing director forwards the script to the dubbing studio where the script is translated and dialogues are composed. Then the text is proofread by a native speaker. In subsequent steps, the rendered dialogues go through the process of synchronization in which the spoken dialogues should correspond with the characters' lip movements on the screen.

The dubbing or synchronizing director can add, change or obviate superfluous expressions if the general meaning of a film is not affected. Moreover, it is highly significant to match actors' voices with the characters they perform since their timbre of voice, intonation, accent or the speed of speech may determine how a certain character is perceived by the audience. In the meantime, a dubbing director monitors the actors' work and regulates all pronunciation mistakes. The Time Code Record demonstrates when the actors chosen to imitate certain characters perform and for how long. Finally, the dubbed and synchronized text undergoes the last phase of error detection (Martinez, 2004)

## **2.1 A Pedagogical Value of Dubbing**

In comparison to subtitling, which has become a widely acclaimed educational tool in language education, dubbing has not escaped criticism. Perhaps the most serious disadvantage of this method is that the original dialogues in L2 are totally replaced with its dubbed version in L1, and as a result it is impossible for the target audience to hear the source text. In fact, the usage of dubbed films and TV series in some countries of southern and western Europe has deteriorated the level of English knowledge. Nonetheless, in recent years, there has been an increasing interest in dubbing as a powerful tool in second language acquisition and because the process of dubbing creation involves two stages – the dialogues' translation and then its verbal production – it influences multiple L2 skills collectively.

### *2.1.1 Stage 1 – Dialogues' translation*

A number of studies have found that preparing translation for dubbed dialogues in the source language reveals several pedagogical advantages. First of all, students may acquire new source language forms, synonyms, idiomatic expressions or phrasal verbs in a proper context. Because films present various everyday situations, students have an opportunity to learn many language variations like colloquial, slang vocabulary or more specified expressions, e.g. in law or medicine, which raises their awareness of registers (Danan, 2010). Secondly, students practice spelling, word order, grammatical and sentence structures to build coherent messages. Finally, students may improve translational skills and learn to tackle proverbs, sayings, metaphors, word play or cultural references complying with certain restrictions like time limits and length constraints. One should also remember that complex phrases or structures should be avoided to compose "easily read aloud and readily understood" dialogues (Duff, 1989, p. 154-156). To achieve a satisfying result the rendered dialogues should undertake the phase of synchronization to match the dialogues with the characters' lip movements, particularly in close-ups and extreme close-ups. Therefore, the three types of synchrony should be respected: lip synchrony – bilabial, labiodental consonants and open vowels should be reflected in L2 in frontal shots; kinetic – semiotic signs and non-verbal communication; and isochrony – the length and time of the utterance is limited (Chaume, 2008). Finally, students should also pay attention to the visual and acoustic dimensions of a film while rendering dialogues.

### *2.1.2 Stage 2 – Oral production*

The second stage focuses on the development of listening, reading and speaking skills. Students have to record their voices paying particular attention to proper pronunciation, phonetic precision, rhythm, intonation, stress location at word and sentence level or speed of speech and

timing “which fosters more native-like speech delivery” (Burston, 2005, p.81), as well as paralinguistic aspects of the voice such as sadness, surprise, impatience, anger, happiness or disappointment (Burston, 2005). In addition, each student should embody a certain character on the screen “to reproduce the dramatic and emotional content of a scene” (Danan, 2010, p.446). In this way, students may also imitate different accents. Students should also observe visual signs, non-verbal communication, body language (i.e. facial expressions or gestures) to make their utterances sound more natural. Furthermore, practicing dialogues aloud decreases the number of mispronunciation areas, improves fluency, increases awareness of intonation, differentiates between textbook and film pronunciation and increases perception as Chiu (2012, p.25-26) highlighted in the analysis.

Through numerous rehearsals in a group or individually in the classroom or autonomously at home, they practice their speech to get closer to native language speakers’ proficiency.

## 2.2 A Set of Dubbing-based Exercises

In the past decade, several studies investigating the pedagogical value of dubbing have been carried out by many eminent researchers (Danan, 2010; Burston, 2005; Kumai, 1996; Chiu, 2012). As a result, a set of dubbing-based exercises has been constructed to enhance and train multiple language skills.

Building on this, there three types of video dubbing exercises have emerged. **Re-voicing** means that students record their voices on the existing L2 soundtrack (Burston, 2005; Kumai, 1996). Students listen to the original version, practice reading the script and record a new soundtrack with their voices. In this way, they practice grammar and sentence structure, learn new vocabulary and their proper pronunciation. Another type of dubbing-based activity is **script translation**, which means that students translate the L2 script into L1 and then dub the video material in L1 (Zohrevandi, 1994). In this case students practice their writing competences, L2 to L1 translation skills and no oral production in L2. There are dubbing-exercises, however, which involve translation and oral production in L2. It means that students may reproduce **a new L2 soundtrack** which may be done in three different ways. Firstly, students translate the L1 script into L2 again and compose a new version of the L2 soundtrack (Wagener, 2006; Danan, 2010). Secondly, students may create their own new storyline in L2 and then dub the video in L2 with their new dialogues. Finally, students translate from the dubbed L1 version back into L2 before they compare their L2 version with the original L2 version and then record their new soundtrack (Bilbrough, 2007; Burczyńska 2012). In all cases students have to come up with various creative solutions to compose their dialogues which will be both lexically and grammatically correct, and additionally well synchronized with the characters’ lip movements.

