



MEMORIA



II CONGRESO INTERNACIONAL DE
LINGÜÍSTICA APLICADA
*EFFECTIVE TEACHING PRACTICES:
THE KEY TO MAZIMIZING LEARNING*

28, 29 y 30 de octubre de 2015



Departamento de Idiomas Extranjeros



MEMORIA

II Congreso de Lingüística Aplicada *Effective Teaching Practices: The Key to Maximizing Learning*

Compilada y editada por
Joe Montenegro Bonilla
Jacqueline Araya Ríos

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Presentación

Este documento contiene las ponencias que están en la memoria digital del II Congreso Internacional de Lingüística Aplicada (CONLA) 2015 realizado los días 28, 29 y 30 de octubre del 2015 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 2015 también compiló una memoria digital en USB con las ponencias presentadas en el congreso. El comité científico evaluó un total de 37 propuestas, de las cuales se seleccionaron las 27 ponencias que conforman la memoria digital del evento. La selección de las ponencias se dio durante un proceso en el que se recibió el resumen y se revisó por parte de un miembro del comité científico afín al área de especialidad de la propuesta. Seguidamente, en una sesión integrada se obtuvo retroalimentación del total de miembros del comité científico para mejorar la propuesta y proceder con su aprobación. Posteriormente, se le comunicó al autor o autores la decisión de la Comisión Científica y se solicitó el envío del documento completo, incorporando los cambios de ser necesario, para su inclusión en el programa de actividades y la memoria digital del congreso.

La versión final de cada ponencia es única y exclusivamente el resultado del trabajo 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 agregar 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 2015 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 en el ámbito 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 2015



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M.A. Lenna Barrantes Elizondo

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M.A. Noelia Jiménez Valverde – *Logística externa*
M.A. Sofía Mora Abarca – *Financiera*
M.L. Joe Montenegro Bonilla – *Protocolo*

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Aaron Ríos Retana
Ariel Robles Barrantes
Charis Calderón Rojas
Dana Robles Badilla
Dania Mata Mora
Daniela Chacón Aguilar
Fabiola Fonseca Valverde
Gerlyn Beita Sibaja
Irina Mena Céspedes
Isaac Cordero Arias
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Leandro Jiménez Gamboa
Yerlin Murillo Jiménez

Invitados Especiales

John Murphy, Ph.D.
José Ricardo Osorio, Ph.D.
Jorge Aguilar, Ph.D.

Comisión Científica de CONLA UNA 2015

M.A. Cinthya Olivares Garita

Cinthya Olivares Garita es bachiller en Enseñanza del Inglés, licenciada en Lingüística Aplicada del Inglés, tiene una maestría en Segundas Lenguas y Culturas de la Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica y una maestría en Gestión Educativa con énfasis en Liderazgo 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. Ha laborado por trece años con estudiantes de todos los niveles: primaria, secundaria y universitaria. También ha trabajado para otras empresas públicas y privadas. Ella ha publicado en la revista LETRAS de la Universidad Nacional y la revista Lenguas Modernas de la Universidad de Costa Rica 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 y el programa CI-UNA Access Microscholarship desde el 2014 el cual es un convenio entre la UNA, la Embajada de los EEUU y el MEP. Fue la académica responsable del I Congreso Internacional de Lingüística Aplicada CONLA UNA 2013 y miembro de la comisión central del II Congreso Internacional de Lingüística Aplicada CONLA UNA 2015. Fue coordinadora del Departamento de Idiomas Extranjeros de la SRB, Campus Pérez Zeledón 2014-2015.

M.A. Lena Barrantes Elizondo

Lena Barrantes Elizondo posee un bachillerato en Enseñanza del Inglés, una licenciatura en Lingüística Aplicada, una Maestría en Segundas Lenguas y Culturas y una Maestría en Gestión Educativa y Liderazgo, todos ellos de la Universidad Nacional. Durante sus quince 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 y II 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 y gestión educativa en conferencias nacionales e internacionales además de publicar artículos en diferentes revistas del área..

M.A. Jacqueline Araya Ríos

Jacqueline Araya Ríos 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. Desde hace 16 años es académica en la Universidad Nacional Sede Regional Brunca en el bachillerato en la Enseñanza del Inglés y el Diplomado en Inglés y actualmente es profesora propietaria del Departamento de Idiomas Extranjeros. Es coordinadora del componente de Inglés con Fines Específicos del proyecto de extensión “Promoviendo el Capital Social Comunitario” de la Universidad Nacional Sede Regional Brunca. 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 y ha publicado en la revista de Lenguas Modernas de la Universidad de Costa Rica.

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. También es Máster en Gestión Educativa y Liderazgo por la Universidad Nacional. 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 un bachillerato en la enseñanza del inglés, una licenciatura en lingüística aplicada en inglés y una maestría en lingüística aplicada en inglés, grados académicos obtenidos en la Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica, Campus Omar Dengo. Ha trabajado durante 17 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. Actualmente, es profesor propietario del Departamento de Idiomas Extranjeros. Fue coordinador del área de inglés y ha sido lector y director de tesis del programa de licenciatura en lingüística aplicada en inglés. También, fue miembro

del programa de intercambio para docentes *Partners of The Americas* en Portland, Oregon, USA, en el cual enseñó la cultura costarricense en varias instituciones educativas de dicho lugar. Habla portugués, lengua que estudió en la *Fundación Centro de Estudios Brasileños*. 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. Ha trabajado 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.

M. A. 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. Académica en el campus Pérez Zeledón de la Universidad Nacional en los programas de Diplomado en Inglés, Bachillerato en la Enseñanza del Inglés y Licenciatura en Lingüística Aplicada. Comprometida con las áreas de la acción sustantiva de la universidad: investigación, extensión y producción; cofundadora y coordinadora del Centro de Idiomas de la Universidad Nacional, Sede Regional Brunca (CI-UNA). Sus trabajos de investigación han sido presentados en diferentes espacios dedicados a la divulgación del conocimiento: 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 Chorotege; Primera Jornada Internacional de Pedagogía, Lengua y Literaturas Inglesas, Universidad de Costa Rica; Congreso Internacional de Educación Superior 2012, Pennsylvania, Estados Unidos; y IV Congreso Internacional del Conocimiento 2015, USACH, Santiago Chile. Tutora de trabajos finales de graduación en la Licenciatura en Lingüística Aplicada con Énfasis en Inglés. Actualmente participa en la gestión administrativa como vicedecana de la Sede Regional Brunca.

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. Ha trabajado como colaboradora, traductora e intérprete de investigaciones en lenguajes indígenas del Centro de Investigación en Lingüística de Ball State University, IN, USA, 2005. Fue tutora Español/Inglés en Learning Center of Ball State University, IN, USA, 2006 y fundadora y responsable del proyecto Cursos de Inglés Conversacional P.Z. en 2010. Recibió la distinción de la UNA como extensionista destacada en el 2010. Actualmente es ejecutora del proyecto Cursos de Inglés Conversacional CI-UNA, Sede Regional Brunca desde el 2011, además de ejecutora del

programa-convenio con la Embajada Norteamericana CI-UNA-English Access Microscholarship Program desde el 2013. Ha sido organizadora, coordinadora y/o participante de otras actividades académicas que se desarrollan en la Universidad Nacional tales como: Certamen Literario Brunca, Semana académica, Jornada Internacional de Becas, Charlas de Vinculación Externa y Transferencia Tecnológica, Autoevaluación del Bachillerato en la Enseñanza del Inglés, Atracción estudiantil Puertas Abiertas, Plan Nacional de Inglés CONARE-MEP: Capacitación a Docentes en Servicio del MEP. Ha tenido una extensa participación en congresos, seminarios y foros, con publicaciones a nivel nacional e internacional. Inmersa en la acción sustantiva universitaria investigación, extensión, docencia y producción. Inició funciones en la Universidad Nacional en el 2001, y en cuanto a experiencia administrativo-docente ha ocupado los cargos de Coordinadora de Carrera, Directora Académica y en el presente miembro académico del Consejo Universitario.

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 II Congreso Internacional de Lingüística Aplicada 2015 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

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



Investigaciones cualitativas, cuantitativas y bibliográficas
(Ponencias ordenadas alfabéticamente por apellido del primero autor)

Interactive Reading: A Method to Enhance EFL Learner's Reading Habits

Lic. Elian Acuña Aguilar

Lic. Rodrigo Ignacio Campos Araya

Resumen

Por mucho tiempo se consideró que la lectura era una habilidad lingüística pasiva, en la cual no se llevaba a cabo ningún tipo de proceso mental. No obstante, esta percepción ha cambiado. Mikulecky (2008) expresó que la lectura requiere de un proceso consciente e inconsciente de pensamiento en el cual los lectores utilizan diversas estrategias para interpretar los mensajes (Teaching Reading, para. 2). Este punto de vista ha sido apoyado por autores como Altamirano y Navarro (2013) quienes anotaron que diversos estudios en lingüística aplicada han planteado que los humanos cuentan con una estructura psicológica latente que se activa cuando nueva información es encontrada (p. 18). La asociación entre la nueva información recibida y el conocimiento previo del lector es lo que resulta en la interacción entre este último y el texto leído. Este proceso genera un intercambio activo entre el lector, el escritor, y el texto. Autores como Tamrackitkun (2010) han propuesto que la lectura demanda pensamiento y no puede ser separada del conocimiento previo, y de los sentimientos del individuo involucrado en el proceso así como de la naturaleza del texto (p.14). Esta interpretación debería llevar a los docentes de inglés a pensar en métodos que permitan una interacción activa entre los docentes y el material de lectura. El uso de libros, historias cortas, artículos y otros textos escritos auténticos se ha popularizado entre los maestros de inglés como lengua extranjera. Es por esta razón que los dichos profesionales encontrarán en esta propuesta una experiencia de enseñanza sistematizada que permita a los estudiantes desarrollar el gusto por la lectura a través de la caracterización de personajes e historias extraídas de una compilación seleccionada de textos escritos.

Abstract

For many years, linguists considered that reading was a passive skill and that no mental process was required while being exposed to written material. Nowadays, this perception has changed radically. As defined by Mikulecky (2008), reading is “a conscious and unconscious thinking process. The reader applies many strategies to reconstruct the meaning that the author is assumed to have intended.” (Teaching Reading, para. 2). This argument has been supported by authors like Altamirano and Navarro (2013) who observed that “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” (p. 18). The association of the new data to the reader's background knowledge is what results in the interaction between the text and the reader. This interaction requires the active participation of the reader, the writer, and the text. In fact, Tamrackitkun (2010) prompted that “reading is thinking and can never be separated from the purpose, prior knowledge, and feelings of the person engaged in the activity r from the nature of the text being read” (p. 14). This interpretation should lead teachers to think about methods that allow learners to interact more actively with the texts they read. The use of books, short stories, articles and other types of authentic written texts to teach English as a foreign language has become popular among English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. For this reason, EFL teachers will find in this proposal a systematized teaching experience that leads learners to develop the taste for

reading by making characters and stories contained in a selected compilation of written texts come alive through the interpretation of plays.

Key words: reading, authentic material, interaction, systematized teaching experience

1. Introduction

Learning English as foreign language (EFL) demands discipline. Such discipline must be accompanied by the interest in developing effective communicative skills. Learners ought to be aware of the importance of conceiving the learning process as a holistic systematization of experiences that lead them to develop their communicative competence. Knowing a language is not just a matter of speaking it. It also involves the integration of all linguistic skills. The current globalized world in which people interact demands the mastering of different communicative strategies. This setting portrays the need for EFL teachers to implement instructional methodologies that lead learners' to exploit their potential. It is imperative to keep in mind that not all learners have the same capacity to internalize knowledge and that everybody has differentiated abilities to communicate. In this regard, instructors should pay close attention to the methodologies that they implement in order to lead learners to develop the different linguistic skills.

The role of the four skills (listening, reading, writing and speaking) must be highlighted in the learning process. No linguistic skill is perceived as passive anymore. Even though in the past only speaking and writing were pictured as the interactive skills, nowadays listening and reading have been proved to be active skills as well. Talking particularly about reading, this skill has been given great importance lately, and the active process involved while interacting with written texts has been widely discussed. In fact, Fallas and Fonseca (2013) asserted that

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. (p. 182)

This conception of the process that effective reading demands helps to generate ideas about the implementation of strategies that make reading be attractive for novice EFL learners.

1.1. General Objective

To analyze the relevance of using an interactive methodology that boosts EFL learners' interest in reading.



1.2. Specific Objectives

To research the role of reading in EFL classrooms.

To propose a systematized methodology that enhances novice EFL learner's interest in reading activities through the interpretation of plays

1.3. Research Questions

What role does reading play in EFL classroom settings?

To what extent are traditional reading techniques effective to augment EFL learners' interest in reading?

What activities are learners interested in when attending EFL reading classes?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Reading Skill in EFL Learning

Effective reading skills are fundamental during the English learning process. In fact, students receive most of the input necessary to develop communicative skills by means of reading texts. Within the EFL classrooms, reading is used for academic purposes. This skill is taught by means of comprehension and analysis of short and extensive texts. Nonetheless, for many people reading represents a pleasurable free-time activity that helps them increase their knowledge about a broad set of topics. In EFL settings, students are exposed to written texts during most of the learning experiences. Formal and informal contexts generate opportunities for apprentices to put into practice their interpretation skills. Mikulecky (2008) recognized the importance of reading and stated, "reading is the basis of instruction in all aspects of language learning: using textbooks for language courses, writing, revising, developing vocabulary, acquiring grammar, editing, and using computer-assisted language learning programs" (Teaching Reading, para. 1). However, EFL apprentices generally report a lack of interest in reading activities. This issue is concerning, especially considering that in Costa Rica high school students' performance level at the end of secondary education is assessed by administering them a standardized reading comprehension test.

Whenever a reader approaches a text, an internal process of analysis of information takes place. Even though the material is presented in a language that has not been fully developed in the learner's communicative system, some background knowledge that includes facts and perceptions is activated. Such prior information has been stored in the reader's brain as a network based on previous experiences related to the text itself. Once the reader is in contact with the content of the material, there is an internal process of associations that links the information previously stored to the new information presented and the interpretation made by the reader. The concern that may arise is how to make learners develop good reading habits. Not all individuals develop the ability to extract the information from the texts easily. In fact some need to dedicate more time and use varied techniques. The main issue regarding the students' lack of interest in reading might be a result of the belief that reading only has usefulness within classroom activities and that out of the

classrooms it does not have much utility. Authors like Hendricks and Lassiter (2009) have refuted this misconception by arguing, “We believe that reading more than just assigned passages for academic purposes also will contribute to greater student success” (p. 12). In fact, reading skills are important not only when participating in EFL learning programs but also for the professional development. Dealing with academic and nonacademic texts demands high levels of concentration and analysis. Hence, it is recommendable to develop effective reading habits.

2.2. Inclusion of Reading Techniques in the Classroom

Learning to read is a process that demands time, dedication, and effort. Even though some beginning apprentices seem to have a natural taste for reading, and they dedicate plenty of time to this activity, many novice readers report struggling to develop interest in this field. Here is when instructors should look for alternative measures to guide their pupils along the path. McNamara (2009) established that “Strategy instruction across a variety of domains builds on the notion that less skilled students should learn strategies that mimic those exhibited by skilled students or that *compensate* for processes exhibited by skilled students” (p.34). Imitation of effective techniques used by skilled readers may produce good outcomes if it is properly directed. McNamara (2009) reported to have designed a technique called “Self-explanation Reading Training” (SERT) which included strategies like comprehension monitoring, paraphrasing, elaboration, using logic, prediction, and bridging inference (p.35). After implementing SERT, participants showed considerable improvement in their reading comprehension skills. Other strategies such as skimming, scanning, intensive and extensive reading also help improve readers’ performance.

The relevance of using effective reading techniques lies on the improvement shown by some participants in EFL programs. However, sometimes it is necessary to modify these techniques so that slower learners are also able to become successful in the learning process. It would even be helpful to model the activities for the students to have a clear perception of what they are requested to do. Medina (as cited in McRae, 2012) suggested that the teachers should “explain the strategy..., describe the importance and benefits of using the strategy, model how to use the reading strategy, highlight when and where to use the strategy, and show students how they can assess whether they are using the strategy successfully or unsuccessfully. (p. 22). All these techniques are oriented toward the improvement of learner’s linguistic skills.

In settings in which reading programs have been implemented, high standard goals have been established. In order to set the objectives and the desired performance behavior, there must be a well-structured inclusion of reading techniques. According to Gamboa (2013), reading strategies must be complemented with the inclusion of explicit instruction in order to provide learners with grammar and vocabulary knowledge of the target language in an interactive approach to teaching reading. On top of that, reading instruction must be constantly aimed at leading students to recycle those strategies that have proved to be effective (p. 212). In North Carolina, United States, for example, the State Board of Education adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts in 2010. The

aim of this program is that the learners achieve some performance standards according to their school level. For this, the stakeholders designed “READY End of Grade Language Arts/Reading Assessments”, which is administered in grades 3, 5, 7, 8 and English II as a way to measure the students’ level of performance. Based on the skills developed by learners along the process, they are credited with achievement levels that go from level one, in which readers have a very limited command of knowledge and skills, to level five, in which learners demonstrate superior performance. This division has let the stakeholders determine the intervention guidelines to help students improve their reading skills. Even though this program is not aimed at EFL contexts, it provides some ideas of how to organize the educational system through the implementation of sequential instruction.

2.3. Usage of Interactive Techniques to Teach English

Researchers have devoted plenty of time to explain how intrinsic and extrinsic factors might alter the learning process either positively or negatively. As a result of the studies, authors have stated that motivation is essential when attempting to learn a foreign language. Lightbown and Spada (2000) referred to two different types of motivation: integrative motivation and instrumental motivation (p. 56). The former was identified as the interest in learning a language for personal growth and cultural enhancement; the latter was conceived as the interest in learning a language for practical and immediate goals. Even though these types of motivation are thought to be closely related to the reasons why people decide to learn a language, it is necessary to remark that the environment in which the learning process is carried out plays a very important role in enhancing students’ desires to learn a language. If the learning context does not look appealing for the learners, they will probably quit or the development of their communicative skills will be limited. In this regard, Lightbown and Spada (2000) suggested the use of varied activities, tasks, and materials as a way to avoid the decrease of attention and the increase of boredom that pop up as a result of lessons that are always taught by following certain routines, patterns and format, (p. 57). This lack of creative activities, tasks, and materials does not allow participants to exploit of their creativity, which sometimes also hinders their impulse to learn the target language.

The search for strategies that increase the interest in reading and the meaningful outcomes is constant among linguists. According to Brown (2000) a constant “issue in pedagogical research is the extent to which learners will learn to read better in a laissez-faire atmosphere of enriched surrounding or in a instructed sequence of direct attention to the strategies of efficient reading” (p. 301). Some authors have stated that an effective way to help readers comprehend the written texts is by associating their content with other elements. Rädle, Heilig, and Reiterer (2011) established, “The process of understanding a research paper relies to an essential extent on sense-making” (p.2). This dialogue between those who propose direct methods and researchers who advocate for indirect methods have resulted in several proposals. For example, the British Council Hong Kong (2008-2009) developed some workshops in which participants performed drama plays that were oriented toward the development of linguistic skills. However, they reported the learners’ lack of confidence in their English, and the perception that drama is just fun and games (p.2). In

this regard, teachers must carefully address the sequence of activities so that participants feel willing to participate and at the same time they understand the aims of the activities clearly.

Short stories and other similar texts provide teachers and learners with a wide variety of elements that create fictitious characters, settings, conflicts, and plots that help enrich learners' imagination. If language learners are able to comprehend and analyze the content of the texts, and then recreate the stories by means of role plays, not only would their reading skills be enhanced but also the writing, listening and speaking skills would be reinforced as well as other sub-skills. Since students are given the chance to act out as someone else, there is interaction between who they really are and the imaginary character they play. They need to adopt a new personality, and this might help them overcome factors such as shyness and fear to make mistakes that sometimes prevent them from interacting in real life situations. Besides, it is important to remark that learners must establish exchanges of information with other characters, which enriches the development of their linguistic system.

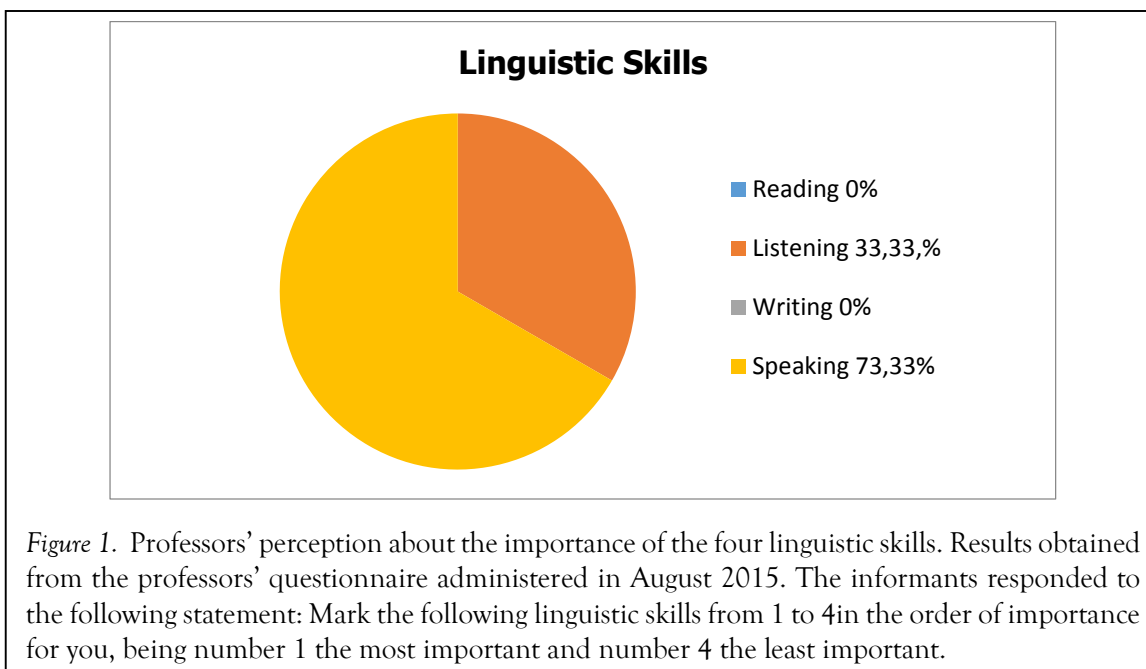
In order to suggest readings that are suitable for novice learners, it is imperative to analyze the different elements contained in the texts. Elements like the characters must be considered before selecting the pieces of writing. Even though the characters are imaginary, they must have simple features that resemble those found in real life personas. Another important element in the story is the setting where the events take place. Students should be able to recreate it unless they want to change the version of the story, which is also part of this proposal. As stated previously, the learners should be allowed to modify elements of the story based on convenience; for this reason, if they feel like making changes in aspects like the conflict, plot and resolution of the conflict, their creativity should be allowed to flourish. Considering these aspects, shorts stories such as Cinderella, Pinocchio, and The Magic Mirror are among the tales that could be used for the purpose of carrying out modified role plays. One reason why these stories would be good choices is that originally they were aimed at entertaining adults. For this, using parodies would be fun and audience-engaging. Another reason is that most learners are familiar with these tales since they are very likely to have been in contact with them through cartoons or other means.

3. Data Analysis

This section contains the analysis of the data collected during this research. A questionnaire was administered to EFL professors at Universidad Nacional, Campus Coto to gather their insights about the importance of reading within the Integrated English courses during the first year of the major. Another questionnaire was to first students who are majoring in English Teaching at Universidad Nacional, Campus Coto to gather their insights about the importance of reading within the Integrated English courses during the first year of their career.

3.1. Professors' and students' insights

The data collected from the professors revealed some interesting insights. The first figure reveals the perception that professors have about the importance of the linguistic skills.



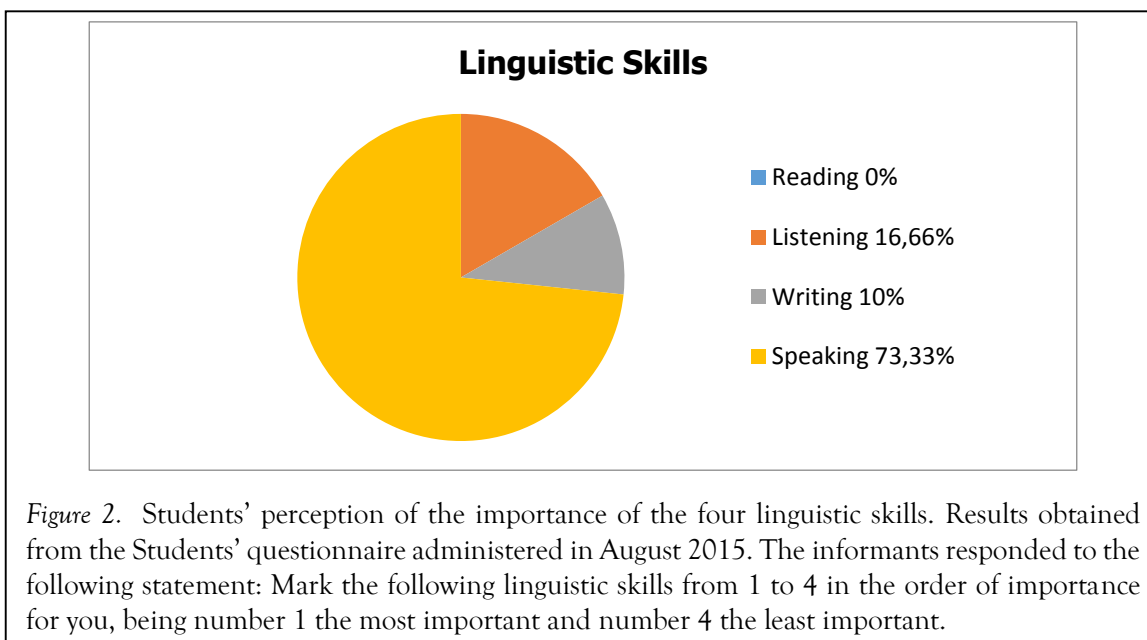
The majority of professors agreed on stating that speaking is the most important skill that should be reinforced during the first year of instruction in the major. Interestingly, this perception matches the information garnered from the students.

In this regard, most of the students also expressed that for them the most important skill during the first year of the major is speaking. These data reinforce the idea of using reading as a prompt to participate in oral expression activities. As mentioned before, the learners need to make associations between the background knowledge they possess and the new information they are exposed to. Thus, reading is proposed as a tool to provide novice students with knowledge that they can use whenever it is necessary.

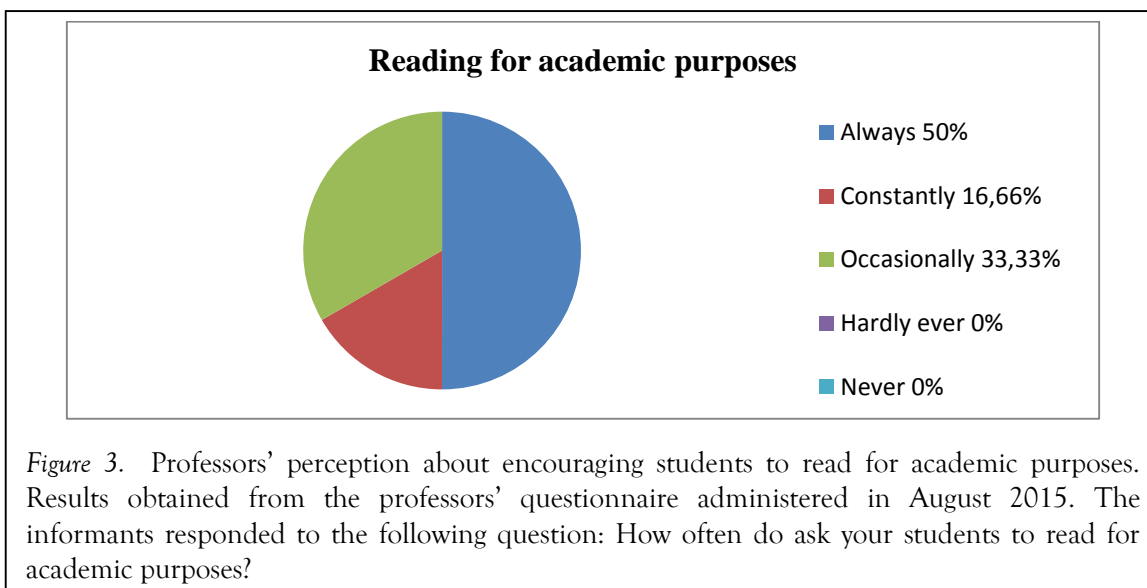
Another important point in the research was the encouragement to read for academic purposes and for pleasure. Both professors and students were inquired about this aspect.

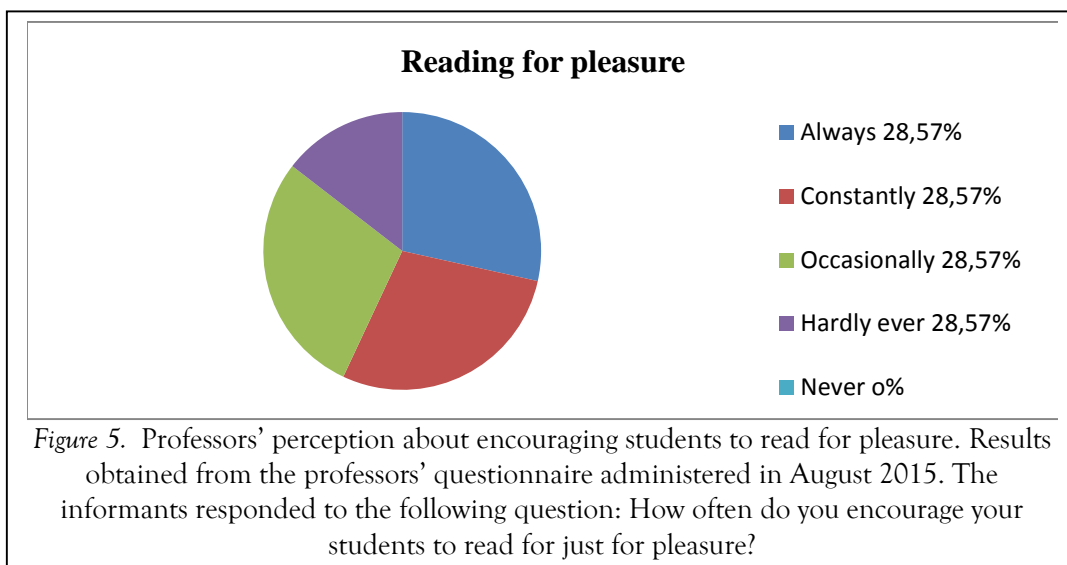
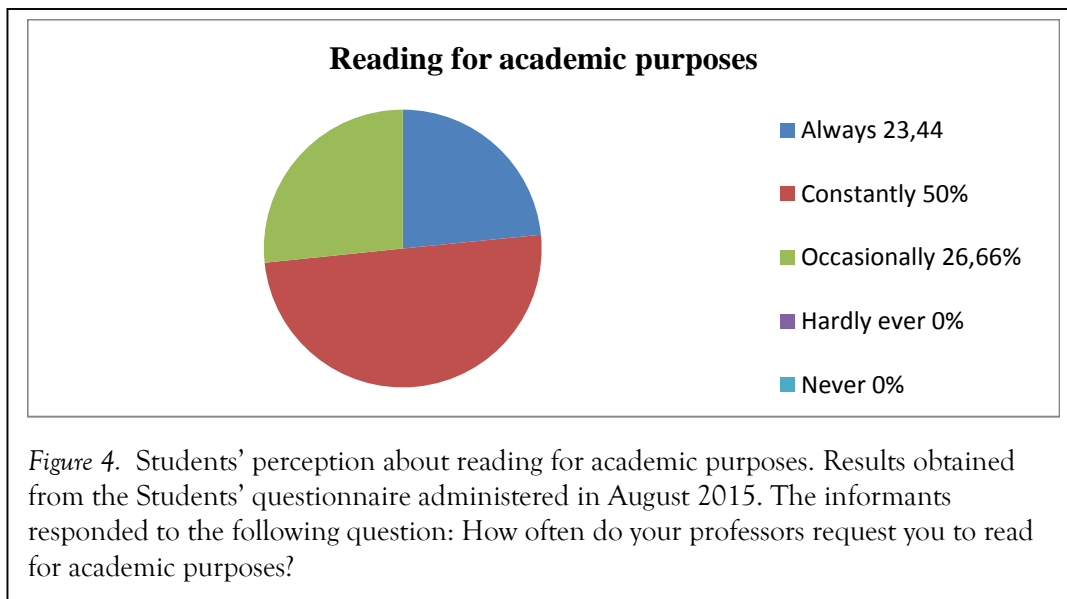
Regarding this aspect most professors stated that they always request students to learn for academic purposes as part of the learning process. Here, the students' perception varies a little. However, this perception is still positive since most of the students consider that their professors constantly request them to read academic texts constantly, as shown in the following chart.

Even though the role of reading has been remarked for its importance in academic activities, reading for pleasure seems not to be fomented enough among novice EFL learners. The following figures reveal some interesting information.



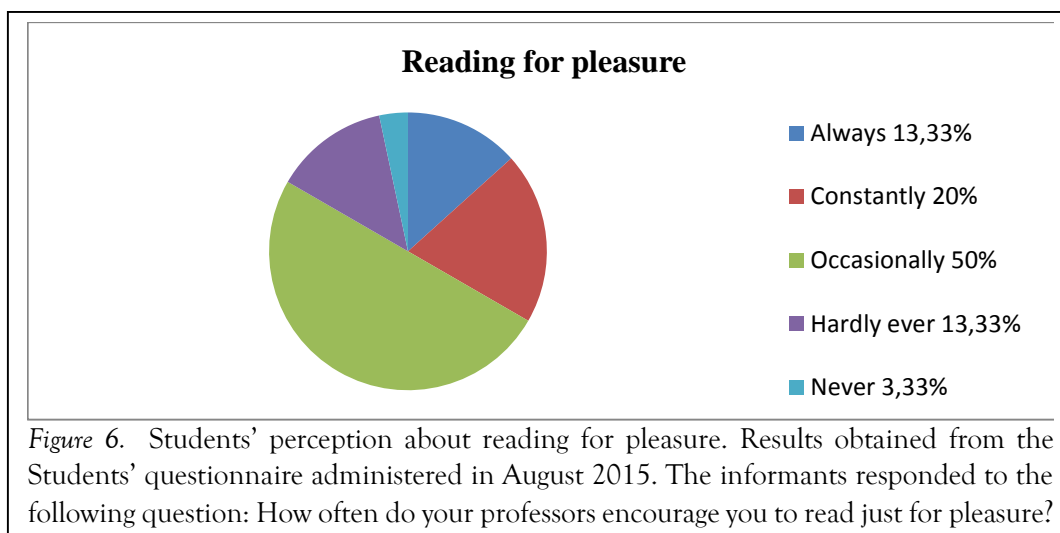
Regarding reading for academic purposes, the professors, who responded the questionnaire, stated that it is highly required for their students; nonetheless, reading for pleasure does not seem to be as promoted as academic reading. This information is backed up by the students whose answers are presented in the following figure.





Most of the responders considered that their professors do not encourage them to read for pleasure as constantly as they request them to read for academic aims. This might result worrisome taking into account that reading is one of the main sources of input. It is necessary to think of the importance that reading might have for the students in the future. This major demands students to be constantly reading different types of texts; thus, developing the taste and the skills necessary to succeed must be a paramount since the very beginning of the major.

As a way to support the idea of this proposal, students were asked about the types of texts they prefer to read or find more interesting (figure 7).



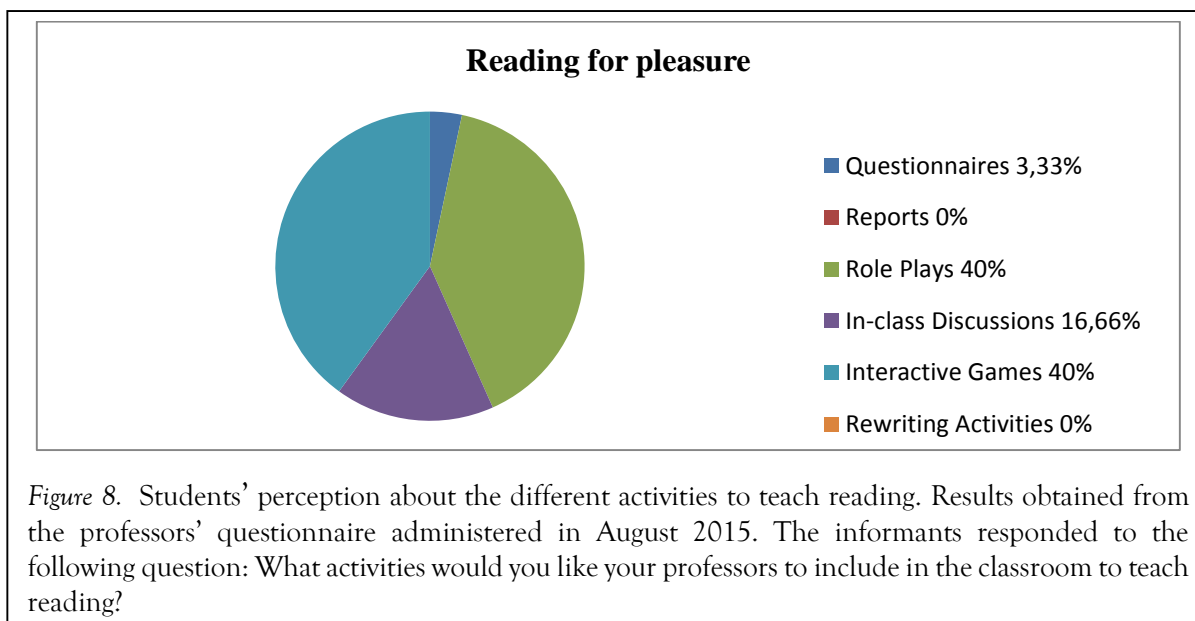
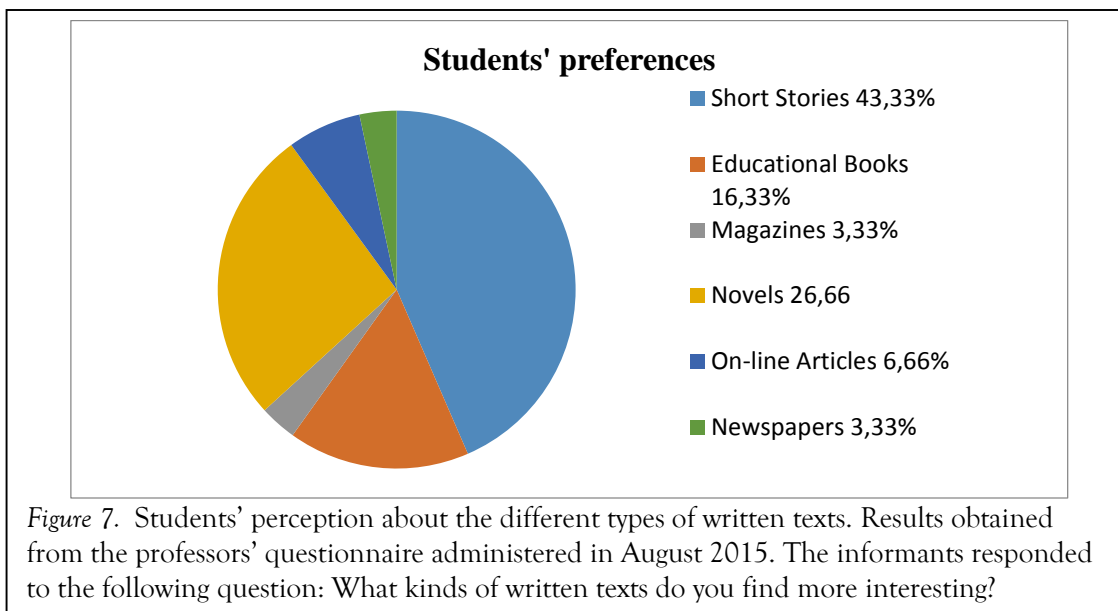
In this regard, it is clearly stated that the students' preferences are oriented toward short stories and novels. As already stated this type of literature provides readers with vivid opportunities to develop their imagination and explore imaginary worlds that otherwise would be impossible. Once this data have been collected and the students' preferences are known, it would be of great help for the learning process to take advantage of this to facilitate the acquisition of new knowledge. It is necessary to mention on last element that is closely related to the learners' preferences regarding written texts. Students were asked about the activities they would like their professors to include in the classroom to teach or reinforce reading habits. The figure below presents the findings.

Taking into consideration the informants' responses, it is clearly observed that they show preference for those activities which involve some interaction. This information also supports this proposal. Learners feel that reading would be more enjoyable if interaction is present. This leads to conclude that the perception that some people have that reading is boring is not a consequence of reading itself but a perception provoked by the lack of activities and texts that enhance the readers' interest. This shows that before criticizing the learners' lack of interest and reading skills, it is necessary to self-assess the teaching process in order to find out if there is enough and proper encouragement.

4. The Use of Interactive Reading to Enhance EFL Learner's Reading Habits

Literature is perhaps the easiest and safest way to imaginarily travel and live experiences. Stories not only entertain but they also generate cultural knowledge. Literature is one of the riches cultural expressions used to share thoughts and beliefs. Literature has been throughout history to immortalize the lives of those who were brave enough to let other know what they were capable of creating. English literature has hundreds of short stories

that have entertained people throughout generations. Stories that were written many decades ago are still told, and they provoke admiration. Many of them have been translated into different languages and new versions have also been created. For these reasons, learners who are beginning the process of learning English should be given the opportunity to let their imagination grow by following the proposal summarized below. (Annex 1)



<p>Stage 1: What's going to happen?</p>	<p>In this stage the learners are presented with the story and they are asked to make predictions about what they think the story is going to be about. The characters are introduced and the students are allowed to read the introductory paragraph. In a round table, they are encouraged to contribute with ideas in order to predict what is happening next.</p>
<p>Stage 2: Where? Who? Why? How? They live happily ever after!</p>	<p>Once the students are done with the predictions, they read the full story. This can be done individually or in groups depending on the students preferences. They must analyze the setting the characters, the conflict, the plot, and the resolution of the conflict. They should be encouraged to analyze why the different events happens in the story and why the characters behave the way they do. This is a way for students to start developing their analytical skills. In this stage they will need the guidance of the teacher. Keep in mind that they are beginners and there are several elements that they have not mastered.</p>
<p>Stage 3: What if...?</p>	<p>In this stage, the students may suggest changes for the setting the characters, the conflict, the plot, and the resolution of the conflict. Let the students use their imagination. After all, that is what short stories were made for. The idea is that the students perform their own versions of the stories. Even though the participants are motivated to create their own versions of the stories, tell them to stick to the original story as much as possible. Sometimes when people perform parodies, they include characters from other stories, but this might disrupt the performance and create some confusion among beginning learners.</p>
<p>Stage 4 Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse.</p>	<p>Once the new versions are ready, some controlled rehearsal should take place. The professor should work as a theater director, guiding and helping the new actors and actresses with any aspect that needs some improvement. Remember to create a positive and fun environment. The idea is to help students enjoy everything they do along the process.</p>
<p>Stage 5 Time to act out!</p>	<p>When everything is ready, the students, with the cooperation of professors, may plan a special activity in order to present their plays. It is advisable to encourage them not to focus on accuracy. Instead they should focus on enjoying the experience. This kind of activity should help learners release stress, and earn confidence.</p>

5. Conclusions

There is no doubt that the EFL instructional process will continue to show evolutionary development toward the needs of students and teachers. This is a strong reason to keep one's mind up to the continuous changes and the need to focus on the benefits of the educational systems, especially in countries like Costa Rica in which the opportunities are usually accompanied by the request of bilingual professionals. The process of teaching has shown to be more successful when it is approached as a holistic method. The tendency to divide the skills and put them in order of importance is failing and lacking support and fundament. It is very important to work on all of them and integrate them as a way to provide learners with interaction that helps improve their communicative capacity.

The responsibility regarding the different learning styles falls on the person in charge of guiding the learning process. Teachers and professors of English have to be aware of that and develop varied activities for those students who need special attention and have different styles to approach the contents being taught. Reinforcing and encouraging the research on these topics is an aspect that should involve the experiences lived in the classrooms. Every activity that uses the skills and shows positive results should be discussed to share the results beyond that classroom.

Even though the results of the research have shown speaking and listening to be the strongest practiced skills there is a significant conclusion that gives reading considerable presence in the learning process. It is necessary to take this as a responsibility and encourage apprentices too develop the taste for reading activities. There should be reinforcement of reading in every level of the educational system. With the right approach and motivation the weaknesses regarding this skill can be turned into opportunities and this will result in disreputable value for the learners, especially if they are beginners since this will mark the route for a fascinating journey.

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Annex 1

Story Title:

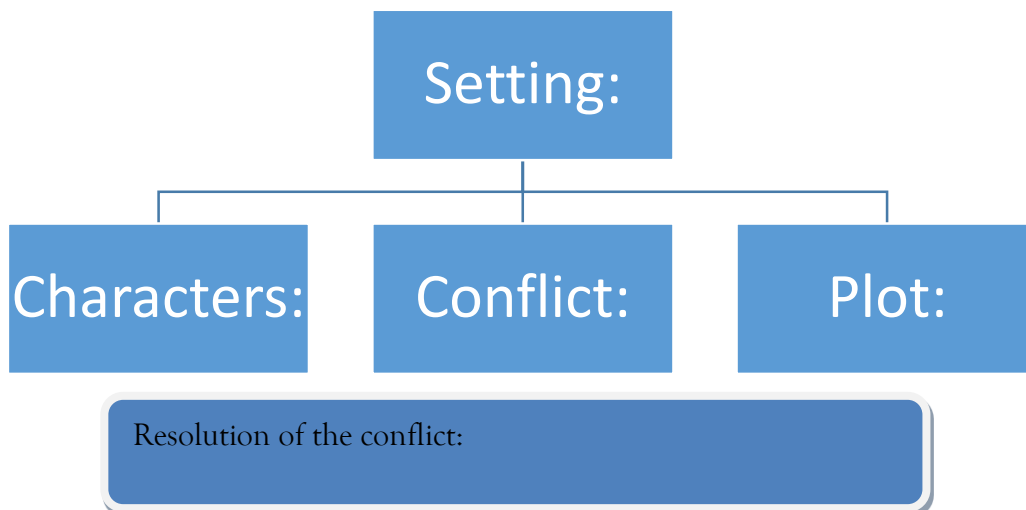


Stage One: What's going to happen?

Whole-class activity: Read the introductory paragraph and make prediction about the story.

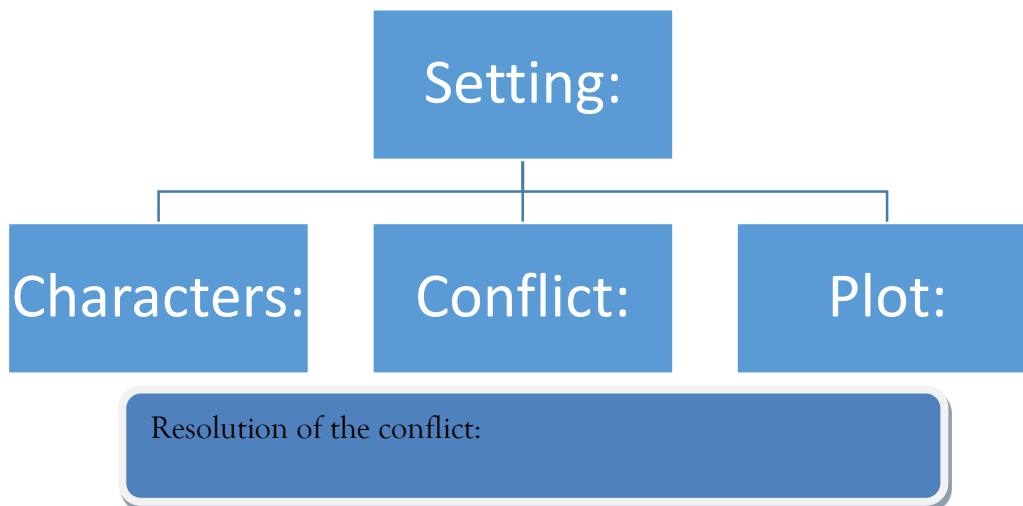
Stage Two: ? Who? Why? They lived happily ever after!