## 2.3 A Dubbing Project

### 2.3.1 Aims and procedures

Although traditional methods of foreign language acquisition have many benefits and influence various areas of language, they have already been rendered obsolete. They are usually based on textbook vocabulary and compact discs containing less natural and less authentic dialogues than communicative situations presented in films. As a result, students are deprived of the possibility to acquire more colloquial or slang expressions to use in everyday situations and spontaneous conversations with English-speaking friends.

The aim of this project is two-fold. Firstly, it is to provide students with a break from regular English classes and to determine whether dubbing-based exercises may serve as a useful tool to acquire new vocabulary in a proper context as well as colloquial and slang expressions in L2. Secondly, it is highly significant to examine what areas of language skills students had an opportunity to practice.

To investigate this issue, twelve Polish students (7 female, 5 male, seventeen-year-olds of middle class background) participated in the video-dubbing workshops. Students were at the intermediate level of English proficiency attending the class of the Public Adult High School in Boguszyce, Bydgoszcz, Poland. Students were divided into three groups participating in dubbing-based classes that were held 45 minutes each week for 2 months (in addition to their regular classes). In the first stage, students were to prepare back-translations of selected scenes from the computer-animated comedy *Gnomeo and Juliet* from the Polish dubbed-version into English without having watched the original version previously. The dialogues the students translated had to be both lexically and grammatically correct. They were asked to consider the usage of English slang and colloquial vocabulary in their translations. In the second stage, students were to rehearse dialogues reading them aloud in pairs and then to record their dialogues as a new soundtrack to the film with the help of *Windows Movie Maker*.

### **3 Methodology and data analysis**

To ensure the validity and reliability of this project both qualitative and quantitative research methods will be used. As a result, apart from statistical data, some students will be also approached individually. Both questionnaires (open-ended questions; closed questions, i.e., rating scales, multiple choice questions) and interviews were conducted to investigate the effects of dubbing-based activities.

#### **3.1 Results and discussion - dubbing and language gains**

The process of composing dubbing consists of two stages: written and spoken language production. In the first stage, students translated Polish dubbed dialogues back into English. All groups acquired differentiated expressions in a proper context, i.e. some British and American colloquial and slang phrases, such as a bloke, a dude, a blaze, off the hook, to twig, to tell porkies; idiomatic expressions like to be the apple of somebody's eye; and cultural equivalents. For example, some Polish students literally translated a muscled belly as a "radiator" (a colloquial Polish expression) while in English the translation "six-pack" makes sense. As a result, students became aware that certain expressions in Polish cannot be literally translated into English but a lexical and cultural equivalent must be found. In addition, they practiced grammatical and sentence structures as well as their translational skills tackling the translation of idioms, word play or sayings. In the second stage, students recorded their translated dialogues as a new soundtrack providing each character with their own voice. They paid great attention to the proper pronunciation of the new words and were working hard to get closer to native-speaker proficiency. Students tried to reflect the emotional and natural character of their dialogues. In interviews they admitted it was a very interesting experience to listen to the recording of their own voices, which made them realize how their speech sounds, what mispronunciation mistakes they make and what pronunciation areas they should work on.

In addition, the activity was received very positively and all of the students found the exercises very enjoyable and feel motivated to take part in a similar study in the future. One hundred percent of participants stated that they learned very interesting and useful vocabulary which they can deploy in everyday, colloquial conversations and 91% of them assessed dubbing-based exercises as “very beneficial”. 83% of students have also noted that dubbing, particularly the voice recording, is a good way to practice pronunciation and to decrease shyness and uncertainty while speaking.

#### 4 Conclusions

Building on the project conducted, dubbing-based exercises seem to be a perfect alternative for traditional methods to introduce a bit of “fresh air” in the language classroom. Students participating in the dubbing process themselves have plenty of opportunities to enrich their vocabulary of various registers, practice grammar, pronunciation, intonation, speed of speech, and many others, which in turn has a positive influence on multiple areas of their language skills, i.e. writing, reading, listening and speaking. In addition, expressions which students acquire in the first stage of dubbing production, are repeated and practiced in the second stage of the dubbing process, which may boost chances of remembering them. Finally, it is a great mixture of fun and learning to motivate students to improve their language competences.

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Sin su apoyo, tanto económico como en la prestación de otros servicios, este primer congreso CONLA UNA 2013 no hubiese tenido el éxito alcanzado. Esperamos que la iniciativa de promover el conocimiento y la excelencia en los docentes de educación primaria, secundaria y universitaria de la Región Brunca repercuta en otros proyectos de similar naturaleza y envergadura y se vea plasmado en mejoras en la calidad de la educación regional. Nos queda un profundo sentimiento de satisfacción por el trabajo realizado y la colaboración recibida y esperamos contar con su apoyo en un futuro segundo congreso.