Individual or group activity: Read the full story and analyze the element below. Analyze why the different events happens in the story and why the characters behave the way they do.



Stage Three: What if...?

Group activity: Use your imagination and suggest changes for the setting the characters, the conflict, the plot, and the resolution of the conflict.



Stage Four: Rehearse, rehearse, and rehearse.

Group activity: Start rehearsing the new version of the story. Prepare the scenery and outfits. Make the story come alive.

Stage Five: Time to act out

Group activity: After you have rehearsed the play, it is time to present it to the school community. Plan a special activity. Invite students from other groups. Let them enjoy your talent.

Annex 2



UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL
SEDE REGIONAL BRUNCA, CAMPUS COTO

RESEARCH: Interactive Reading: A Method to Enhance EFL Learner's Reading Habits

RESEARCHER: Elian Acuña Aguilar / Ignacio Campos Araya

Date of administration: _____

Instrument #1: Questionnaire for first year students majoring in English teaching at Universidad Nacional, Sede Regional Brunca, Campus Coto

The following questionnaire is part of a study being conducted by two professors of English of Universidad Nacional in the Applied Linguistics area.

Objective: To collect students' insights about the different aspects related to the inclusion of reading activities during the first year of the major.

Directions: Respond the following questions as elicited. Any information you provide will be used for academic purposes only. Thank you for your cooperation.

Part I: Personal information

Age: _____

Gender: ____ Female ____ Male

Level: _____

1. Mark the following linguistic skills from 1 to 4 in the order of importance for you, being number 1 the most important and number 4 the least important.

____ reading ____ listening ____ writing ____ speaking

2. In what order are the following linguistic skills reinforced by the professors during your integrated English classes? Mark the options from 1 to 4, being number 1 the most reinforced and number 4 the least reinforced.

____ reading ____ listening ____ writing ____ speaking

3. In what order do you put into practice the following linguistic skills during your integrated English classes? Mark the options from 1 to 4, being number 1 the most used and number 4 the least used.
 reading listening writing speaking

4. How often do your professors request you to read for academic purposes?
 Always Constantly Occasionally Hardly ever Never

5. How often do your professors encourage you to read just for pleasure?
 Always Constantly Occasionally Hardly ever Never

6. How often do you spend time on your own reading texts just for pleasure?
 Always Constantly Occasionally Hardly ever Never

7. What kinds of written texts do you find more interesting? Mark the options from 1 to 6 , being number 1 the type of text you like the most and number 6 the type of text you like the least.
 Short stories
 Educational Books
 Magazines
 Novels
 On-line Articles
 Newspapers

8. What literature genre do you find more interesting? Mark the options from 1 to 8, being number 1 the most interesting genre and number 8 the least interesting genre.
 Science Fiction
 Fantasy
 History
 Horror
 Poetry
 Romance
 Thrillers
 Comedy

9. What activities would you like your professors to include in the classroom to teach reading? Mark the options from 1 to 6, being number 1 the activity that you like the most and number 6 the activity that you like the least.

_____ Questionnaires

_____ Reports

_____ Role plays

_____ In-class discussions

_____ Interactive games

_____ Rewriting activities



Annex 3



UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL
SEDE REGIONAL BRUNCA, CAMPUS COTO

RESEARCH: Interactive Reading: A Method to Enhance EFL Learner's Reading Habits

RESEARCHER: Elian Acuña Aguilar / Rodrigo Ignacio Campos Araya

Date of administration: _____

Instrument #2: Questionnaire for professors of the English Teaching Major course: "Inglés Integrado I & II" teaching at Universidad Nacional, Sede Regional Brunca, Campus Coto.

The following questionnaire is part of a study being conducted by two professors of English of Universidad Nacional in the Applied Linguistics area.

Objective: To collect professors' insights about the different aspects related to the inclusion of reading activities during the first year of the major.

Directions: Respond the following questions as elicited. Any information you provide will be used for academic purposes only. Thank you for your cooperation.

Part I: Personal information

Gender: _____ Male _____ Female

Academic Degree: _____

Years of experience in teaching: _____

1. Mark the following linguistic skills from 1 to 4 in the order of importance for you as a professional in this field, being number 1 the most important and number 4 the least important.

___ reading ___ listening ___ writing ___ speaking
___ other (explain please) _____

2. In what order do you consider the following linguistic skills must be reinforced during the integrated English classes? Mark the options from 1 to 4, being number 1 the most reinforced and number 4 the least reinforced.

___ reading ___ listening ___ writing ___ speaking

3. In what order do students put into practice the following linguistic skills during the integrated English classes? Mark the options from 1 to 4, being number 1 the most used and number 4 the least used.
 reading listening writing speaking

4. How often do you ask your students to read for academic purposes?
 Always Constantly Occasionally Hardly ever Never

5. How often do you encourage your students to read just for pleasure?
 Always Constantly Occasionally Hardly ever Never

6. How often do you spend time on your own reading texts just for pleasure?
 Always Constantly Occasionally Hardly ever Never

7. What kind of written texts do you find more interesting to work with or to give to your students? Mark the options from 1 to 6, being number 1 the type of text you like the most and number 6 the type of text you like the least.
 Short stories
 Educational Books
 Magazines
 Novels
 On-line Articles
 Newspapers

8. What literature genres do you think students would find more interesting? Mark the options from 1 to 8, being number 1 the most interesting genre and number 8 the least interesting genre.
 Science Fiction
 Fantasy
 History
 Horror
 Poetry
 Romance
 Thrillers
 Comedy

9. What activities can be included in the classroom to teach reading? Mark the options from 1 to 6, being number 1 the activity that you like the most and number 6 the activity that you like the least.

_____ Questionnaires

_____ Reports

_____ Role plays

_____ In-class discussions

_____ Interactive games

_____ Rewriting activities

Implementation of the Multistage Frame Technique to Enhance Students' Standard American English Vowel Sounds Pronunciation

Lic. Elian Acuña Aguilar
Lic. Johana Quirós Cordero

Resumen

Los programas de estudio de inglés como idioma extranjero se enfocan en el desarrollo de las habilidades comunicativas de los estudiantes. El plan de inglés propuesto por el Ministerio de Educación Pública de Costa Rica (MEP) se basa en la enseñanza a través del método comunicativo. De acuerdo con Nunan (2003) este método se basa en la generación de oportunidades de comunicación en la lengua meta (p. 50). A pesar de su popularidad, muchos profesores tienen ideas erróneas de la verdadera naturaleza del método comunicativo. Muchos piensan que por ser comunicativo, este método deja de lado todo tipo de explicación formal de los contenidos de estudio y que se basa en conversaciones abiertas que eventualmente fomentan el aprendizaje de la lengua meta. Para aclarar esto Richards (2006) planteó que el método comunicativo debe entenderse como el conjunto de principios acerca de los objetivos de enseñanza del lenguaje, la forma en que los estudiantes aprenden, las actividades que faciliten el aprendizaje, y el papel del docente en el aula (p. 2). Este planteamiento establece la integración de todos aquellos elementos necesarios para el aprendizaje de la lengua meta. Para lograr una comunicación efectiva, es necesario considerar la importancia de plantear ideas claras y concisas y que los mensajes transmitidos sean exactos. Es aquí donde el tema de una correcta pronunciación juega un papel relevante de manera que los mensajes emitidos o recibidos sean los correctos. Es por esto que el siguiente trabajo ofrece una técnica estructurada para mejorar la pronunciación de los sonidos vocales de inglés americano en estudiantes de inglés como idioma extranjero. Esta propuesta busca integrar los elementos de pronunciación mientras se logra alcanzar una comunicación efectiva.

Abstract

Nowadays, English as a foreign language (EFL) instructional syllabi focus on the development of learner's communicative skills. In fact, the English educational plan proposed by Costa Rica's Ministry of Public Education is based on communicative language teaching (CLT) which establishes that lessons should consist of opportunities to communicate in the target language (Nunan, 2003, p. 50). Although CLT is the most popular methodology implemented today in language instruction, sometimes teachers have a misconception of what CLT really is. Some wrong arguments state that CLT is a methodology that omits explanations completely and that all the learning process takes place based on open-ended discussions which gradually foment the learning of the target language. This has provoked that the formal instruction of some relevant linguistic aspects like pronunciation is not included in EFL classrooms. Nonetheless, in order to clarify misconceptions about CLT, Richards (2006) wrote the following: "Communicative language teaching can be understood as a set of principles about the goals of language teaching, how learners learn a language, the kinds of classroom activities that best facilitate learning, and the roles of teachers" (p. 2). According to this viewpoint, CLT integrates all the elements involved in language learning

in a way that the communicative needs of the learners are met. In order for communication to be effective, speakers must be accurate when attempting to express ideas. In terms of oral communication, accuracy is a must especially regarding pronunciation aspects so that no wrong messages are emitted or received. For this reason, in this paper EFL teachers are offered a multistage frame technique to enhance students' standard American English vowel sounds pronunciation. This proposal is aimed at integrating pronunciation elements while looking forward to achieving effective communication.

Key words: pronunciation, communication, integrating, multistage

1. Introduction

The immersion in a globalized world has created the necessity for people to be highly trained in different fields. New jobs and services have emerged from the integration of new technology and the rapid increase of world population. Many new companies have taken the ground in the work market, and they offer people the chance to develop professionally. Nevertheless, in contrast to what happened some years ago, people who attempt to obtain a job are not graded solely based on their previous experience but on their learning and communicative skills. Most multinational companies look forward to hiring employees who are able not only to carry the tasks which they are hired for but also to keep updated with the latest market trends. People who want to successfully be part of the worldwide job market must be aware of the demanding context in which they will be immersed. In this setting, English as foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL) play important roles for the community.

Effective communicative skills development is now part of the curricular design for EFL and ESL contexts. Authorities in charge of designing and planning educational programs are aware of the high standards that students are expected to meet. For this reason, the communicative approach, which is widely used nowadays, looks forwards the integration of all language skills and sub-skills. Teaching English for EFL and ESL learners has been regarded as an organic process that cannot be conceived as the internalization of the language parts separately but as the integration of the elements involved in a whole. However, many linguists have found that pronunciation is not given the importance it deserves within the English learning process. Authors like Moedjito (2008) have stated that “there is no systematic clear guideline of pronunciation teaching although English is one of the important compulsory subjects at secondary schools” (p. 130). This lack of a systematized path to follow may usually result in the learners' prevention from developing comprehensible pronunciation in the target language. Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) have reported that “many learners of English as a second language have ‘major difficulties’ with English pronunciation even after years of learning the language” (p. 74). This complaint has been perceived in many different contexts all around the world, not being Costa Rica an exception. It is precisely this concerning issue what should lead stakeholders and teachers to look for alternatives in order implement pronunciation teaching techniques in EFL and ESL classrooms.

1.1. General Objective

To contribute with the enhancement of the pronunciation of standard American English vowel sounds in tenth grade students

1.2. Specific Objectives

To identify the role of pronunciation in EFL classrooms in the Costa Rican context.

To determine the significance of implementing pronunciation instruction in tenth grade EFL classrooms in the Costa Rican context.

To suggest a systemized methodology for the instruction of the pronunciation of standard American English vowel sounds in tenth grade students

1.3. Research Questions

What role does pronunciation play in Costa Rican EFL classroom settings?

How important is comprehensible pronunciation in real communicative settings?

How can the pronunciation of standard American English vowel sounds be enhanced among tenth grade students?

2. Literature Review

Learning a language implies the development of the four linguistic skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and the sub skills in which they are divided. All these elements should be integrated and developed gradually. However, there has been some controversy about the effectiveness of integrating these elements formally in Costa Rican high school EFL classrooms. Some researchers have argued that the reason why such integration has not been effective is the lack of skilled instructors. In fact, the instruction of pronunciation is a clear example of this debate. Araya and Cordoba (2008) stated that “teacher knowledge requires the mastery of teaching and learning techniques, methodologies and strategies that can help to develop students’ different skills such as listening, reading, writing and speaking” (p. 18). This revealed that in order to teach a language, a professional must master all these elements and be able to transmit the contents clearly so that learners are able to internalize them.

Nonetheless, some investigations have revealed that not all language instructors are skillful enough to reach the right integration of the target language elements in their lessons. Authors like Gilakjani (2012) have found some inconsistency specially when including pronunciation elements in English classes. He concluded that nowadays many instructors are reluctant to include phonetic aspects in their classes (p.4). In fact, when Gilakjani (2012) wrote, “pronunciation tends to be neglected in the second language (L2) classroom, and L2 teachers are frightened by the idea of teaching pronunciation” (p.4), he evidenced the alienation of pronunciation instruction from English classes. Nevertheless, it is imperative to keep in mind that speakers of English are expected to develop communicative proficiency as well as accuracy especially in regard to the adequate production of the target language sounds.

2.1. Overview of English Instruction Approach in Costa Rica

Inclusion of English as a foreign language within the Costa Rican public education curricula has been addressed for a long time now. EFL in Costa Rica has undergone great restructuring; programs, approaches, and aims have changed in order to best fit the constantly changing world's economy. The inclusion of this language has always served the need to provide the nation with prepared labor force comparable to any developed country. Even nowadays this need keeps going on in the current English Syllabus in which The Ministry of Public Education (2003) stated the following:

"The English Syllabus", was written within the principles stated both in our Constitution, The Education Law and in the Educational Policy "Towards the 21st Century" in order to help the students face life and work situations which require an average command of English, with the desire that this preparation will allow them to participate actively into the challenges of the global economy for the benefit of the country. (p. 14)

Independently from the purpose of the inclusion of EFL in the Costa Rican classrooms, the approaches have also been moved by world trends. According to Barboza (2010), the United States and England have been the main sources of ideas to emulate (La Enseñanza y el Aprendizaje). The initial grammatical approach which required the pupil to repeat and learn by heart all the structures and vocabulary provided has been long eradicated from the language classroom. Currently, MEP's guidelines are trusted to the implementation of the Communicative approach in all types of English classrooms. In their attempts to increase the linguistic level, MEP's authorities have developed a great variety of English programs that range from the traditional Academic English to English for Specific Purposes among other modalities. Even though many aspects like assessment, syllabus, and contents change from one English class modality to the other, the Communicative approach continues to be used in each one of them. In the specific case of the modality *Technical Education English for Communication*, MEP (2009) proposed that "students will become independent users of the language which will allow them to face workplace situations once they will have finished." (p.14). Once again by means of the implementation of the communicative approach, MEP intended to prepare Costa Rican youth for the future working challenges.

When doing further reading of the *Technical Education for English for Communication* syllabus, MEP (2009) provided clear guidelines on how to best increase the students' linguistic skills. "In this syllabus, the communicative skill of the language is the object of study. Emphasis is given to the four basic linguistic abilities: listening and speaking, reading and writing." (p.15). As stated before, this program is based on the four linguistic skills. They have become the center of the program along with some sub-skills such as grammar and vocabulary. In addition, culture is included since the students have already acquired a higher level that will let them understand the sociocultural information that learning a language also requires.

On the other hand, MEP (2009) addressed pronunciation as a complement to the other skills and sub-skills. Within the sixteen general objectives of the program,

pronunciation is only mentioned in one of them. The objective stated the following: “To develop in the students a clear pronunciation and the use of prosodic features of the English language which will allow them to be understood by a responsive native speaker in controlled and free situations.”(p.27). Although some importance is given to this linguistic aspect, MEP neglected further instruction on how to teach pronunciation in class in this specific modality. The suggestions are very vague and do not provide the teacher with a detailed perspective on how to work this sub skill in class. Regarding listening, MEP (2009) proposed two aspects related to pronunciation. One was a specific listening activity, and it was stated as follows: “distinguishing between sounds, stress and intonation patterns”(p.28), and as the other is some suggestion for activities related to listening comprehension in which the teacher must “provide practice in distinguishing among sounds, stress, intonation patterns, to understand sentences, short texts, and others.” (p.29). In both statements the importance of the suprasegmental aspects of the language are not significantly mentioned. Finally, pronunciation is included as a part of the speaking skill, and the program proposed that students should be aware of some principles in which pronunciation is included. It mentioned that “speech delivery, rhythm, intonation and pronunciation are learned by listening to appropriate language models (tapes, native speakers, teachers and other English speakers)” (p. 30). Although included in the speaking section, it did not provide any idea of how to include it not only as a source of input but as a way to obtain student output.

2.2. The Role of Pronunciation in the EFL Communicative Contexts

First of all, it is mandatory to define what pronunciation is and its importance when learning a foreign language. Gilakjani (2012) defined it as:

The production of sounds that we use to make meaning. It includes attention to the particular sounds of a language (segments), aspects of speech beyond the level of the individual sound, such as intonation, phrasing, stress, timing, rhythm (suprasegmental aspects), and how the voice is projected (voice quality). (p. 96)

As defined, pronunciation deals not only with the production of sounds but also with the way they are used in utterances in order to convey meaning according to the communicative context. Developing good pronunciation is necessary because it helps speakers to be understood in any given context. Learners must be prepared to cope with real challenges outside the classroom walls and to be capable of being successfully understood by both English native and nonnative speakers. Closely linked to the need to be successfully comprehended is the need to prove to be proficient in order to perform the communicative tasks learners are required to. It is necessary to take into consideration that there are large groups of people who need “a high level of intelligibility and therefore require special assistance with pronunciation” (Howlader, 2010, p. 235). In this regard, English nonnative speakers who must perform tasks that demand constant interaction with other English speakers are aware of the importance that accurate pronunciation has in order to keep fluent communication. Finally, other learners who are capable of performing orally by means of an adequate production of sounds are those who are privileged with special conditions such as studying abroad in English speaking countries, moving to English speaking countries, and performing jobs that demand interaction with English native and nonnative speakers.

Besides all these factors, having good pronunciation might be regarded as a synonym of prestige among speakers of English. In fact, Derwing (2010) found in a study conducted in Canada with nonnative speakers of English that 53 % of the participants thought that Canadians who spoke English natively would respect them more if they articulated English sounds correctly (cited in Çakır & Baytar 2014, p. 100). Based on these findings, Çakır and Baytar (2014) concluded that “articulating the correct pronunciation in target language may show the social status of the people or their educational background” (p. 100). This might mean that learners of EFL look forward to pronouncing English in a native-like way as much as possible. What is important then is to find out if the right conditions to achieve this goal are given in Costa Rican high schools.

2.3. Teachers’ and Learners’ Role in Pronunciation Instruction

Language instructors play a very important role in the development of the learners’ pronunciation accuracy; however, the students are the ones who play perhaps the most important role in this endeavor. As it is the instructors’ responsibility to provide language learners with activities and materials that enhance their pronunciation; it is also the learners’ task to put into practice what they are provided with. According to Howlader (2010), in countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India where the need to speak English has increased, students have to deal with a variety of limitations that need to be overcome in order to reach success in the English teaching programs (p. 234). This has also been noticed by instructors in the Costa Rican context. Students’ pronunciation might be affected by a series of factors; some of them intrinsic, some other extrinsic. Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) identified elements such as accent, stress, intonation, rhythm, motivation, exposure, attitude, instruction, mother tongue influence, age and personality as the responsible for the students’ intrinsic limitations (p. 75). This information was also supported by Qian (2011) who pointed out negative transfer, materials, and individual aptitude as the main factors that interfere with learners’ pronunciation (p. 115). All this reveals the existence of a series of elements that need to be overlooked while working on learning a foreign language; nevertheless, some of them are skipped or are not given the importance they deserve.

When teaching pronunciation, it is of great importance to help students use correct phonological patterns. Thus, teachers ought to search for effective techniques that make classes entertaining and engaging for students. Villalobos (2008) argued that “foreign language teachers need to change traditional learning-based activities, and use the acquisition-based comprehensible input more, considering new developments in second language acquisition theory” (p. 4). The change of traditional methodologies will provide instructors with bases to deal with some of the elements that prevent learners from developing accurate pronunciation. Besides changing traditional teaching strategies would be helpful to analyze the strategies used by EFL learners who have successfully developed their pronunciation skill. These strategies, as defined by Hişmanoğlu (2012), are “intentional behaviors and thoughts used by learners so as to enable them to comprehend, learn, or remember L2 pronunciation” (p. 248). It is important to keep in mind that pronunciation learning is a process that requires the use of different methodologies according to the learners’ needs. Authors like Derwing and Rossiter, as cited in Hişmanoğlu

(2012), have identified a set of strategies used by EFL learners. Some of these strategies are “self-repetition, paraphrasing, increasing or decreasing volume, writing and/or spelling difficult words, using a slow rate of speech, calming down, using pantomime, avoiding difficult sounds, appealing for assistance from native speakers, using clear speech, and monitoring articulatory gesture” (p. 248). The usage of these strategies depends on the students’ learning style and the level of success achieved by each particular participant.

3. Data Analysis

This section contains the analysis of the most relevant findings obtained after the administration of the instruments during this research. A questionnaire was administered to EFL teachers to gather their insights about the importance of pronunciation within the EFL learning process in Costa Rican context. Another questionnaire was administered to tenth grade students at Canaán High School to gather their insights about the importance of pronunciation within the EFL learning process in Costa Rican high schools.

3.1. Teachers’ insights

The data gathered after the administration of the questionnaire to a group of EFL teachers revealed some interesting viewpoints about the relevance of pronunciation. As a sub-skill, pronunciation is considered of great importance among teachers.

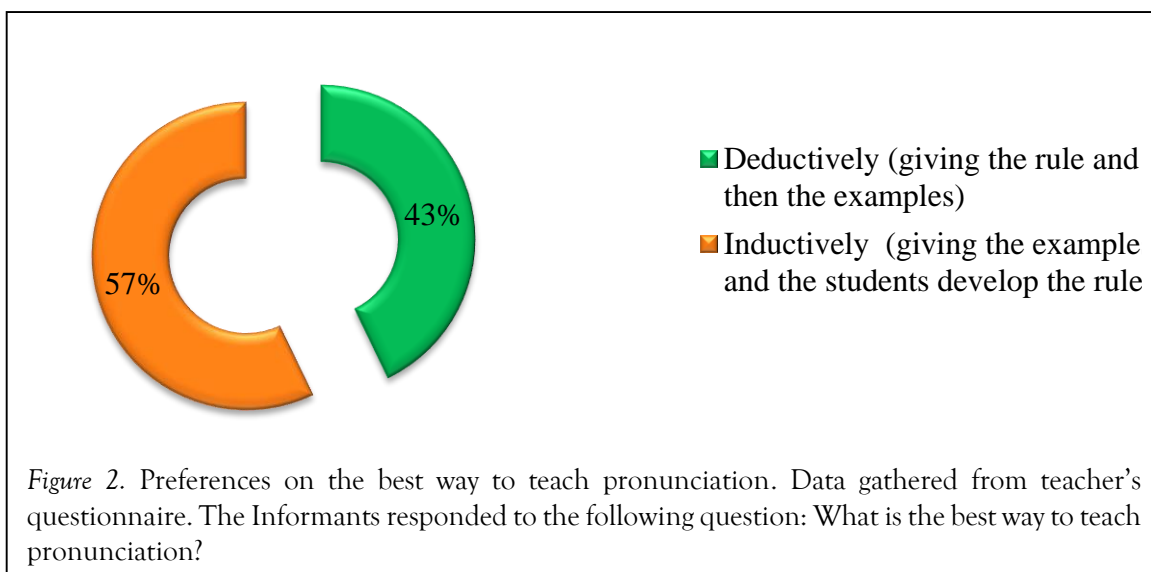
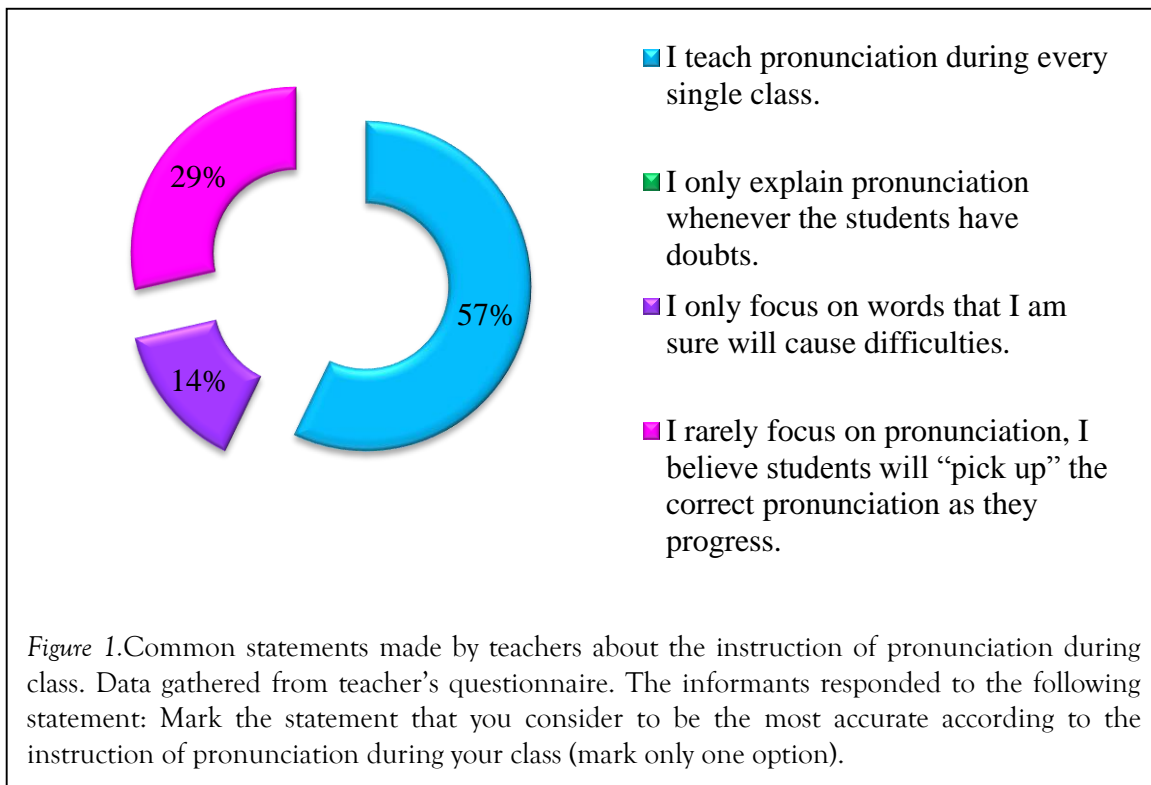
As shown in the graphic above, most EFL teachers consulted stated that pronunciation is reinforced or at least included in every teaching session. This can be interpreted as the perception that pronunciation plays a very important role as a linguistic element. When consulted about the way in which pronunciation is included in their classes, the data showed that most teachers introduce pronunciation patterns inductively. The following chart represents this information.

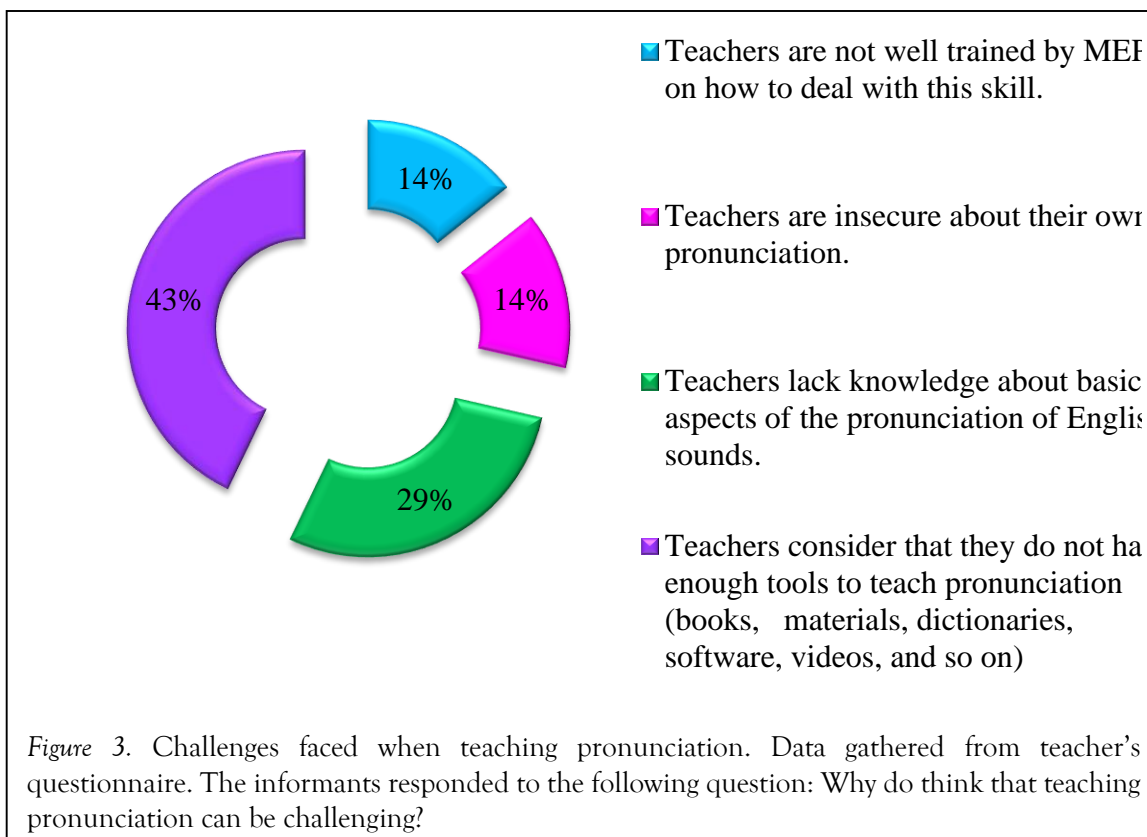
This information reveals that deductive pronunciation instruction is not used as much as inductive instruction during the EFL classes in high schools. There may be several reasons why this happens; one of them is that MEP’s guidelines lack information on how to include or instruct this sub-skill during the development of the teaching syllabus.

Interestingly, when requested about the challenges to teach pronunciation, the informants reported the lack of resources as the main factors that hinders the inclusion of this element into the Costa Rican EFL classrooms. The following chart represents this information.

This information shows the perception that teachers have about the availability of resources that could be used to teach pronunciation deductively. Finding appropriate teaching materials is probably one of the main challenges in Costa Rican contexts. The lack of resources that fulfill learners’ needs and context has been reported as the main obstacles for the teachers who must dedicate lots of time to the preparation of material. This does not mean that pronunciation should be taught in isolation. However, the design of material that

includes pronunciation elements that fit in the MEP's guidelines might help in the enhancement of learners' pronunciation skills.





3.2. Students' insights

When consulted, EFL learners provided some interesting points of view regarding the inclusion of pronunciation aspects in the learning process and the relevance of this sub-skill to achieve effective communication. They seem to be aware of importance of emitting and receiving accurate messages. This is a positive factor since learners who are willing to really learn the language, will probably look for the strategies to improve by themselves. Nevertheless, the teachers and material developers should take these insights into consideration in order to design strategies and material that help learners master effective communicative abilities. When consulted about the importance of pronouncing correctly, there is clear agreement with the need to be accurate. The following chart shows that all the students think that it is imperative to develop this ability.

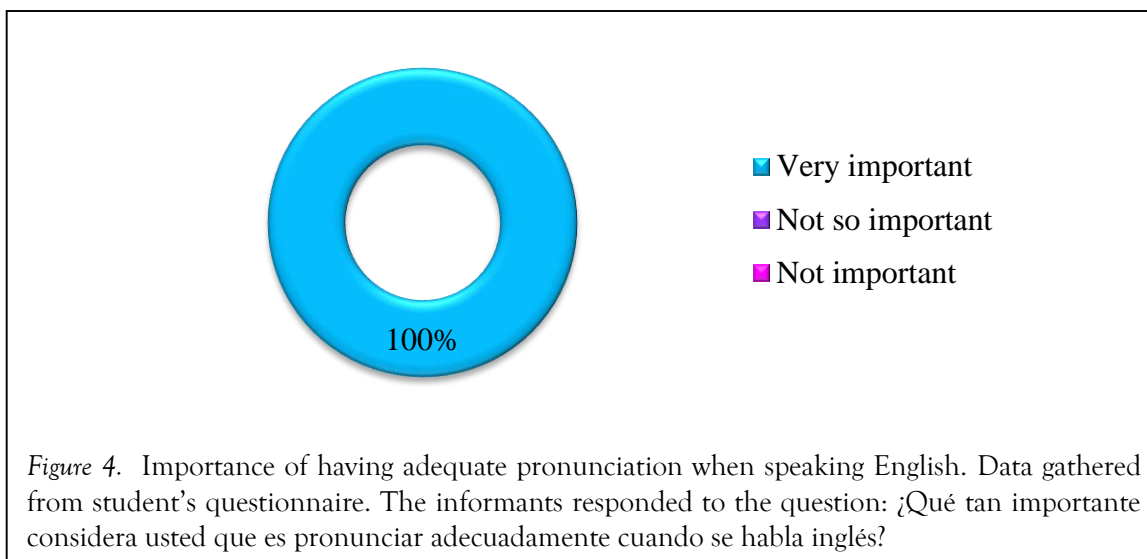


Figure 4. Importance of having adequate pronunciation when speaking English. Data gathered from student’s questionnaire. The informants responded to the question: ¿Qué tan importante considera usted que es pronunciar adecuadamente cuando se habla inglés?

This perception is related to the view of the activities that learners consider more effective to use in the classroom. Since Costa Rican context offers a limit range of possibilities to learn English by picking it from the surrounding environment, it is necessary to think of classroom activities that facilitate this process. When requested about this issue, the learners reported that for them the use of songs (modeling), clear explanations, and games are the most effective activities to learn pronunciation accurately. The following chart represents the learners’ insights in this regard.

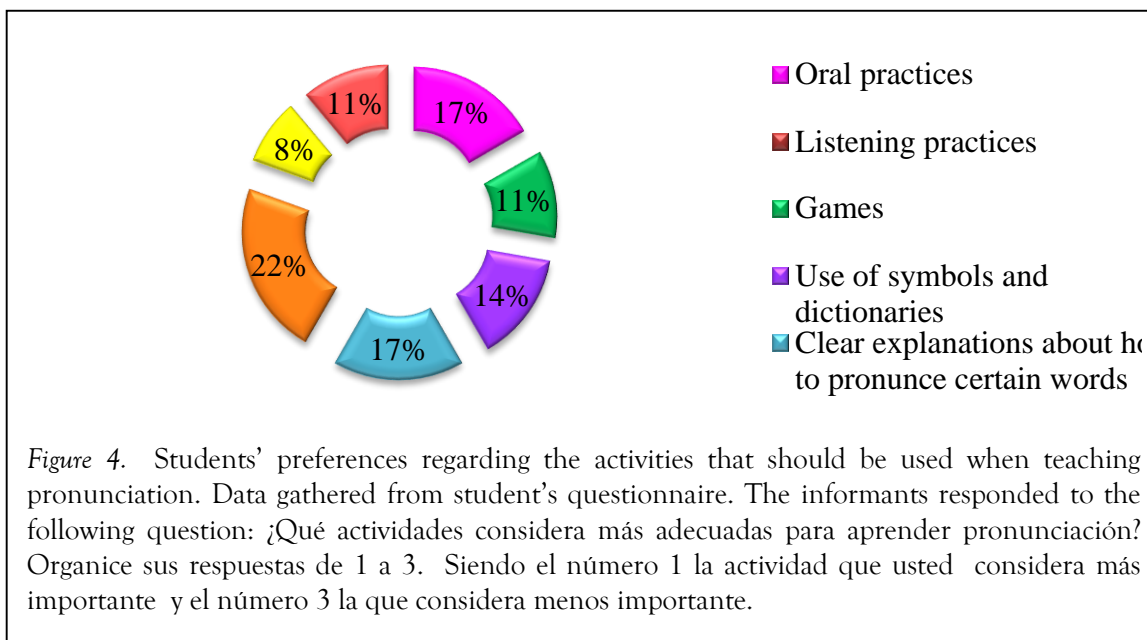


Figure 4. Students’ preferences regarding the activities that should be used when teaching pronunciation. Data gathered from student’s questionnaire. The informants responded to the following question: ¿Qué actividades considera más adecuadas para aprender pronunciación? Organice sus respuestas de 1 a 3. Siendo el número 1 la actividad que usted considera más importante y el número 3 la que considera menos importante.

It is interesting that learners place the use of songs as the number one activity to learn pronunciation. They see the use of authentic modeling as an important resource to pick the correct pronunciation of sounds. Then, the use of explanations and games received the same

number of positive opinions. This shows that for them formal instruction and practice should be complemented along the learning process. All these data should serve as the bases for planning and designing material that incorporates both guided instruction and interactive practice.

4. The implementation of the Multistage Frame Technique to Enhance Students' Standard American English Vowel Sounds Pronunciation

The enormous importance of having an adequate pronunciation when aiming to achieve an intelligible and fluent communication in English is well known by the learners. Teachers, on the other hand, have the crucial role of presenting activities that motivate students to improve this sub-skill within a communicative language instruction. As Spanish speakers, Costa Rican students cope with many linguistic challenges when learning English as a foreign language. One of these challenges is the absence of phonetic elements in the mother tongue in comparison with the foreign language. Some of these elements are vowel sounds and the variation in tension and articulation of some of them. Vowels sounds such as /i/, /ɪ/, /ɛ/, /eɪ/, /a/, /æ/, /ʊ/, /u/, /ʌ/ and /ə/ are the ones to deal with through the implementation of the “Multistage Frame Technique”. The technique is addressed to help teachers include pronunciation within the communicative goals imposed by the Ministry of Public Education while encouraging students' participation, analysis and learning preferences. The “Multistage Frame Technique” focuses on the former vowels sounds due to the absence of some of them, and the difficulty caused by the lack of knowledge on how to correctly produce them which commonly leads to mispronunciation and confusion caused by the L1 transfer. The “Multistage Frame Technique” guides students through a series of stages that evolve from controlled activities in which the teacher's guidance is imperative to free communicative activities that emphasis the implementation of the students' of the new knowledge. The technique is designed to include different types of activities that comprise the usage of authentic and non-authentic materials, different assessment techniques, and all of this by unifying the main skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). The name of this technique arouses from the five stages designed to improve student's pronunciation which are explained the below.

Stage 1: OPEN YOUR EARS

This stage is an inductive presentation of the sound or sounds to be studied. During this activity the teacher will control and guide the process through lock-step activities based on words that illustrate the sounds to be studied. The main goal of this stage is to activate schemata and therefore facilitate the acquisition of the sound.

Stage 2: GET TO KNOW IT

In this phase, the students will be provided with a theoretical explanation of the sounds to be studied. The symbols to be used are the ones contained in the introduction of the booklet. The activities designed are teacher-centered which include rule explanations and examples in order to provide learners with direct input that will theoretically justify the studied

phonemes. Also, controlled listening and speaking exercises are provided to assure adequate comprehension.

Stage 3: *THE REAL DEAL!*

Through the use of non-authentic and authentic materials, the students will be provided with opportunities to put into practice the target sounds. This stage includes practice activities like listening, games, multimedia and creative use. In this part of the class, students are given opportunities to use sounds in a free environment; hence, they are preparing themselves for real situations through creative usage of the phoneme within a given context.

Stage 4: *HOW DID IT GO?*

How did it go? Consists of consolidation activities that provide a last opportunity for students and teacher to assess the progress achieved through the previous stages. This is performed through different assessment techniques such as self, peer and teacher assessment. In this stage activities are closed and will help to encourage the students' critical thinking by questioning not only their peers but themselves.

Stage 5: *BE BETTER!*

Based on the information gathered through the assessment techniques and a student's generated task, the students will be provided with feedback as a way to improve the weaknesses found in the pronunciation of vowel sounds. This last activity will provide the teacher with enough information to generate adequate feedback to help students. Also, it will generate a critical perspective in the students about their specific needs and points of improvement.

The "Multistage Frame Technique" features a series of scaffolded activities aimed at promoting student's awareness regarding the most relevant aspects of the standard American English vowel sounds within MEP's context.

5. Conclusions

It is easy to comprehend the positive consequences of helping learners enhance their pronunciation skills just by mentioning clear and intelligible communication with others. Even though Mep's *Technical Education English for Communication* syllabus provides very basic and limited guidelines about the inclusion of pronunciation when teaching, it is important for the educator not to neglect it during class. The main aim of the "Multistage Frame Technique" is to help students and teachers include pronunciation instruction and usage during the regular classes. It is crucial to expose students from early learning stages to adequate teaching-learning techniques, which do not avoid any skill or sub-skill. High school students need to be aware of all the aspects that conform the language not just the traditionally evaluated skills such as reading and writing. In addition to the highlights of the importance of pronunciation in the MEP's context, it is necessary to mention the need to generate appealing activities through the implementations of authentic and non-authentic materials that will attract students to learn by increasing their motivation. Teacher's must

take into account the students preferences and opinions in order to satisfy their expectations and needs. Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams (2014) illustrated the importance of adequate pronunciation. They wrote,

I gradually came to see that phonetics had an important bearing on human relations that when people of different nations pronounce each other's languages really well (even if vocabulary & grammar not perfect), it has an astonishing effect of bringing them together, it puts people on terms of equality, a good understanding between them immediately springs up. (p.189)

This viewpoint recognized the importance that pronunciation has in common human interaction and its role as a bridge in communication. It helps to accentuate the need to include practices such as the "Multistage Frame Technique" in common educational Costa Rican settings.

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Annex 1

UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL
SEDE REGIONAL BRUNCA



RESEARCH: Implementation of the Multistage Frame Technique to Enhance Students' Standard American English Vowel Sounds Pronunciation

RESEARCHER: Johanna Quirós Cordero / Elian Acuña Aguilar

Date of administration: _____

Instrumento #1: Cuestionario para estudiantes de décimo nivel

El siguiente cuestionario es parte de una investigación realizada por profesores de inglés de Universidad Nacional, Sede Región Brunca.

Objetivo: Conocer la perspectiva de los estudiantes sobre distintos aspectos relacionados con la pronunciación del inglés durante las clases del idioma.

Instrucciones: Responda las siguientes preguntas de acuerdo con lo solicitado. Los datos brindados serán utilizados únicamente con fines académicos y tendrán total privacidad.

Información personal:

Edad: _____

Género: Femenino:_____ Masculino _____

10. ¿Ha llevado o ha estado en algún tipo de curso de inglés durante su tiempo libre?

___ No

___ Sí *

*Si contesto sí, ¿por cuánto tiempo estuvo asistiendo al curso(s) o ha asistido al curso?

11. ¿Cuál habilidad considera usted que es más importantes y que se debería enseñar en la clase de inglés? (únicamente elija una opción)

___ Comprensión auditiva ___ Lectura ___ Expresión oral

___ Escritura ___ Vocabulario ___ Gramática

___ Pronunciación

12. ¿Cuál habilidad se enseña más durante las clases de inglés en el colegio? (únicamente elija una opción)

- Comprensión auditiva Lectura Expresión oral
 Escritura Vocabulario Gramática
 Pronunciación

13. ¿Qué tan importante considera usted que es pronunciar adecuadamente cuando se habla inglés?

- muy importante no muy importante no es importante

14. ¿Su profesor(a) de inglés explica la pronunciación correcta de distintas palabras durante la clase?

- siempre a veces nunca

15. Marque la opción que complete la frase adecuadamente según su experiencia en clase de inglés. (únicamente elija una opción)

Cuando usted tiene una duda sobre cómo se pronuncia una palabra, su profesor(a) de inglés:

- le solicita que repita la palabra un par de veces después de él/ella.
 únicamente lo pronuncia una vez más y continúa con la lección.
 escribe en la pizarra como se debe pronunciar usando símbolos y se practica un poco.
 ignora su pregunta sobre cómo se pronuncia la palabra y continúa con la lección.

16. Cuando usted tiene dudas con respecto a la pronunciación de alguna palabra, ¿Cómo le gustaría que se le aclarará esa duda?

- Repetición de la palabra varias veces.
 Usando símbolos que le facilite entender desde una perspectiva más visual.
 Explicándole la pronunciación y luego poniendo en práctica la palabra en una actividad.
 Por medio de ejercicios auditivos que le permitan mejorar su capacidad de reconocer y repetir la palabra.

17. ¿Qué actividades considera más adecuadas para aprender pronunciación? Organice sus respuestas de 1 a 3. Siendo número 1 la actividad que usted considera más importante y número 3 la que considera menos importante

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> prácticas (conversaciones/diálogos). | <input type="checkbox"/> orales | <input type="checkbox"/> explicaciones claras sobre como pronunciar ciertas palabras. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> prácticas auditivas. | | <input type="checkbox"/> uso de canciones. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> juegos. | | <input type="checkbox"/> videos que demuestren como pronunciar adecuadamente. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> uso de símbolos y diccionarios. | | <input type="checkbox"/> repeticiones. |

18. ¿Cómo aprende usted mejor?

_____ con una explicación por parte del profesor sobre las reglas y excepciones con base en ejemplos

_____ tratando de formular la regla por usted mismo y excepciones con base en ejemplos con ayuda del docente



Annex 2



UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL
SEDE REGIONAL BRUNCA

RESEARCH: Implementation of the Multistage Frame Technique to Enhance Students' Standard American English Vowel Sounds Pronunciation

RESEARCHERS: Johanna Quirós Cordero / Elian Acuña Aguilar

Date of administration: _____

Instrument #2: Interview for MEP EFL Teachers

The following questionnaire is part of a study being conducted by two professors at Universidad Nacional in the Applied Linguistics area.

Objective: To collect teachers' insights about the different aspects related to the instruction of pronunciation of vowel sounds during the English for communication classes.

Directions: Respond the following questions as elicited. Any information you provide will be used for academic purposes only. Thank you for your cooperation.

Part I: Personal information

Age: _____

Gender: _____ Female _____ Male

Degree: _____

Years of teaching experience: _____

1. Which linguistic skill or subskill do you consider to be more important when teaching? (mark only one option)

_____ Listening _____ Reading _____ Grammar _____ Pronunciation
_____ Speaking _____ Writing _____ Vocabulary

2. Based on you experience, which skill do you emphasize during your classes (mark only one option).

_____ Listening
_____ Speaking
_____ Reading
_____ Writing
_____ Grammar
_____ Vocabulary
_____ Pronunciation

3. Mark the statement that you consider to be the most accurate according to the instruction of pronunciation during your class (mark only one option).

- I teach pronunciation during every single class.
- I only explain pronunciation whenever the students have doubts.
- I only focus on words that I am sure will cause difficulties.
- I rarely focus on pronunciation, I believe students will “pick up” the correct pronunciation as they progress.

4. What is the best way to teach pronunciation?

- Deductively (giving the rule and then the examples)
- Inductively (giving the examples and the students develop the rule)

5. Do you think that teaching pronunciation is difficult?

- Yes
- No

Justify your answer:

6. Why do think that teaching pronunciation can be challenging?

- Teachers are not well trained by MEP on how to deal with this skill.
- Teachers are insecure about their own pronunciation.
- Teachers lack knowledge about basic aspects of the pronunciation of English sounds.
- Teachers consider that they do not have enough tools to teach pronunciation (books, materials, dictionaries, software, videos, and so on.)

7. Does the Technical Education Syllabus for English for Communication include objectives aiming at increasing students’ pronunciation level?

- Yes
- No
- I don’t know

8. Do you believe that the Technical Education Syllabus for English for Communication should include more objectives aimed at increasing students’ pronunciation level?

- Yes
- No

Justify your answer:

9. What three activities do you think would be more successful when attempting to increase students' pronunciation level? Organize the activities from 1 to 3, being 1 the most important and 3 the least important one.

- ____ Oral practices (role-plays/dialogues)
- ____ Listening practices
- ____ Games
- ____ Implementation of IPA and dictionaries
- ____ Explicit explanations about problematic words
- ____ Songs
- ____ Videos that illustrate pronunciation of sounds
- ____ Drills

Teaching Explicit English Pronunciation to Young Learners

M.Sc. Yendry Alvarado Castillo
Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica
yendry.alvarado.castillo@una.cr

M.A. Lena Barrantes Elizondo
Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica
lenna.barrantes.elizondo@una.cr

Resumen

En la enseñanza del inglés como segunda lengua en Costa Rica, la instrucción explícita de la pronunciación en etapas tempranas del sistema educativo sigue siendo controversial. Siempre y cuando no exista una guía oficial que establezca el enfoque que se debe seguir, los profesores seguirán tomando decisiones personales con respecto a este tema. A pesar de que la materia de inglés en primaria se hizo oficial en 1995 (Córdoba, Coto y Ramírez, 2005, p.6), muchas ideas para mejorar su instrucción siguen bajo escrutinio, ya que los resultados lingüísticos al final del programa no son los esperados. Es un hecho que hay muchos retos que rodean un programa de idiomas cualquiera que sea. En el caso particular de educación infantil, Moon (2005) identificó tres grandes argumentos a favor de esto: la hipótesis “entre más joven mejor”, la idea “entre más tiempo mejor”, y finalmente la importancia global de aprender un idioma internacional. Basado en estos hechos es que se genera esta investigación cualitativa, la cual pretende indagar el papel de la instrucción de pronunciación explícita a niños en diez escuelas en Pérez Zeledón. Para obtener información significativa se aplicaron cuestionarios, se recolectaron documentos y se llevaron a cabo observaciones estructuradas. Los profesores de inglés fueron los principales informantes de este estudio. Una vez analizada la información, las investigadoras sugieren un modelo de instrucción explícita para enseñar vocales a estudiantes de primaria el cual incluye principios importantes del enfoque basado en experiencias.

Palabras clave: educación infantil, pronunciación, enfoque deductivo, aprendizaje basado en experiencias, instrucción deductiva

Abstract

In foreign language teaching in Costa Rica, the explicit instruction of pronunciation at an early age remains a controversial issue. As long as there is not an official guideline for primary school English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching that establishes the approach to be used, educators will continue making personal choices regarding this issue. Though EFL teaching started as a basic subject in primary schools in 1995 (Córdoba, Coto and Ramírez, 2005, p.6) a lot of ideas to raise standards are still under scrutiny since results seem not to be the desired ones. It is a fact that there are many challenges in implementing a language program. In this particular setting, Moon (2005) identified three main arguments in favor of instruction at an early age. She pointed out the hypotheses “the younger the better”, the argument that “longer is better”, and the global importance of learning an international language. Based on the

previous facts, this qualitative study aims at introspecting the role of explicit instruction for the teaching of pronunciation to young learners in ten primary schools in Pérez Zeledón. To gather meaningful data, questionnaires, structured observations and artifact collection were some of the instruments used. Language teachers were the main informants in this study. After results were obtained and analyzed, researchers decided to suggest a deductive model to teach vowel sounds pronunciation to primary school learners that follows key principles of the experiential approach.

Keywords: young learners, pronunciation, deductive approach, experiential approach, deductive instruction

1. Introduction

English is a worldwide spoken language, and every day the number of people interested in learning it increases. Costa Rica is not the exception. English as Foreign Language (EFL) learning dates back to the 19th century. It was in 1825 when the Executive Power enforced a law to include it in the curriculum at Casa de Enseñanza (Córdoba, Coto and Ramírez, 2005, p.3). From that time on, the curriculum has been improved many times. It has always searched for making students able to communicate in English as comprehensible as possible. However, some students are not able to establish a fluent conversation using the target language after six years of exposure in primary school and five more years in high school. There are people who blame the school system and the curriculum itself. Other experts identify teachers as the main cause. Indeed, government authorities claim that the main problem regarding this burden is that some educators start teaching without a desired proficiency (Mora, 2011, n.p). Other arguments are directed toward monotonous non-authentic classes.

EFL teachers may pay some attention to pronunciation, but it is necessary to identify to what extent it is approached in class, specifically at the primary school level. Educators in public education are guided by a syllabus that outlines key principles; however, specific frameworks are not decreed. They can make their own choices regarding class instruction as long as they follow the topics, approach and functions.

2. Literature Review

This paper covers an exploration of theoretical contributions about general principles when teaching children, the role of explicit pronunciation instruction and experiential learning.

2.1. Teaching English to Young Learners

Teaching English as well as any other language represents a big challenge and requires not only effort and creativity but also time and dedication. Being a language teacher is not an easy task. There are many factors that determine the way a class needs to be addressed. One of those aspects, and a very important one, is the kind of population taught. Teaching adults

and children imply different processes. Piagetian and Vygotskian theories contribute to understand the world of children and how they function in their surroundings. Piaget viewed the idea of the child as an active learner and thinker, and a sense maker. Children identify intentions and purposes in what people around them do, they tend to make sense of other's behaviors and even language. He saw the child as an active learner alone in the world. They see the opportunities for learning the world gives them.

On his part, Vygotsky identified the child as a social being. He believed that they learn and develop as a consequence of the social context. He constructed the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) concept which helps frame the teaching of foreign languages. The importance of this term is described by Cameron (2001) "the idea that the adult tries to mediate what next it is the child can learn; this his implications in both lesson planning, and in how teachers talk to pupils minute by minute" (p.8). Additionally, routines play a key role in the classroom since they give room to progressive learning or words and sounds. Language improvement takes place when the child takes control over the social encounters with peers and adults. Understanding their world is key to maximizing their opportunities. As Linse (2005) noted "there are many ways to learn about children's development and interests. Observing children both in and out of the classroom is a good way" (p.7); they have favorite games, TV shows and toys that can be taken to the class. Surveying for information is a tool to tailor instruction too.

Brown (2001) established a clear difference among three main groups when teaching a foreign language: children, teenagers and adults. He noted that the former group possesses a spontaneous peripheral attention to forms, has a short attention span, needs to have all five senses stimulated and is focused on the "here and now" (pp.87-90).

The Critical Period Hypothesis holds the argument that older learners can never achieve the same levels of achievement as young ones do. Age has strong effects that according to immersion studies, youngsters who seem to pay more attention to sound and prosody are more attentive to word order. They are generally less able to give prolonged attention (Cameron, 2001, p. 15). That is why the amount and type of exposure play a meaningful role when addressing kids. Meaningful experiences have a deeper impact and leads to stronger retention.

2.2. Reasons for Explicit Pronunciation to Young Learners

Pronunciation is one of the most important features to be taken into account when teaching English to children. This micro-skill involves aspects like fluency, listening comprehension, vowels and consonants, intonation, rhythm, and stress among others. Poor performance means poor fluency. In fact, learners actually avoid words or grammatical structures that they find difficult to pronounce, and teachers are sometimes guilty of misinterpreting these 'gaps' in production as gaps in a learner's knowledge or understanding (Oxford University Press, 2012, pa. 2). It is mandatory to make students familiar with both structures and sounds so that students will always feel comfortable and able to perform any. In this way, students

will not avoid instruction; on the contrary, they will find challenges an opportunity for improvement, and a way to get more goals and achievements.

The instruction of this micro-skill should, then, be tailored to kids' particular needs. There are many relevant ideas related to this issue, one of them is the fact that

Young learners are usually very aware that English feels and sounds different to their mother tongue. This makes this a great age for working on pronunciation, and offers us an opportunity to sow seeds that will produce very tangible benefits. (Oxford University Press, 2012, par. 2)

Based on these premises, educators should not underestimate its role in the primary school class; indeed comprehensible input must be provided at all times. By doing so, young learners will accurately replicate sounds and patterns to become effective communicators. It is a well-known fact that what kids learn in early ages is well learned and kept for long terms.

Poor pronunciation is a problem that can be fixed in time if attention is given to it during the first years of learning. This issue is also linked to listening comprehension problems. As a result, students with bad performance will be facing listening comprehension problems as well. Language teaching must be wise enough to determine students' abilities and needs in order to provide them with practice and the tools to improve it; however,

Teachers will have observed that in some cases students will still get pronunciation wrong even after listening and repeating an item or feature many times. So the first goal is to see if learners can be taught specific items and if they can retain this learning. The second goal is to see if they can then transfer this learning to other items contextualized at the sentence level. At a further stage, one would also want to see if they can also produce them correctly in less-controlled situations... (Couper, 2006, p. 47)

Poor fluency may not be the only outcome. Listening can be a nightmare for students with limited skills, either because they simply do not recognize key sounds or words in their spoken form, or because they have to concentrate so hard when listening so that their brains overload and 'block'. In order to improve listening skills, it is important to improve and practice stress, intonation, vowels and consonants because both skills are interrelated.

As soon as problems with listening are addressed, students are less frustrated when they face exercises or experiences of this type. The main need, of course, is to focus on phonetic elements. Although problems with speaking and listening are a cause of poor pronunciation, other skills can also be affected. At the level of writing, spelling issues are very common which, at the short and long term, affects more complex structures like sentences and paragraphs. As a side effect, reading is affected as well since students can get easily confused. All four skills are closely linked to this micro-skill. All of them are related and linked to each other. A person with poor pronunciation has problems when trying to understand what he or she listens to. Moreover, if a student is asked to read aloud, he or she

will not either understand what is being read, nor be understood by others. It is obvious that learning vocabulary may face the same problems.

Fortunately, there are many different activities that can be done to help students with. If a textbook is used to teach the course and those books have different activities related to phonics, it is important not to skip them. However, there are many other activities that enhance students' performance. There are different tips that teachers can take into account. Some of them are:

Stick to what matters: Sometimes teacher pay too much attention to very simple and meaningless aspects and do not give emphasis to what is really important.

Integrate pronunciation into normal lessons.

Do not leave the teaching of pronunciation to the end of the week or to that moment when there is nothing else to do. Pronunciation must be at first, or a point with big importance and attention in every class.

Insist on accuracy but don't demand perfection. Insisting on good pronunciation is the first way of showing that it matters.

Work on pronunciation and enjoy working on it. But most of all, make sure learners enjoy working with it

Make the teaching of pronunciation fun and enjoyable (Oxford University Press, 2012, pa. 9-10)

Teaching sounds, stress and intonation to young learners might mean a challenge for some teachers. However, it is important to be open to changes and to be willing to focus on students' needs.

It is a fact that young learners, especially the ones attending preschool will not have any personal reason or long-term goals for studying English. They might not care about any specific subject; however, they expect the new and fun when entering a room. Experiential learning promotes not only meaningful experiences but also a reflection on them. Its role in language instruction to kids is not only significant but also urgent.

2.3. Experiential Learning

This approach to teaching is defined as "a key approach to student-centred learning for a sustainable future" (Cox, Calder & Fien, 2010, pa. 1). It is also explained that it involves making opportunities for debriefing and consolidation of ideas and skills through feedback, reflection, and the application of the ideas and skills to new situations (Cox, Calder & Fien, 2010, pa. 2). There is no age limits for this type of instruction. Indeed, based on the argument the sooner the better, implementing it at early stages assures that students develop abilities that will shape their later stages. The EFL classroom should not be the exception for

experiential in-class activities. Language teachers can find practical principles that can be adopted in every class.

Next there is a list of eight key principles for this approach. First, *Intention* represents the goals, objectives, and activities that define the experience. Second, *Preparedness and Planning* outlines the idea that teachers must ensure that they enter the experience with sufficient foundation to support a successful experience. Third, *Authenticity* implies that the experience must have a real world context and/or be useful and meaningful in reference to an applied setting or situation. Fourth, *Reflection* explains that this process is integral to all phases of experiential learning, from identifying intention and choosing the experience, to considering preconceptions and observing how they change as the experience unfolds. Fifth, *Orientation and Training* determine that teachers must be prepared with important background information about each student and about the context and environment in which the experience will operate. Sixth, *Monitoring and Continuous Improvement* states that while reflection provides input for new hypotheses and knowledge based in documented experience, other strategies for observing progress against intentions and objectives should also be in place. Monitoring and continuous improvement represent the formative evaluation tools. Seventh, *Assessment and Evaluation* means to develop and refine the specific learning goals and quality objectives identified during the planning stages of the experience, while evaluation provides comprehensive data about the experiential process as a whole and whether it has met the intentions which suggested it. Finally, *Acknowledgment* claims the recognition of learning and impact occur throughout the experience by way of the reflective and monitoring processes and through reporting, documentation and sharing of accomplishments. (National Society for Experiential Education, 2009, pa. 2-9)

3. Research Procedure

A qualitative case study methodology was adopted for this research because it allowed the process for describing and explaining the phenomena that relate to a specific group, in this particular case EFL public education. The setting was ten different public primary schools in Pérez Zeledón that include EFL into the formal curriculum. Regarding this type of investigation, Creswell stated that in case study “the researchers develops an in-depth analysis of a case” (2014, p.14). In this study, the case is pronunciation instruction to young learners in public elementary schools.

3.1. Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following questions about pronunciation instruction:

- What are the recommendations to the teaching of vowel sounds to young learners provided by the Ministry of Public Education?

- What are teachers' perceptions regarding the use of an explicit instruction for the teaching of pronunciation to young learners?
- What explicit model can be suggested to teach vowel sounds to primary school teachers?

3.2. Context and Curriculum

Public primary schools drive EFL instruction by following a specific syllabus; one for first cycle (1st, 2nd and 3rd grade) and another one for second cycle. Students attend ten lessons per week. The syllabus suggest the use of the Communicative Approach in which classroom activities are recommended to be designed to focus on completing tasks that are mediated through language or involve negotiation of information and information sharing (MEP, 2004, p. 24). Some methodologies are recommended as well. The oral and aural skills are the object of study. Emphasis is given to the two basic linguistic abilities: listening and speaking are the main focus of the curriculum (MEP, 2004, p. 20).

3.3. Data Collection

The participants were ten teachers who answered a questionnaire (see appendix 1). The focus on a small number of participants in a case-study allowed for close analysis. In-class behavior was recorded through non-participant structured observations (see appendix 3) that were made in ten different public primary schools. The syllabus was subject of analysis which provided significant details. Additionally, a textbook used in some of the classes observed was scrutinized.

4. Findings

After a deep analysis of the data gathered, the next findings can be outlined. They are the foundation for the design proposed in the recommendation section.

4.1. Possibilities and issues regarding explicit pronunciation instruction

The MEP syllabus does not limit instruction of pronunciation; however, it does not provide any guideline nor suggests a particular methodology or textbook. The reference it gives to some elements is outlined when delineating how to teach speaking. This document notes that, to promote the development of this skill, teachers must be aware of the following principles: speaking is acquired through listening and practice; supra-segments of intonation, pitch, rhythm are learned by listening to good language models such as native speakers and non-native speakers. (Ministry of Public Education, 2004, p. 21)

No specific section is devoted to help or guide instructors in this endeavor.

Through the observation process, key information was garnered. First, it was shown that teachers did use songs in class. Some of them made use of clapping and tapping too.

The ten informants asked students to listen to different sounds and imitate them. Three of them, indeed, demonstrated the location of articulators. There was no record of the use of charts, and a short percentage presented vowels and consonants explicitly (see figure 2). It can be concluded that there is a tendency to address pronunciation in an indirect way. It was also observed that all teachers used games while a 50% used copies from textbooks. No evidence of the use of tests and dictation was recorded.

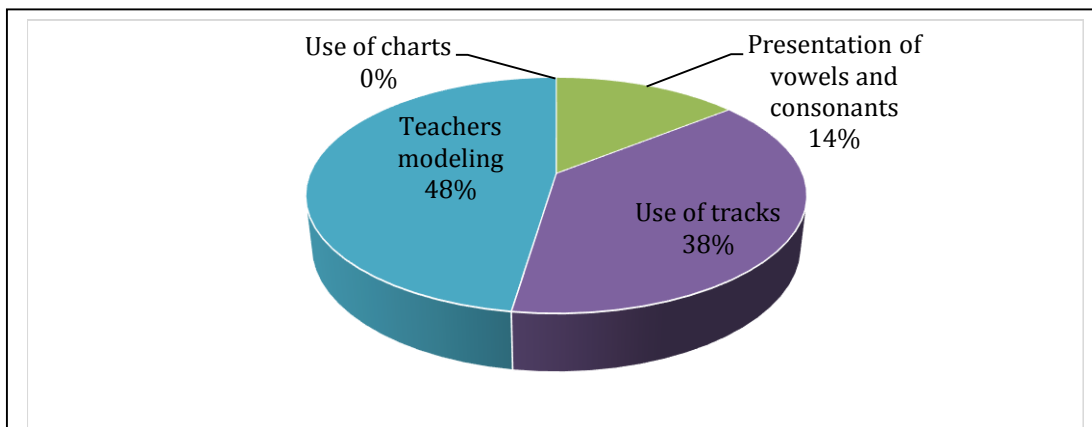


Figure 1. Explicit demonstrations. These data were recorded by using a structured observation scale.

During the observations, the use of a textbook was evinced. After analyzing its content, it was found that it did not provide any section for sounds, stress or intonation. It did not include any exercise or activity to address this micro-skill neither.

Some drills were recorded in the classes observed. The most used were songs, poems and tongue twisters (see figure 3). Chants were never used. The syllabus insists on the use of songs. Under the class procedures suggested, it can be identified “Identify basic vocabulary by playing games and singing songs. Participate in oral tasks like poems, riddles, songs and games. Listen to songs, dialogues, or descriptions in order to fulfill a task” (pp.43-47). Also, one specific linguistic objective listed is “Pronouncing correctly (songs, poems, and riddles) familiar language.” (p. 62). Finally, one didactic tip recommended is “Expose student to different charts, grids and resources such as: big books with stories with sequencing pictures, thematic, pneumonic and semantic pictures, poems, riddles, musical games, songs, puppets shows and fairy tales” (p.74). However, none of these are recommendations are directed toward pronunciation instruction but to listening and speaking. There is not a section devoted to this micro-skill in the document. What is important though is that these resources are not restricted.

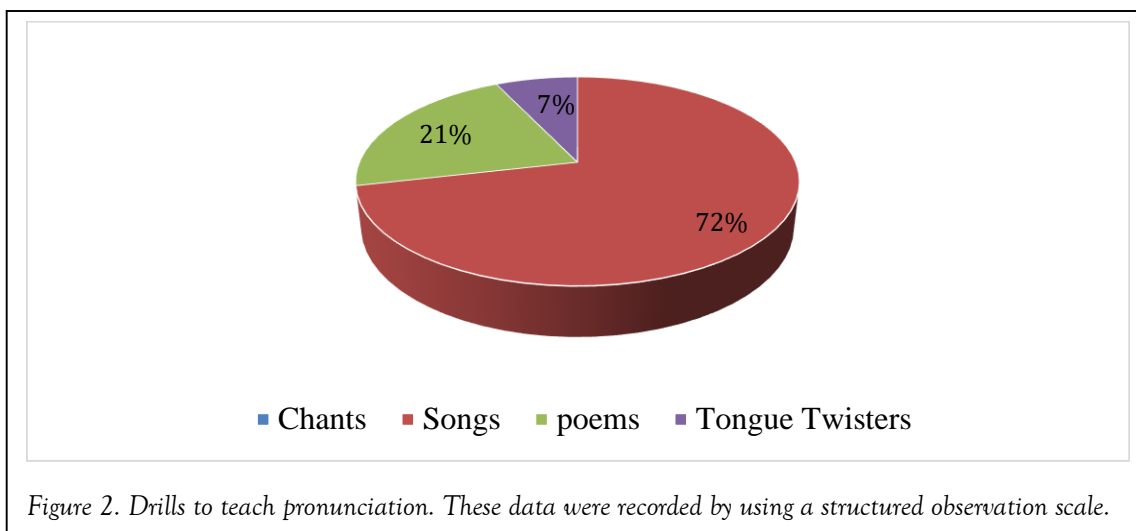


Figure 2. Drills to teach pronunciation. These data were recorded by using a structured observation scale.

Throughout the official syllabus there is no guideline, lineament or limitation regarding pronunciation; however, there is a persistent urge for contextualizing input provided. After introspecting some current practices and possibilities, it was necessary to consider teachers’ perspectives. They are the builders and rulers of learning opportunities. Their daily practice in the primary school classrooms give them the strongest arguments to state what can be achieved, what is required, and what needs to be changed, improved and avoid.

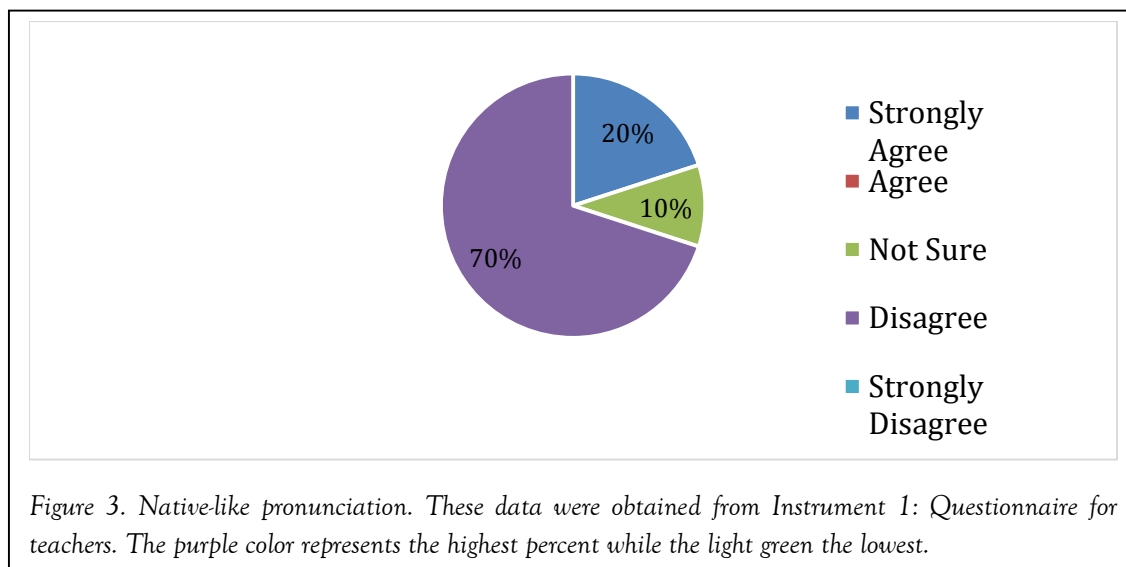
4.2. Teachers’ perceptions

Section 4 in the questionnaire intended to obtain perceptions regarding teachers’ own practices. Most of them mentioned that they do not teach pronunciation explicitly. One of them stated that explicit instruction favors learning since “you can guide the student and not just work informally”. Another informant wrote that both explicit and implicit approaches are equally necessary. None of them used a textbook as reference for pronunciation exercises and activities. These informants questioned did not seem to underestimate their learners’ capacities. They all believed their students are prepared to receive direct explanations. Also, they assured that it is not difficult for kids to get and produce sounds. These informants gave some practical recommendations for successful instruction; they urged the use of technological devices, the use of audios other than the teacher’s voice, training sessions and separate classes.

Language instructors have different opinions about what is required to address sounds. Regarding the role of the target language, a really high percentage disagreed that teachers must have a native-like linguistic level (see figure 3). They do not consider having an accent or a not so high linguistic performance a limitation to instruct.

In addition, 60% agreed that a multimedia laboratory is required. All informants agreed with the argument that teachers need to know specific language theories about methodologies to be able to address phonetic elements in class. However, 60% disagreed

with the idea that it is necessary to attend workshops to be trained on the subject. When questioned about the role of textbook use, 90% agreed that it is necessary. This was an interesting finding since MEP primary school teachers do not have a suggested textbook; indeed, in many cases they are not even allowed. A high percentage believed that pronunciation could be taught in separate classes instead of incorporating this micro-skill to the current curriculum. All informants think that monitoring and correction should be exhaustive. This finding reveals that they are aware of the positive effect of feedback which gives room to experiential learning. Time was also a factor that they remarked. In fact, they stated that they do need more time.



There is no doubt that primary school language teachers face tremendous challenges. Their work is limited when it comes to understanding that the lack of resources is a reality, and that training on updated methodologies is not as accessible as it is desired. Fortunately, nowadays they have more and better opportunities than ever to get material and resources. They are living in a digital era that provides access to conversation exchange websites, authentic and didactic videos of all topics, interactive webpages and many more. Textbooks are no longer the only resource.

5. Conclusions

This paper establishes that deeper analysis should be done. Conducting a more exhaustive observation process and recording an inventory of materials can help explore more factors surrounding the topic studied. The main conclusions from this case study are: most teachers agreed on the fact that it is not necessary to have a native-like language proficiency to be able to teach pronunciation and that having a multimedia laboratory can boost learning. They also stated that training on theories and methodologies may contribute as well. According to the teachers, having separate pronunciation-only classes seems to be a need too. It was evinced that explicit instruction is not taught; however, they stated that their students are

prepared to learn some phonetic elements in this way and that it is not difficult for young learners to get and produce sounds properly.

Based on these conclusions and the findings, the next model is proposed to addressing pronunciation explicitly. This model proposed incorporates explicit and implicit instruction. The former for first, second and third graders while the latter for fourth, fifth and sixth graders. Vowel sounds and prosodic elements are included as well as eight principles of experiential learning. To visualize each experiential principle, the next color code identifies them in the chart.

1. Intention
2. Preparedness and planning
3. Authenticity
4. Reflection
5. Orientation and training
6. Monitoring and continuous improvement
7. Assessment and evaluation
8. Acknowledgment

The next chart organizes the vowels to be taught, the level of instruction, the period of the school year to teach each sound and element, and some suggested classroom activities.

				Suggested activities
1ST CYCLE	INDUCTIVE INSTRUCTION			
First grade	Vowels	I Period	a (æ, a:, ai, aʊ, ɒ)	-Memory games -Chants-songs
		II Period	e (ɛ, ei, ɛ)	-Drills
		III Period	i (ɪ,i:)	-Non-authentic videos -Domino
Second grade	Consonants	I Period	o (ɔ:, ɔɪ)	-Tongue twisters
		II Period	o (oʊ)	-Listening and imitating -Using a mirror
		III Period	u (ʊ, u:, ju:)	-Reflection activities -Formative testing games
Third grade	Prosodic elements	I Period	Stress	-Reporting experiences
		II Period	Blending	
		III Period	Intonation	

2ND CYCLE	DEDUCTIVE INSTRUCTION			Suggested activities
Fourth grade	Vowels	I Period	a (æ, ɑ:, aɪ, aʊ, ɒ)	-Listening and imitating -Using a mirror -Demonstration of location of articulators
		II Period	e (ɛ, eɪ, ʌ)	-Presentation of symbols -Games and competitions -Dictation
		III Period	i (ɪ, i:)	-Drills -Formative Testing Exercises -Reflection activities -Reporting experiences
Fifth grade	Consonants	I Period	o (ɔ:, ɒ)	-Listening and imitating -Using a mirror -Demonstration of location of articulators
		II Period	o (oʊ)	-Presentation of symbols -Dictation -Drills -Games and competitions
		III Period	u (ʊ, u:, ju:)	-Formative Testing Exercises -Reflection activities -Reporting experiences
Sixth grade	Prosodic elements	I Period	Stress	-Tapping -Clapping -Dictation
		II Period	Blending	-Listening and imitating -Drills -Games and competitions -Authentic video analysis
		III Period	Intonation	-Formative Testing Exercises -Reflection activities -Reporting experiences

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Appendix 1: Questionnaire for teachers

RESEARCH TOPIC: AN EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION FRAMEWORK FOR THE TEACHING ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION TO YOUNG LEARNERS 2015

QUESTIONNAIRE 1

DEAR TEACHER

Researchers:
M.SC. YENDRY ALVARADO
M:A. LENA BARRANTES

This questionnaire aims at collecting your insights about the role of pronunciation instruction to young learners. The information you give will be used for academic purposes only.

SECTION 1: Complete the next chart with your background information.

INSTITUTION	GRADES YOU CURRENTLY TEACH	GRADES YOU HAVE TAUGHT	YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE

SECTION 2: This section contains a number of statements with which some people agree and others disagree. Please rate how much you personally agree or disagree with these statements-how much they reflect how you feel or think personally. For each statement, check in the right margin the box corresponding to the degree of your agreement or disagreement. Note, there is not right or wrong answer. All that is important is that you indicate your personal feeling.

To teach pronunciation...	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. teachers must have native-like language proficiency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. teachers need a language laboratory	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. teachers need to know specific language theories about methodologies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. teachers need to attend workshops to be trained on the subject	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. students must have a good textbook	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. students need separate pronunciation-only classes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. teachers need more time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. teachers monitoring and correction must be exhaustive.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SECTION 3: Answer the next questions. Provide as much information as you can.

1. What is the difference between a deductive and an inductive approach to teach pronunciation?

2. Which approach (explicit/implicit) favors successful learning of pronunciation in young learners?



3. What guidelines or recommendations does the Ministry of Education provide for the teaching of English pronunciation in Costa Rican elementary schools?

4. What recommendation would you give to the Ministry of Education regarding the instruction of pronunciation to young learners?

5. How good is your presentation?

 Native-like  Really good  Good  Not really good

SECTION 4: Based on your current practices and opinions check YES or NO.

	YES	NO
1. Do you teach pronunciation explicitly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Do you use a particular textbook to teach pronunciation? (for reference or for classroom activities)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Are your students prepared to learn pronunciation explicitly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. When learning English accuracy is more important than meaning?	<input type="checkbox"/> 	<input type="checkbox"/> 



Appendix 2: Observation Scale

RESEARCH TOPIC: AN EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION FRAMEWORK FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION TO YOUNG LEARNERS 2015

OBSERVATION SCALE OBSERVATION OBJECTIVE:

To gather information about classroom behavior regarding the teaching of English pronunciation to young learners.

Researchers:
 M.SC. YENDRY ALVARADO
 M:A. LENA BARRANTES

DATE: _____ NUMBER LESSONS OBSERVED: _____ GRADE: _____
 SCHOOL: _____ NUMBER OF STUDENTS OBSERVED: _____

Observed Behaviors	Tally record		OBSERVER'S NOTES These notes should include duration, material used,
	Choral	Individual	
Drills	Chants		
	Songs		
	Poems		
	Tongue-twisters		
Marking stress	Clapping		
	Tappings		
	Dots		
	Underlining		
	Clicking		

Articulation of sounds	Listen and imitate			
	Use of mirror			
	Demonstration of location of parts (tongue, mouth, teeth)			
Explicit demonstrations	Use of phonemic charts			
	Presentation of symbols			
	Presentation of vowels and consonants			
	Use of tracks (authentic-nonauthentic)			
	Teacher's modeling			
Teaching activities	Dictations			
	Games			
	Textbook			
	Tests			

What it Takes to Be a First-Year Student: An Ethnographic Study at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension

Lena Barrantes Elizondo
Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica
lenna.barrantes.elizondo@una.cr

Resumen

Esta investigación se enmarca dentro del enfoque cualitativo y el diseño etnográfico. Se reporta la descripción de una etnografía realizada en Universidad Nacional, Sede Regional Brunca con un grupo de estudiantes de primer ingreso en la carrera Diplomado en Inglés. Diferentes instrumentos para recolectar datos fueron utilizados para poder identificar y obtener información relevante sobre las experiencias de los informantes. Los métodos de recolección de datos interactivos fueron: una entrevista a tres profesores y dos entrevistas estructuradas con estudiantes. Tres cuestionarios fueron aplicados; uno de ellos al director académico, otro a estudiantes matriculados y otro a estudiantes egresados. Los instrumentos no interactivos usados fueron: diez observaciones participativas y ocho no-participativas. Algunos artefactos (documentos) fueron recolectados, entre ellos la malla curricular, registro de notas, registro de asistencia, material didáctico, anuncios de periódicos y documentación sobre el uso del laboratorio. Algunas fotografías sirvieron también como instrumento de análisis. Los resultados revelaron que los estudiantes matriculados demostraron estar altamente motivados para aprender inglés a pesar de las muchas demandas y retos que enfrentan. El ser parte de un programa efectivo también fortalece la actitud positiva. También se identificó la clase multi-nivel. El haber estudiantes con diferentes niveles lingüístico hizo que el trabajo de clase fuera un reto; algunos era más rápidos que otros. Además, las técnicas para corregir a los estudiantes utilizadas por los profesores promovieron un ambiente cálido para los aprendientes. Finalmente, esta etnografía pone en evidencia un fenómeno en particular: estudiantes altamente orientados a invertir en el aprendizaje de un idioma, motivados por un programa efectivo.

Palabras clave: etnografía, motivación, clase multi-nivel, inversión en aprendizaje, corrección, niveles lingüísticos

Abstract

This research follows a qualitative approach and an ethnographic design. This document reports a description of an ethnography carried out at Universidad Nacional, Brunca extension with a group of first-year students from the Associate's Program in English. Different data instruments were used throughout this research in order to identify and accumulate relevant information about their experiences. The interactive methods were a key-informant interview carried out to three professors, two unstructured interviews in which participants shared meaningful insights. Three written questionnaires were administered to the head of the English Department, current and former students. Some non-interactive methods were also used, ten participant observation reports and eight nonparticipant observation reports. Artifacts were also collected. Some of them were the curricular guide,

grades' records, attendance list, teaching aides, newspaper ads and the access and use of the language laboratory. Visual recording through photographs is another data collection instrument used in this ethnography. Findings revealed that the students shown to be motivated to learn the language in spite of the many demanding tasks and challenges faced. An effective curriculum also reinforces participants' positive attitude toward their learning process. A heterogeneous multilevel class was identified. Different proficiency levels made of class work a challenge for some participants while others were able to easily follow the flow of language instruction. Also, teachers' technique for error correction promoted a nonthreatening class environment. Finally, this ethnography evinces one main phenomenon: *highly goal-oriented students toward language learning investment motivated by an effective program offered.*

Keywords: ethnography, motivation, multilevel class, learning investment, cultural capital, error correction, proficiency levels

1. Introduction

Even though English is not the most spoken language in the world, its influence on business, education, economy and entertainment is paramount. It is not about how many people speak it; rather it is about what it is used for. Its importance in Costa Rica has emerged slowly over the years, but currently it is clearly manifested in different regions. English has become a necessity in the economic area since job opportunities are demanding this language as a key requirement. Consequently, education has shown concern and hence different possibilities to study it effectively are now available. That is the case of Universidad Nacional, Brunca extension that is offering a two-year Associate's Program in English. This program provides the community with an accessible opportunity to learn this language successfully. Learners take daily classes on writing, reading, oral skills, culture and pronunciation, which enables them to become effective communicators. Due to its influence on the students, and the community, this ethnography intended to reveal what it takes to be part of the program. The phenomenon identified in this ethnography encompasses the following categories: the benefits of an effective curriculum, motivation, language learning investment, and characteristics of teaching adults.

2. Literature Review

Some theoretical derivations that throw light into the complexity of being an EFL learner is explored in this section. The different contributions explore the role of an effective curriculum, motivation, learning investment and teaching adults.

2.1. An Effective Curriculum

Providing effective course curricula in a major constitutes the building blocks of a successful institution. When designing and implementing a language program many factors come into play. Richards (2001) revealed many of the implications. He listed institutional, teacher,

teaching and learner factors (p.198). He refers to the importance of organizing courses and contents effectively as well as the considerations developers should have. He said:

A school's organizational culture is revealed in the way the following questions answered: What are the school's goals and mission? What is the school's management style? How are courses and curriculum planned? How receptive is the school to change and innovation? (pp.198-199)

The first question is addressed to clarify the institution's educational purpose and vision. According to the institution's website, some of Universidad Nacional, Brunca extension's goals are to be a pioneer campus by educating excellent professionals and to generate strategic projects to reinforce the region's development by considering the needs of the community. By using these goals as reference, it can be interpreted that the institution under research seeks to have an effective curriculum. Richards (2001) also mentioned the importance of establishing a harmonious curriculum design. He stated,

A sound curriculum is reflected in the following features of a school's programs: the range of courses offered corresponds to the needs of learners. The curriculum is coherent: The courses represent a rationale approach to achieving the school's mission. Courses have been developed based on sound educational principles with due attention to recognized curriculum development processes. Course descriptions, including aims, goals, syllabuses, and course organization, have been developed (p.204).

Many are the people impacted when a curriculum is effectively designed and implemented. Language learners are clearly benefited since the final outcome, effective learning, will bring them personal and professional satisfaction. Language instructors can benefit also by receiving job opportunities and participating in profession development. Institutions committed to providing high- quality education invest in prestige.

2.2. Motivation

Learning a second or foreign language is a demanding task. Not every person can succeed in communicating in a different language due to aptitude and attitude factors. Language learners need to be goal-oriented and motivated to achieve the final outcome that is communicating. Motivation is defined by Brown (2000) as "the extent to which you make choices about (a) goals to pursue and (b) the effort you will devote to that pursuit" (p.72). Students' attitude toward the learning of English plays a determining role. It is not only to set a goal, but to pursue this goal. Motivation can be classified in different ways depending on the agents involved. For instance, it can be divided into extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, as well as instrumental and integrative.

Intrinsic motivation implies a desire that comes from the inside of the learner, it has internal factors that make language learning be purposeful. This idea is reinforced by Brown (2000) when he affirmed, "Intrinsically motivated behaviors are aimed at bringing about certain internally rewarding consequences, namely, feelings of competence and self-

determination” (p. 76). On the contrary, in extrinsic motivation, teachers play a significant role since learners get this kind of motivation from external factors like the teacher, institution, parents or workplace. In this case, students expect a reward from these external agents like money, encouraging phrases, good grades and prizes. Intrinsically motivated language learners tend to be more successful because they do not depend on others to achieve competence.

Instrumental motivation can also be defined as a “desire to learn a language in order to attain certain career, educational, or financial goals” (Brown, 2000, p.75). This type of motivation leads to a utilitarian use of the language learned to achieve a higher social status, to pursue a degree or to get a job. Integrative motivation contrasts since it is directed toward learners who feel identified with the people who speak the language as well as with the target culture. Brown (2000) described it as a “desire to learn a language stemming from a positive affect toward a community of its speakers” (p.75). Whatever the perspective motivation is analyzed, it certainly has a keynote role when learning a foreign language since it drives students’ path toward success.

2.3. English Learning Investment

Language learners’ desires and expectations cannot be overgeneralized since groups differ from context to context. Discrete socially constructed needs in individuals, institutions, and communities contribute to an array of goals and demands when learning to speak a foreign language. Society’s needs may direct learners toward a specific direction. This issue leads researchers, curriculum developers and trainers to consider what is behind students’ motivation. Borton (1995) enlightened this topic by identifying two interlocked concepts: cultural capital and investment. Bourdieu and Passeron explained cultural capital as “the knowledge and modes of thought that characterize different classes and groups in relation to specific sets of social forms” (cited by Norton, p.17). Borton (1995) added to this concept that “if learners invest in a second language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital” (p.17). Investment is, in other words, the purchase of learning that will be used in the future to generate academic income. It is also important to take a glimpse into the difference made between investment and instrumental motivation as described below:

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 (Norton, 1995, p.17). Understanding this difference may guide language instructors to better classroom practices and target them to short and long-term goals. Addressing students’ expectations must go

hand in hand with understanding that age is a key factor that should drive instruction. There are significant differences when teaching kids, teenagers and adults.

2.4. Teaching Adults

Differences are found in personalities, likes, concerns, goals and abilities among children, teenagers and adult learners. Identifying variables when teaching adults gives language instructors a clearer view of what to expect from students and how to direct classroom performance. Brown (2000) listed suggestions and caveats:

Adults are more able to handle abstract rules and concepts. Adults have longer attention spans for material that may not be intrinsically interesting to them. Adults often bring a modicum of general self-confidence (global self-esteem) into a classroom; the fragility of egos may therefore not be quite as critical as those of children. Adults, with their more developed abstract thinking ability, are better able to understand a context-reduced segment of language. (pp. 90-91)

Adult language learners are goal oriented, they learn the language because they have established purposes. Many are directed toward improving their life status considering educational and financial issues. Hence, the difficulties they face are also particular. Celce-Murcia (2001) envisioned this perspective by stating,

For many adult students, economic upward mobility will be achieved, if not by them, by future generations. If they learn enough English to survive, their children and grandchildren will most likely to be able to take advantage of the upward mobility education can bring. (p. 396)

On her part, Turula (2002) examined the sense of direction adults learner need to have in the classroom; she said, “Adult learners need to know-and it is the task of the teacher to tell them- how particular activities and exercises help them achieve their overall learning aims and, therefore, why they need to do them” (p.32). Adult learners can handle abstract concepts and rules better than young ones due to their cognitive abilities. They are critical thinkers who demand concrete explanations on a topic or language structure. However, language aptitude is a factor people are not born with. Hence, teachers cannot take for granted that adult students can learn better. Scrivener (2005) stated “It is hard to know how best to work with individuals if you know nothing at all about them (p. 66)”. Teaching adults

is challenging and involves a combination of mutual understanding, teaching awareness and teachers' involvement.

3. Research Methodology and Data Analysis

This study follows a non-manipulative, naturalistic ethnography design and a descriptive scope. The main purpose of this study is to generate complete descriptions of events, interactions and activities that lead into the development of categories that allow interpretation of the beliefs of the participants so that a complete description of the educational settings and context is put in evidence. This ethnography involved the use of different data collection instruments. LeCompte and Preissle (2003) categorized data collection instruments into two main methods, interactive and non-interactive by mentioning Peltó and Peltó's contribution on the topic. They stated,

The former (interactive) are methods for collecting data involving interaction between researcher and participant; as a result, they may produce reactions from participants affecting the data collected. Unobtrusive and other less reactive techniques (Webb, Campbell, Schwartz, & Sechrest), which necessitate little or no interaction between investigator and participant, comprise the second category (noninteractive). (p.159)

Data, in this ethnography, were collected using both methods. An interactive instrument used was a key-informant interview carried out to three professors of the program whose information was valuable. Also, two unstructured interviews in which participants shared some insights are part of these instruments. Three written questionnaires were administered to the head of the English Department, current and former students.

Some non-interactive methods were implemented during the development of this research. For example, ten participant observation reports and eight nonparticipant observation reports took place for around three months. Finally, visual recording through photographs was another data collection instrument that helped illustrate some of the in-classroom and outside the classroom behavior. Artifact collection constitutes the gathering of physical elements surrounding the population. Artifacts are a salient element in any ethnography since they provide data that describe the group under study. The list of artifacts in educational research is extensive, as LeCompte and Preissle (2003) suggested, some resources are:

text-books, teacher-made games and teaching aides, curricular guides, memos, enrollment records, minutes of meetings, student personnel records, student and teacher handbooks, student classroom products, lesson plans and other teacher files, correspondence, government documents, and such researcher-stimulated materials as teacher diaries, logs...(p.216)

They also categorized them in two different types; artifacts obtained from archives or data banks and artifacts obtained by following physical trace. For this research the former category will be labeled as type 1 while the latter will be type 2. Type 1 artifacts gathered for this research were: registration statistics (provided by the registration office), the curricular guide, grades records, attendance record, teaching aides (encouragement phrases), and newspaper ads. The type 2 artifact included describes the access and use of the language laboratory.

3.1. The Setting

Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension is located in San Isidro de El General, the main district of Pérez Zeledón county. It is in the southern region of Costa Rica. This is one of the three branches of UNA, and it was founded in 1976. It also has a smaller campus (Sede Coto) in Ciudad Neilly. The majors offered are English Teaching, Computer Engineering, Business Administration, International Commerce and Science Teaching. A small forest that provides a quiet environment surrounds UNASRB. There are departments and groups on campus that provide essential everyday services that enhance the learning environment. It has 15 classrooms and large corridors. All rooms in hall A are equipped with a projector. There is an auditorium, a gym, a soccer field, two computer labs, a language lab and a library. The library has two group-study rooms equipped with a TV set, projector, comfortable seats, a large table and a small whiteboard. There are strict regulations for their use. There is also an individual study room with a ten-person capacity. It has a twenty-person capacity computer lab. Students have access to wireless Internet service all around the campus. Regarding dining services, there is one cafeteria and a lunchroom for those who bring their own food.

3.2. The Participants

First-year students of the Associate's Program in English are the participants of this ethnography. They were observed during their Integrated English 1 course. Two professors teach this course, one for reading, speaking and listening from 5:00 p.m. to 6:40 p.m.; and the other one teaches grammar and writing from 7:00 p.m. to 8:40 p.m. Class schedule was Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 5:00 p.m. to 8:40 p.m. Listening and speaking classes were held in the language laboratory while grammar and writing were held in room A01. Students were suggested to take all the courses of their program (Pronunciation, Oral Communication 1 and Spanish Writing); however, not all of them took the courses. There are 32 people in this group. There is no reference of any student with a special accommodation; however, there are some who wear glasses and sit in the front rows.

All of them are Costa Rican. Their ages range from 17 to 42. It is a young population since the majority of are under 21. There are 21 women and 11 men. Fourteen of them live near the campus while the rest come from remote rural areas so they stay in a relative's house or rent an apartment near campus. Most of them are full-time students although some work as secretaries and others as babysitters. Few of them have some English background since they studied in institutes and language schools before enrolling in the major. Students tend to sit around the same people, which is an evidence of certain group preferences. Most of the students decided to register in UNASRB because it is a public institution, and it implies

prestige and excellence; few considered it because of its low cost and location. Furthermore, two of them are registered in Universidad Estatal a Distancia (UNDE), one is enrolled in Business Administration and the other one in Tourism. There is one girl who has postponed her major in Chemical Engineering at Universidad de Costa Rica because she is currently taking care of her newborn. The professors in charge of this course are two young female assistant professors at UNASRB. Both have also a tenure position in a public elementary school. They both have a master's degree in Second Languages and Culture from Universidad Nacional.

3.3. Description of Access and Entry Process

The ethnographer implemented some strategies to shorten the distance between her and the research participants. Some strategies selected were: to talk to students in Spanish outside the classroom, to sit next to them during classes, to participate in classroom activities, to arrive minutes before the class starts and to greet and call them by their names when she ran into them in the institution.

The ethnographer approached some of them and asked them personal questions to gain their confidence. They shared their academic concerns mainly. Nonetheless, it was an excellent opportunity to get to know participants more. Another strategy was to sit next to some students during classes. It was effective since all of them felt confident enough and asked questions. Participating in some class activities was also a strategy selected. The ethnographer also arrived minutes before the class started. Finally, greeting and calling by their names was really effective. Students immediately smiled and greeted back to her. There was still certain distance between one specific group of participants who were really difficult to access. They sat in the back of the room.

3.4. Data Analysis

The first step to follow was to read all the information gathered from the observations, interviews and artifacts to establish a broad outline of the phenomenon. All elements were put together to bring consciousness and judicious findings. Once, this step was taken LeCompte and Preissle's conceptual techniques "theorizing, sequential selection strategies, and general analytic procedures" (2003, p.238) were considered. First, it was necessary to establish the tasks of theorizing. "...perceiving, comparing, contrasting, aggregating, ordering, establishing linkages and relationships, and speculating" (p.240) were the pace to follow. While perceiving, the researcher chose and defined some of the units of study. They are also called the emerging patters; those patters were next compared and contrasted. A step forward was taken to establish linkages among those patterns. However, no statistical manipulation was done. Some inferences about the participants behaviors were also made during the last step, speculating.

Sequential selection strategies took place when the participants, the events recorded in the photographs and observation reports were examined. This technique was followed to facilitate the finding of more emergent constructs. One of the first emergent patterns found

was motivation, shown by the participants' early arrival to classes and a high attendance record. This led to the idea of designing an instrument in which students could share the reason why they behaved that way, and hence guide the ethnographer toward the discovery of the phenomenon.

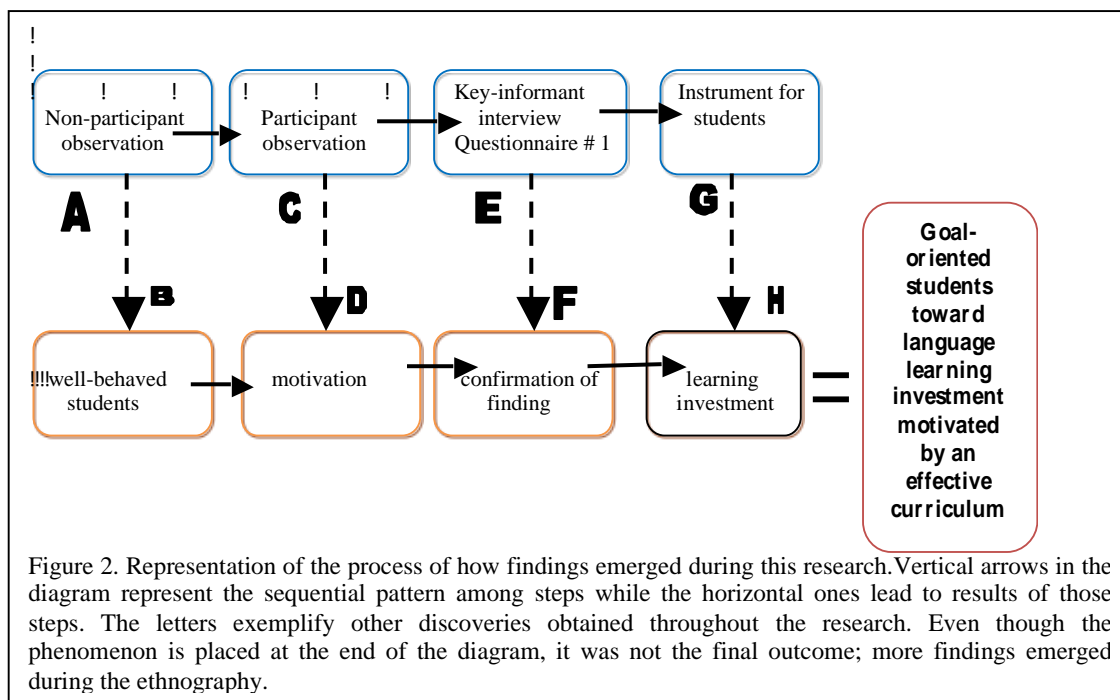
Once the participants' insights were obtained, the last conceptual technique was considered, *general analytical procedure*. Here, analytic induction took place. It "involves scanning the data for categories of phenomena and for relationships among such categories (LeCompte and Preissle, 2003, p. 254). More categories were scanned, and more findings were noticed; for instance, motivation was narrowed to instrumental. In order to validate the initial and final impressions triangulation was used. Triangulation helped the ethnographer to assure the accuracy of data and findings gathered. The findings were shared with the professors and students who agreed on them.

4. Findings

Findings in this ethnography emerged through the data gathering and analysis processes. Observation reports revealed valuable information that guided the researcher so that other instruments were used. Six participant and ten non-participant observations took two months and they covered two different classes from the same course (Integrated English 1). The ethnographer planned to observe only the speaking, listening and reading classes; however, as units of study were emerging, she decided to expand the scope of research and start observing the other class. Professors were always willing to facilitate the group. During the first non-participant observations, the ethnographer identified well behavior in class. They always paid attention to the instructions and explanations. During the participant observations, the researcher could notice that participants continued to be motivated due to their active in-class performance. All students brought the book to classes and they used it when requested. All of them had a brand new book and followed classroom work as assigned by the instructors. Motivation was then the first category identified. This finding directed the ethnographer to start researching the cause of this motivation. Hence, she used some other instruments with the informants. Later, professors agreed on the findings obtained in a key-informant interview, and students confirmed this information as well. The researcher decided to apply one more instrument that could lead to an explicit reason of their motivation to establish the phenomenon. This instrument consisted of presenting learners incomplete sentences for then to provide spontaneous answers. Their responses lead to the phenomenon, *goal-oriented students toward language learning investment motivated by an effective program offered by UNASRB*.

Learners proved to have a long-term goal for their future; this goal is to speak English to have better job opportunities once they are immersed in the job market. Participants were conscious about their country's economical needs, so they were currently purchasing and investing in learning that they will use to generate academic income. The following diagram is a representation of the process of how findings emerged in this ethnography.

This phenomenon can be justified by two main reasons also found during this research. First, as it was previously mentioned Costa Rica's economy is demanding an English speaking population, and it can be exemplified by some classified ads in everyday newspapers. Young adults can clearly see the impact English has on the job market. This need to learn to speak a foreign language forces them to look for institutions that can successfully train them. Universidad Nacional, Brunca extension is one of those places in the southern region that are offering an effective program. This conclusion was drawn from comments and responses in questionnaire one as well as by analyzing the curricular guide, which shows to be really demanding. Students shared that they trust the university because of comments they have heard and because of their own learning experiences. Learners also trust professors; they even consider them good professionals with a lot of experience. Offering a demanding schedule and courses motivated them to believe in the system. The complete courses take only two years, but the schedule is challenging since participants have to attend classes everyday. A registration statistics provided by this campus revealed that during 2009, 273 people were interested in studying English; nevertheless, there was space only for 32. This same information shows that people prefer this program over the English Teaching Major which has been one of the institutions' strengths.



Discoveries were illustrated in figure 2 with upper case letters, and they include particular behaviors from the participants and also some administrative elements that had a direct influence over the institution, students, professors and the teaching/learning process. Some constant behavioral patterns were identified. One of them was that learners almost always worked in pairs. Seating arrangement was set up in a way they did not work alone or in groups. In room A01, desks were arranged in pairs and in the language laboratory booths were paired up. Students showed preferences regarding the way they set up their desks.

Another constant behavior was that they were always in time. They usually arrive five or ten minutes before classes started, and some of them even stayed in the room during the break.

One important finding was the participants' high attendance record since it evidenced their motivation and responsibility for their learning. As it was demonstrated through the record provided by one of the professors, students did not miss classes regularly. The other professor confirmed this finding, and she added that when some of them have missed a class they present the corresponding formal justification.

Professors also provided information for analysis. For instance, it was found that they have certain teaching techniques that aid learning. Both teachers walk around the class while classwork. This technique minimizes the interaction gap between students and teacher. Also, they can assist and monitor learners' performance, so they get individual attention and feedback. Another technique found was the use of quotations with visual aids to start the class. These quotations were followed by a brainstorm and apprentices had the chance to use the target language to express their ideas and opinions. In addition, professors provided a lot of input, it was noticed that classes were spoken in English only at all times. There is no use of the mother tongue; in fact, instructors reinforced the "only English" rule. During some observations, a professor insisted not to talk to her in Spanish. Gentle correction was also found during the observations. Students were not threatened with rude correction, instead professors showed them that incorrectness occurred, but without making a big fuss. Even respect among participants took place since they did not laugh at each other. Language instructors seem to be sure of the methods needed to achieve a well-managed class. The researcher also found that learners enrolled in this English program have a demanding weekly routine since they have a full schedule from Monday to Friday. They start at 5:00 p.m. and finish at 8:40 p.m. and on Tuesdays they start at 3:00 p.m. Participants make sacrifices to get to university everyday. Testimonies were recorded in the interviews. Some of the informants work and study at the same time which turns this experience into a real challenge.

Another interesting finding is related to the access and use of the language laboratory. This institution has two language laboratories; however, only one is fully equipped. Even though there are many other groups using this laboratory, students took full advantage of it. In fact, the speaking, listening and reading class from the Integrated English 1 course was given in this room throughout its schedule (Monday, Wednesday and Thursday from 5:00 p.m. to 6:40 p.m.). The Oral Communication and Listening Comprehension 1 course was taught in this same room once a week as well as their pronunciation course on Tuesdays. It means that they used the language laboratory five days a week. One more discovery revealed that this group is a multilevel class and this issue was discovered by analyzing participation in class and some of their grades. Participation was gathered in the observations and the grades' record was provided by one of the professors. It was observed that some students were able to answer exercises or questions by providing a complete sentence in English while other participants were not even able to answer, so they used their mother tongue. Grades also revealed this gap since there were learners who constantly scored low grades (they range from 19 to 69) in contrast with others who achieved higher scores regularly (those grades range from 80 to 100). Finally, this gap is also exemplified in classroom participation in view of the

fact that not all students answered oral questions asked by the professors. Usually, the same apprentices were the ones who dare to give their opinions or answers of an exercise.:

Photoethnography

This section reinforces some of the main findings. Photographs one, two and five were taken by the ethnographer in the real classroom setting while pictures three and four were taken by the collaborative professor. The first picture exemplifies two particular and recurrent behaviors in this group. One is that students always took the same seats with the same peers.

The other behavior is that students were always working quietly and attentively. As it is clearly seen they were solving the exercises assigned. They all had their own material and followed the teacher's instructions and class exercises.

Students were waiting outside the room for the class to start (see photograph 2). Two different groups who were waiting outside and near room A001 are observed. They usually were from 10 to 15 minutes before the class started. This behavior showed their concern about punctuality. Learners always got in the language laboratory at 4: 55 p.m. This behavior shows commitment and responsibility.



Photograph 1, photograph by researcher, language laboratory.

Another pattern of behavior recorded in these photos (see photo 4) was that students in the back were more distracted than the ones in the front. Also, it illustrates the small room in which this laboratory is installed. There was not enough space for thirty students and a teacher. It was hard to move from one both to another. However, professors were walking around constantly.



Photograph 2, photograph by researcher, campus.

Finally, room A01 was spacious enough to move. However, no group work was recorded or any other kind of seating arrangement. Instead, students were paired up and kept the same arrangement. In the particular case of photo five, they were writing a letter to a friend as part of a class activity. They all were on-task until they finished. This on-task behavior was observed repeatedly. No misbehavior or off-task pattern was registered during the study. The room was neatly organized and has a good lighting system. The board was large enough.

5. Conclusions

The following information lists some of the main conclusions and recommendations derived from the data analyzed. These conclusions provide a set of counter-measures addressed to the improvement the few weaknesses identified. They cover in-class actions and administrative decisions. The recommendations set out principles for action and allow language instructors and students a measure of flexibility in implementing these principles according to their particular circumstances.



Photograph 4, photograph taken by collaborative teacher, language lab



Photograph 5, photograph by researcher, room A001

5.1. A Mixed-Level Class

Being a multilevel class, this group faces challenges. Students who have a higher level left behind others with a low proficiency level. This was shown through class participation and grades. Indeed, proficient ones must follow a measured pace when teachers try to slow down activities. Due to this stumbling block, the researcher recommends to carry out a needs analysis at the beginning of the semester. There is a variety of diagnostic procedures that

include administrating a placement test, asking students to fill in a questionnaire, interviewing them (individually or in groups) and observing them while working in class. Language instructors can take action and implement any of these; however, the institution can also establish a placement test as a requirement. Once, the diagnosis is done and professors have a glimpse of their apprentices' language competence, there is a range of possibilities to minimize this proficiency gap.

A recommendation for teachers is to pair up learners with a lower level with communicative stronger ones. Both groups benefit from this procedure. Advanced students strengthen their linguistic competence because they have the chance to explain instructions and share knowledge. Also, less competent ones can benefit because they get the language explained to them in different ways and from different perspectives. To assign tutors for extra class assignments can also benefit them. Advanced learners can be tutors to help beginners with homework and presentations. Another suggestion is to call on apprentices when directing questions and checking exercises. High-level learners usually take center stage when participation is optional, and low students feel threaten to share their ideas and answers. Language instructors can also divide the class by using subtle grouping techniques. Learners should not realize this classroom arrangement because they can get discouraged. However, teachers can focus easily on those who need extra support and guidance. Professors should talk openly about this proficiency gap, and make them understand that there will be situations in which pace will be slower or faster than expected. Building awareness minimizes negative consequences and promotes a more relaxing classroom environment.

Even though institutional policies do not allow Universidad Nacional, Brunca extension to proceed with a placement test and discard those who do not show a high proficiency level, this institution can wide the scope of the program and offer two groups to the community. Hence, grouping learners by the results of a placement test can minimize this gap, and more attention can be given depending on individual needs. Finally, this institution should offer extra-curricular and language-oriented activities like conversation and reading clubs and writing centers for those who need extra support in their learning process. Another recommendation for professors is to organize meetings with students from second and first year in the same program so that the latter can talk about their concerns and worries. This can also work as a stimulus for them to continue studying to achieve the higher level accomplished by more experienced students.

5.2. Technology

The successfulness of language learning relies not only on academic aspects such as an effective curriculum and good professionals, but also on the quality of resources provided for everyday instruction. It was found in this ethnography that the English department has two language laboratories. One of them (laboratory one) is equipped with air conditioning, appropriate lighting, two hang-on speakers in each corner in the back. Also, it has 30 booths grouped in pairs connected to a control console that is used as a teacher's desk. This control console is also connected to a VCR, head projector, and TV. Students and professors have

access to two CD players as well. The other laboratory is equipped with brand new desks, a TV set and air conditioning only.

Regarding this issue two recommendations are given. First, to place laboratory one in a bigger room since, as it is noticed in some of the pictures included in the photoethnography, this place is too small to host thirty-one people. The second recommendation is to equip this room with more technological aids. Computers should be provided to transform it into a multimedia language laboratory with Internet access and a networked system. This can promote a student-centered approach directed toward self-paced learning as well as the use of authentic and communicative teaching resources. Also, to offer satellite television can improve learning since students and instructors can schedule to have material recorded onto video or audiotapes to use them in the class or to study at home.

5.3. An Effective Curriculum

This recommendation is directed to the Universidad Nacional, Brunca Region campus' authorities. Findings show that this program is a good opportunity for members of the community who really want to learn English as a foreign language. Regular and former students' comments are an evidence of the positive effects it has had. Also, the registration statistics shows that there are many people interested in enrolling these courses. Hence, it is recommended to continue with this for some years more, and to offer not only one but also two or three more groups.

5.4. English Learning Investment

The last recommendations are for students enrolled in this program. First, beginners should attend student-teacher conference hours. The speaking, listening and reading class professor gives this individual feedback in the language laboratory which enlarges apprentices' language learning. Non-participant observations revealed that only five out of thirty learners attended regularly. Second, they should organize study groups to reinforce everyday knowledge, and take advantage of study rooms provided by the library. They can also ask seniors to join them to get more challenging input. Apprentices also should have higher rate of classroom participation, they must identify class activities that promote their contribution; and hence answer questions from the teacher and classmates even though their responses are not completely right, ask questions and make comments and give their own opinions when requested.

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Geragogy: A Contribution to the Teaching and Learning of English as a Foreign Language in Senior Citizens

Verónica Brenes Sánchez
Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica
veronik2905@hotmail.com

Evelyn Valverde Marín
Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica
egabrival@hotmail.com

Resumen

La población adulta mayor ha incrementado considerablemente. De acuerdo a estadísticas obtenidas por el Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censo (INEC), el número de personas adultas mayores en Costa Rica se ha duplicado en la última década (Censo 2005-2014). Considerando este cambio poblacional, diferentes organizaciones gubernamentales y no gubernamentales han facilitado programas para promover la participación de este grupo etario en un aprendizaje continuo. Sin embargo, las personas adultas mayores requieren de una metodología que acoja sus necesidades y habilidades. La organización Socrates Grundtvig (n.d.) defiende un enfoque *geragógico* el cual “enfatisa un aprendizaje guiado para el adulto mayor y considera las habilidades especiales del mismo” (para. 6). En el proceso de enseñanza de una lengua extranjera a personas adultas mayores, las metodologías deben ser elegidas cuidadosamente y adaptadas para satisfacer las destrezas de los estudiantes. Con esta premisa en mente, el propósito de este estudio cualitativo se fundamentó en identificar las necesidades y preferencias de las personas adultas mayores en relación con material didáctico, metodologías y ambiente en una clase de inglés como lengua extranjera, ya que durante el diseño o evaluación de un programa de curso, la efectividad de las técnicas de enseñanza y los materiales deben ser valoradas con el fin de reconocer las exigencias de los estudiantes. Este proyecto se llevó a cabo con personas adultas mayores e instructores de inglés en una institución pública en Costa Rica. Para la investigación se diseñaron tres instrumentos de los cuales dos fueron completados por estudiantes y profesores. Los resultados obtenidos en esta investigación proporcionan una serie de recomendaciones para encargados curriculares y profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera.

Palabras clave: personas adultas mayores, metodología, geragogía, técnicas, materiales

Abstract

The elderly population has been increasing extensively. According to data gathered by the Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censo (INEC), the number of senior citizens in Costa Rica has been doubled in the last decade (Census 2005-2014). On behalf of this population transition, different governmental and non-governmental organizations have initiated programs that boost the inclusion of this age group in an ongoing learning environment. Nonetheless, the elderly need a proper methodology that embraces their own needs and capacities. Socrates Grundtvig Organization (n.d.) defended a *geragogical* approach which

“emphasizes the guided learning of older adults and considers their special needs” (para. 6). When teaching a foreign language to senior people, approaches should not only be chosen cautiously but also adapted to fulfill students’ skills. With this premise in mind, the purpose of this qualitative study was to identify senior citizens’ needs and preferences regarding teaching resources, methodology, and classroom environment. When designing or evaluating a course program, the effectiveness of classroom techniques and materials should be appraised in order to comply with students’ demands. This research project was carried out with senior citizens and English instructors at a public institution in Costa Rica. Three different instruments were designed and two of those instruments were administered to the students and teachers. The findings of this research resulted in recommendations for programs developers and teachers of English as a foreign language.

Keywords: senior citizens, methodology, geragogy, techniques, materials

1. Introduction

Education is shaped as the human being evolves. At the beginning of formal education, classrooms were filled with young learners, and as decades passed, higher education became necessary. Nowadays, as a country’s demography changes so do the educational curricula. Governmental and non-governmental institutions have started to make changes because the world’s population is aging. This phenomenon may be interpreted as the normal process every person undergoes; however, taking a look at the population census carried out in the past years, people live longer and families have fewer children. Occurred this, educational programs have created new learning opportunities for senior citizens. Universities and other institutions have started to promote the inclusion of this age group in a continuous learning process to fit a globalized society. Nonetheless, to offer such opportunities language programs, for example, have had to face and answer inquiries on the elderly’s characteristics, proper methodologies, suitable materials, and appropriate classroom environment for a successful learning process.

Based on the previous premises, a new approach called *Geragogy* is being developed to embrace senior learners’ demands since other teaching methods “often disregard the principles and characteristics of senior learners’ acquisition and seem to neglect senior learners’ needs and motivation” (Dörr, 2006, p. 4). Therefore, how do senior citizens learn? What motivates them to learn a foreign language? Which activities are the most appropriate? What are the characteristics of the teaching resources? What are the features of a classroom environment for this population? By analyzing the information on students’ motivations, needs, and preferences, language programs and teachers will expand their knowledge on how to provide a suitable methodology for successful learning in the elderly.

1.1. General Objective

To identify senior citizens’ needs and preferences regarding teaching resources, methodology, and classroom environment so that recommendations can be given for future EFL curricula development.

1.2. Specific Objectives

- i. To gather data on the elderly's opinion concerning teaching activities, materials, and classroom environment they are exposed to.
- ii. To analyze the information obtained in the instruments about students' opinions.
- iii. To recommend the characteristics of EFL teaching materials and activities for older students.
- iv. To suggest the qualities of classroom setting and environment for senior citizens studying English as a foreign language.

2. Literature Review

The increase of the elderly population has raised awareness on the significance to modify, adapt, and create new methodologies in the educational field. This need to improve the teaching process provides new techniques to be implemented in groups with senior citizens. This section presents concepts, cognitive processes, stereotypes and features of older learner.

2.1. Pedagogy, Andragogy and Geragogy

Through the years, researchers and teaching professionals have provided models and approaches based on students' characteristics and ages. Pedagogy, in the first place, is "the art and science of teaching children" (Knowles, 1973, as cited in Holmes and Abington-Cooper, para.6). Based on this assumption, the term *Andragogy* was popularized in 1980 to claim that younger apprentices learned differently from adult scholars. Knowles defined *Andragogy* as "the art and science of helping adults learn" (para. 10), and he based his andragogical theory on certain human characteristics that come with age. Knowles (1980) found the following:

As individuals mature (a) their self-concept moves from that of a dependent personality toward one of increasing self-directedness, (b) they accumulate a growing reservoir of experience that becomes a rich resource for learning and a broad base upon which they can relate new leanings, (c) their readiness to learn becomes increasingly more oriented to the developmental tasks of their social roles and not the product of biological development and academic pressure, and (d) their time perspective changes from one of future application of knowledge to one of immediate application, giving them a problem-centered rather than subject-centered orientation to learning. (as cited in Holmes & Abington-Cooper, para. 12)

Considering such characteristics of adult learners, instructional curricula have been adapted to suit students' needs and skills. Teachers in an adult classroom environment will be guides,

and they will be in charge of providing opportunities for students to learn by their own, solve problems, and use their experience to acquire new knowledge. These premises could be generalized and considered in the teaching and learning process of senior citizens, yet as the human being continues aging there are physical, psychological, and social changes that may result in the need to generate new methodological procedures.

The elderly learn differently. Following this premise, the term *Geragogy* has been used in the past years to guide language instructors in the teaching process. Geragogy is understood as “the teaching towards older people accommodating the normal physical, cognitive and psychological changes” in life’s evolution (Socrates Grundtvig, n.d., p. 2). This means that when students will encounter the language, they will find learning opportunities adapted to their own necessities. This because as people age, they start presenting health problems such as vision impairment and hearing decline, they possess a lower degree in formal education, and their interaction with their pairs constantly changes (Dörr, 2006, pp. 10.19). Said this, it could be argued that new didactic methods should be generated. Socrates Grundtvig (n.d.) defended that to satisfy these needs “the new geragogy approach would stress instructor-directed learning, supervised decision-making, and person-centered activities” (p.2). Consequently, it is fundamental to consider students’ characteristics to offer the elderly a comfortable and motivating learning environment.

2.2. Cognitive Processes in Senior Citizens

How older learners process information plays a significant role on the teaching and learning of a foreign language. Although researchers agree on the fact that cognitive processes may vary from learner to learner, field specialists have found that the function in the long term memory and short term memory declines with age. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2007) stated that “Aging results in normal changes in cognition. Three specific changes are reduced processing speed, greater tendency to be distracted, and reduced capacity to process and remember new information at the same time—which is called ‘working memory’” (para. 1). However, scientists defend that such changes do not lead to the impairment in knowledge acquisition. Senior citizens are capable of learning; they just need more time to internalize new data. In this matter, analysts suggest keeping a slower pace when working with older learners, especially when delivering instructions or new information (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2007, para. 13). As a result, cognitive processes in the elderly may be attended by providing an adequate time during instruction.

2.3. Stereotypes Old People Encounter

Senior citizens process information differently from any other human being, and this could lead to negative perceptions or stereotypes regarding their learning capabilities. Interestingly, this issue does not start in the classroom; it starts at home. The elderly are treated differently. Relatives make decisions for their senior family members, and the elderly are not allowed to think and act with freedom. Consejo Nacional de la Persona Adulta Mayor (CONAPAM,

2013) pointed out that some people treat the elderly like children (p. 6). Therefore, this misconception has a negative psychological impact on senior citizens because when they want to become part of a course, they are not supported, and some of them are isolated in retirement houses. Contrary, old age is not a synonym of inactivity. Ostwald and Williams (as cited in Socrates Grundtvig) stated that “studies on aging have demonstrated that learning ability does not decline with age. If older people remain healthy, their intellectual abilities and skills do not decline” (para. 71). This is, senior citizens are capable of developing new competences. Fortunately, as years go by, society has become more inclusive, and people have started to understand the changes that come with the old age.

2.4. The Elderly’s Characteristics

Being part of the educational process or not, every person dealing with old people needs to be aware of their physical changes. There is no doubt of the increase in the amount of pathologies related to vision such as “cataracts, glaucoma, and macular degeneration” faced at the old age, and Speros (2009) explained that the pupil “becomes smaller, allowing less light to enter the eye” (para. 10). Depending on the vision problem, senior citizens may rely on their hearing ability, but the University of Washington (as cited in Speros, 2009) estimated that “more than 50% of older adults are affected by hearing loss or impairment” (para.11) obstructing the quality of any message received. Based on these findings, teachers must consider proximity, tone of voice, gestures and posture when providing information. Other aspects affecting old people are “thin’ voice, vocal fatigue, difficulty in being heard in noisy situations, tremor or shakiness” (Tarafder, Datta, Tariq, 2012, p. 85) because most of the body organs atrophy or become thinner in advanced age. Language instructors, who are conscious of the changes old age brings, may provide a comfortable learning/teaching experience for the elderly.

2.5. Design of Teaching Materials for Old People

Teaching is a challenging work since language instructors must carefully prepare or adapt the materials when teaching older learners. The materials brought to the classroom should undergo a rigorous evaluation process. As Graves (as cited in Katachana, 2013) admitted, “in most cases, commercial textbooks hardly respond to particular learners’ needs and high precision courses” (p. 891). First, teaching resources should be adjusted to the features portrayed by the group to be taught, in this case old learners, and then, the books or worksheets must be previously analyzed to verify that they reflect the objectives to be attained at the end of the course. Sometimes it is difficult to find the resources for your class, and the last step is to design your own. Stevens (2003) provided some ways to organize content in material for the elderly including “know your audience, limit your messages, draw on prior experiences, use stories [that learners can associate with their own], and be concrete” (p. 6). Furthermore, the use of images, active voice, repetition, headings, sections, underlying, words in bold and enough space are some techniques that can be employed to highlight

important information and catch the students' attention (Stevens, 2003, p.6). By using appropriate materials, teachers will be able to fulfill the expected goals on time and meet the learners' needs.

3. Methodology and Data Analysis

3.1. Methodology

This study is qualitative in nature because the researchers described the learners and teachers' perceptions regarding the elderly's educational environment. To make the study reliable and valid, it was necessary to include statistical data as well. The data analysis corresponds to the results garnered from two questionnaires (open-ended questions, and closed questions) for teachers and learners and an observation instrument.

3.1.1. The setting and the population

This research was carried out in one public institution which offers non-degree English courses to senior citizens in Costa Rica. This organization provides senior citizens with programs of continuous education that involve them in a dynamic and globalized society. Besides English, older learners are invited to participate in aerobics, dance, and computer classes, among other activities that promote social interaction, brain stimulation, and a get away from boredom.

3.1.2. The instruments

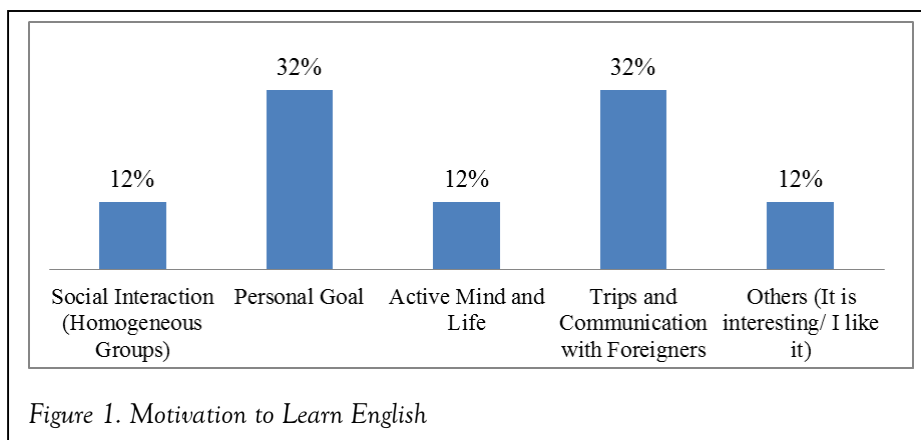
Three different instruments were designed in order to collect data for this research. First, a questionnaire was answered by students in order to know senior citizens opinions and needs regarding methodology used in their classroom. Additionally, a questionnaire for teachers was administered with the purpose of gathering information about older students' learning characteristics and skills. Finally, the researchers observed the English class to obtain data on senior citizens' behaviors and learning styles as well as features of the classroom environment and methodology.

3.2. Data Analysis

This section includes the responses obtained in the questionnaires and observations. The purpose of this analysis is to determine the students' motivation, role of Spanish in the classroom, and the material and classroom characteristics to improve the learning process.

3.2.1. Motivation to Learn English

In the questionnaire the learners were asked to mention their motivations to study English as a foreign language. Figure 1 portrays the reasons behind such choice.



Learning a foreign language requires motivation and determination. Dörr (2006) makes reference to two kinds of motivation the integrative and instrumental motivation, and she also stated that “the main reason why senior citizens would learn a second language is an integrative one...Seniors find themselves “out” of the new (present) community” (p. 22). In the questionnaire students described both integrative and instrumental sources of motivation, but the former is the one that inspires more the students to learn. For example, they mentioned their need to interact with people with their same age and be understood when traveling to English speaking countries. Nevertheless, elderly learners also admitted that they have a personal goal, which is instrumental motivation. Both types of motivation encourage learners to enroll English courses, however, the integrative motivation plays a particular role by incorporating senior learners in this globalized society.

3.2.2. Spanish Use in the Classroom

A controversial topic in language classrooms is the use of the mother tongue to clarify doubts since it goes against the idea of creating a natural atmosphere where learners speak and received only English. The learners under research were asked whether they considered necessary the use of Spanish or not during a session, and 97% of the learners agreed on the use of the native language for translation and clarification. However, 83% of the participants mentioned that no more than 50% of Spanish should be used in the class. The teachers admitted that the use of Spanish depends mainly on the learners’ level. They agreed that less than 30% of Spanish should take place in a classroom with intermediate students, and at least 80% of Spanish should be used with beginners.

The instructors advised translation of difficult words and recommended to prepare classes with lots of visual aids to provide the meaning of new vocabulary. During the observation, teachers first gave the English definition of words by using synonyms, miming and pictures, but the senior citizens mainly preferred the Spanish equivalent. The same happened with instructions. The teachers divided the instructions into steps to make them easy to understand, but some of the students requested the Spanish instructions. When teaching a group of senior citizens, language instructors may consider a minimum use of the

mother tongue to facilitate the teaching/learning process; nonetheless, avoiding the mother tongue 100% of the class is a strategy senior learners may not agree with.

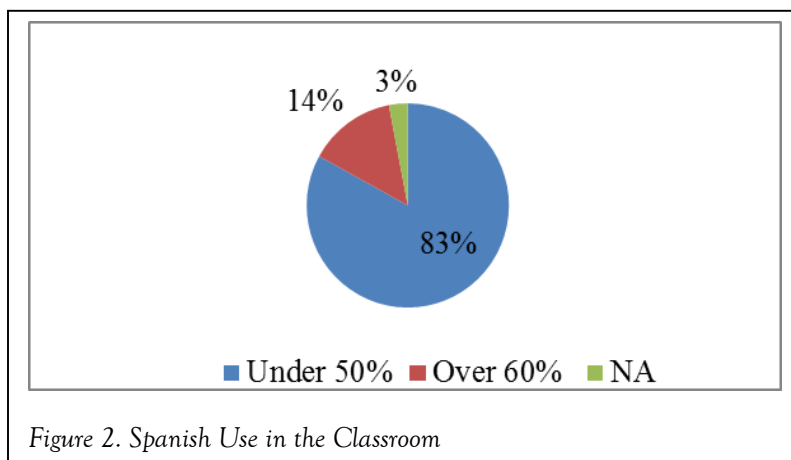


Figure 2. Spanish Use in the Classroom

3.2.3. Senior Citizens Preferences Regarding Activities in the EFL Classroom

It is known that every activity teachers develop in the classroom must fulfill students' preferences. Figure 3 shows that students' favorite range of activities includes oral presentations, songs, videos, board games, and written exercises (grammar, and vocabulary). On the other hand, among the activities that students enjoy less are poems, tongue twisters, and riddles. This phenomenon may occur because this last group may present a higher level of difficulty of the vocabulary presented; for instance, with the metaphorical language used in poems and riddles. In regard to tongue twisters, these could exceed students' capabilities. Teachers must keep in mind that the functions in the phonological apparatus wither with age. Scientists defend that the elderly may present problems articulating due to teeth loss, reduced movement of tongue, and atrophy of the vocal muscles (Tarafder, Datta, & Tariq, 2012, p. 1). Besides contemplating students' preferences, teacher must choose wisely and avoid activities that may affect students emotionally or physically. On this matter, teachers expressed in the questionnaire that students do not like to participate in games that require major physical movement, and that involving students in games such as the music chairs may lead into an accident in the classroom since some senior citizens may present physical problems. Accordingly, language instructors should consider students' likes, dislikes, and physical conditions to boost a safer and more enjoyable learning environment.

3.2.4. Recommended Characteristics of Teaching Resources for Senior Citizens

The quality of the material is also important when designing or adapting resources for senior citizens. Students and teachers were asked to express their opinions concerning the characteristics of books, photocopiables, audio, and other teaching course materials. Both learners and language instructors pointed out the following:



Topics should be of students' interests, e.g. traveling, written materials should appear in big and clear fonts, new vocabulary must be translated and/or illustrated with images, new words should also be accompanied by the pronunciation, and audio (songs and videos) must be clear.

Participants emphasized the development of topics of their interest; this because there are not books especially designed for senior citizens, and teachers sometimes have to adapt topics such as “what do you want to do after you graduate?” for one students can relate to. This fact could also be observed. There were moments during the class in which the teacher had to change some questions or sentences presented in the textbook for others students could identify themselves with. This lack of suitable resources also affects the elderly because most of the time, fonts are not appropriate for them. Considering this shortage in textbooks for an elderly population, instructors must adopt and adapt teaching resources for a more inclusive learning process.

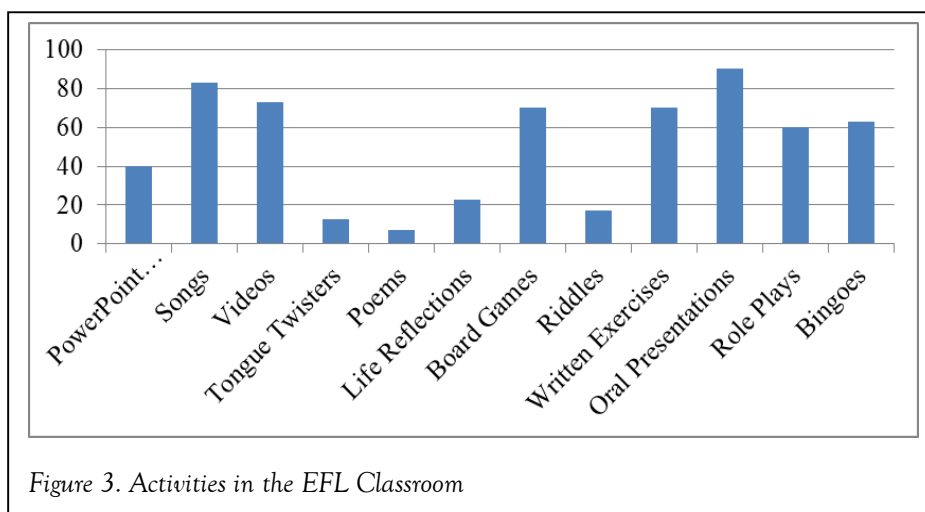


Figure 3. Activities in the EFL Classroom

3.2.5. Characteristics Suggested for a Suitable Classroom Setting and Atmosphere

Characteristics of the classroom setting and atmosphere are essential in the teaching and learning process. First, in the questionnaire students and language professionals were asked to share their opinions on the features every classroom for senior citizens must have. On this inquiry, both participants expressed the following:

The classroom must have proper ventilation and light, the door must be closed to avoid any noise from the outside that may interrupt the development of the class, the furniture must be comfortable (avoid single chairs), and there should be enough space for students to move around and stretch out.

Indeed, classroom setting must also embrace students' needs. During the visits to the teaching space, it could be observed that this language program offers senior citizens with most of the characteristics demanded by the participants. The only obstacle detected was the

sound of cars which run next to the classroom. By considering such characteristics and a motivating classroom environment, opportunities for the elderly to learn may increase.

On the atmosphere provided by teachers, students recommended studying less topics per course (cycle), having smaller groups for a more personalized class, repeating words and rules, having enough practice of contents, using motivational phrases, minimizing stress factors such as tests or any type of summative evaluation, and showing patience towards their learning process. Researchers such as Dörr (2006) supported these thoughts by providing some principles to teach senior citizens. She believed that motivation, a relaxing climate, repetition, slowness, clearness are key to the attainment of new skills (pp. 24-40). Thereupon, teachers should understand what elderly people need and accommodate techniques and strategies that serve senior citizens learning skills.

4. Conclusions

Course programs are designed to attain a set of goals at the end of the cycle, and every syllabus is created based on the needs of the audience attending the program. This is the case of programs for the elderly population, but it is a fact that the incorporation of old people in educational programs is something new. Many institutions lack of resources or spaces to start this process. For this reason, this study suggests a list of vital aspects that could serve as a guide to improve the conditions required in the classroom environment.

One important element to consider is the use of Spanish in the classroom. It was concluded that senior citizens with an elementary level of English appreciate the translation of words, but intermediate students should be encouraged to comprehend the meaning of words through images or gestures provided by language professionals. In addition to the translation of words, the phonetic transcription may be given. Teachers recommended being patient and calm when teaching this population because repetition is fundamental at the old age. Besides repetition, the pace at which senior citizens learn is different, and the information should be divided into sections to avoid overloading of contents. The analysis also revealed that groups should be composed of fewer students to create a relaxing environment, and with small groups, teachers could easily keep a record of the students' progress throughout a course mainly based on formative evaluation.

Lesson plans must contain a bunch of appealing activities for the elderly. Senior learners prefer oral presentations, songs, videos, board games, and written exercises based on grammar and vocabulary over poems, tongue twisters and riddles. The games chosen must portrait tasks that learners can relate to their own life experiences and preferences. The students may struggle in activities full of complicated words that need to be understood to continue with the tasks, for example, riddles. Before the planning process, language instructors dealing with old learners must know the learners' physical conditions. In an advanced age people suffer from various symptoms that are both normal and part of the

stage, but in some cases the problems might be serious or numerous. Effective activities should be short if they have to be standing up, and the activity should be carried out in a place with enough space to stretch and move. On the other hand, if learners are supposed to be sitting during long periods, the chairs must be appropriate for them, and they should take short breaks. Moreover, song and video activities are recommended to be of high definition. Then, any material elaborated for the elderly should contain clear pictures and words, and the classroom environment should have enough lights to aid those with visual problems.

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Appendices

Universidad Nacional
Sede Regional Brunca
Campus Pérez Zeledón
Investigadoras:
Verónica Brenes Sánchez
Evelyn Valverde Marín



Instrumento # 1: Cuestionario para personas adultas mayores estudiando inglés como lengua extranjera

El siguiente cuestionario forma parte de una investigación sobre el proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera en personas adultas mayores cursando los módulos de inglés en un institución pública en Costa Rica. El objetivo principal de esta investigación es conocer las principales razones que llevan a la población adulta mayor a estudiar un lenguaje foráneo como el inglés, así como las necesidades y preferencias de esta población en materiales didácticos y ambiente educativo. La información que se solicita es confidencial y para uso exclusivo de dicha investigación. Gracias por su valiosa

Instrucciones: Lea y responda las siguientes preguntas de acuerdo a lo que se le solicita escribiendo (✓) dentro de la casilla que seleccione.

I Parte: Información personal

Sexo: Masculino Femenino

Edad: _____

Nivel de escolaridad: Primaria Secundaria: Educación superior:

Profesión u ocupación: _____

Pensionado: Si No

¿Padece usted de alguna enfermedad o impedimento físico? Si su respuesta es afirmativa indique cual.

II Parte: Preguntas

1. ¿Qué lo motivó a estudiar inglés como lengua extranjera?

2. ¿Qué contribución tiene el curso de inglés en su vida?

3. ¿Antes de ingresar a los cursos de inglés del Programa de Gerontología, había cursado usted algún módulo de inglés en otro lugar, llámese colegio, universidad, o instituto público o privado?

Sí No

Especifique:

4. De todas las habilidades desarrolladas en la clase de inglés, (escucha, producción oral, lectura, escritura) ¿cuál considera usted ser la más importante? Enumere del 1 al 4 en orden de importancia, siendo 1 la de mayor valor y 4 la de menor valor.

Escucha Producción oral Lectura Escritura

Justifique su respuesta:

5. ¿Considera usted que el uso del español o traducción por parte del instructor en la clase de inglés es necesario?

Sí No

Si su respuesta es afirmativa, ¿cuánto porcentaje de español (en escala de 10 a 100) cree que deba ser usado por el profesor? Indique el porcentaje de español marcando con un (✓) dentro de la casilla que seleccione.

10%	<input type="checkbox"/>	60%	<input type="checkbox"/>
20%	<input type="checkbox"/>	70%	<input type="checkbox"/>
30%	<input type="checkbox"/>	80%	<input type="checkbox"/>
40%	<input type="checkbox"/>	90%	<input type="checkbox"/>
50%	<input type="checkbox"/>	100%	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. ¿Cuáles características considera que debe poseer el ambiente de una clase de inglés para una población mayor a 50 años? Puede indicar rasgos del espacio físico o aspectos metodológicos.

7. ¿Qué características debe tener el material que se utiliza en la clase de inglés para personas mayores de 50 años?

8. ¿Qué actividades considera usted que deben emplearse en la clase de inglés para un mejor aprendizaje? Marque (✓) una o varias opciones.

Presentaciones PowerPoint	<input type="checkbox"/>	Juegos de mesa	<input type="checkbox"/>
Canciones	<input type="checkbox"/>	Adivinanzas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Videos	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ejercicios escritos	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trabalenguas	<input type="checkbox"/>	Presentaciones orales	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poemas	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dramatizaciones	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reflexiones	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ensayos	<input type="checkbox"/>
Otros:	-----		

9. ¿Cuántas horas de estudio independiente dedica para el repaso o práctica del idioma durante la semana? Marque (✓) una de las opciones.

0

1

2

3

4

5

Más

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Verónica Brenes Sánchez
Evelyn Valverde Marín



Instrumento # 2: Cuestionario para instructores de inglés como lengua extranjera para personas adultas mayores

El siguiente cuestionario forma parte de una investigación sobre el aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera en personas adultas mayores cursando los módulos de inglés en un institución pública en Costa Rica. El objetivo principal de este instrumento es conocer características de este grupo etario, así como sus necesidades y preferencias en materiales didácticos y ambiente educativo. La información que se solicita es confidencial y para uso exclusivo de dicha investigación. Gracias por su ayuda.

Instrucciones: Lea y responda las siguientes preguntas de acuerdo a lo que se le solicita escribiendo (✓) dentro de la casilla que seleccione.

I Parte: Información personal

Sexo: Masculino Femenino

Grado académico: _____

Tiempo trabajando como instructor de inglés como lengua extranjera para personas adultas mayores (meses o años): _____

II Parte: Preguntas

1. ¿A enseñado usted inglés como lengua extranjera a otros grupos etarios (niños, adolescentes, adultos jóvenes)? Si su respuesta es afirmativa, indique cual o cuales y el lugar (MEP, institutos públicos privado, etc.).

Sí No

2. ¿De acuerdo a su experiencia, en cuales aspectos se diferencia la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera de personas adultas mayores en la pedagogía utilizada para otras poblaciones?

3. ¿Considera usted que el uso del español o traducción por parte del instructor en la clase de inglés para personas adultas mayores es necesario?

Sí No

Si su respuesta es afirmativa, ¿cuánto porcentaje de español (en escala de 10 a 100) cree que deba ser usado en clase? Indique el porcentaje de español a utilizar marcando con un (✓) dentro de la casilla que seleccione.

10%	<input type="checkbox"/>	60%	<input type="checkbox"/>
20%	<input type="checkbox"/>	70%	<input type="checkbox"/>
30%	<input type="checkbox"/>	80%	<input type="checkbox"/>
40%	<input type="checkbox"/>	90%	<input type="checkbox"/>
50%	<input type="checkbox"/>	100%	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. ¿Cuáles características considera que debe poseer el ambiente de una clase de inglés para una población mayor a 50 años? Puede indicar rasgos del espacio físico o aspectos metodológicos.

5. ¿Qué características debe tener el material que se utiliza en la clase de inglés para personas mayores de 50 años?

6. ¿Qué actividades considera usted que deben emplearse en la clase de inglés para un mejor aprendizaje en la población 50+? Marque (✓) una o varias opciones.

- | | | |
|---------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| Presentaciones PowerPoint | <input type="checkbox"/> Juegos de mesa | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Canciones | <input type="checkbox"/> Adivinanzas | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Videos | <input type="checkbox"/> Ejercicios escritos | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Trabalenguas | <input type="checkbox"/> Presentaciones orales | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Poemas | <input type="checkbox"/> Dramatizaciones | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Reflexiones | <input type="checkbox"/> Juegos | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Otros: _____ | | |

7. ¿Cuáles de las actividades mencionadas en la pregunta anterior (6) considera usted que sus estudiantes disfrutaran más?

8. ¿Cuáles actividades o técnicas considera usted que NO deben ser usadas en una clase de inglés para personas adultas mayores?

9. ¿Cuántas horas de estudio independiente considera usted que una persona adulta mayor debe dedicar para el repaso o práctica del idioma? Marque (✓) una de las opciones.

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- Más

Universidad Nacional
 Sede Regional Brunca
 Campus Pérez Zeledón

Investigadoras:

Verónica Brenes Sánchez
 Evelyn Valverde Marín



Instrument # 3: Observation instrument for an English class taken by the elderly.

This instrument is part of the research about the teaching and learning process of senior citizens taking English classes in a public institution in Costa Rica. This investigation aims at finding the reasons why senior citizens started learning English as a foreign language as well as students' needs and preferences regarding didactic materials and classroom setting and environment. The information gathered through this instrument is confidential and for investigation purposes only.

I Part. Instructions: Read each statement and tick the ones that are presented in the classroom. Write possible examples or comments expressed by the students.

	Observed feature	Comments
Learners complain about the material's font size or type.		
The teacher uses Spanish for translation.		
The learners use Spanish for clarification.		
The teacher uses strategies to encourage the learners to practice the target language inside the classroom.		
The learners are in constant movement.		
The learners develop strategies to make sense of the target language without wanting to understand every word.		
The teacher uses rhymes, word associations to recall what has been learned.		
The teacher makes comparisons between the learners' first language and the target language to help them master it.		
The teacher prepared a wide arrange of activities.		
The topics are according to the learners' age and preferences.		



II Part. Instructions: Write any behavior or idea expressed by the students that may provide valuable information for the study.

An Action Plan to Provide Learners with Balanced Input in EFL Classrooms

Edson Enrique Calderón Rodríguez
Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica
edson.calderon.rodriguez@una.cr

Safiro Rivera Mena
Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica
sapphiresaf26@gmail.com

Cristina Melissa Vargas Barboza
Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica
mel0590@hotmail.com

Resumen

A través del tiempo, se han dado opiniones varias relacionadas con la forma en que los estudiantes reciben la información durante las clases de inglés y si esta información es transmitida de tal manera que los alumnos puedan desarrollar las actividades de la clase. En el caso del aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera, es importante reconocer las necesidades lingüísticas de cada estudiante a la hora de realizar las actividades para cada lección. Por lo tanto, tomar en cuenta el conocimiento previo de los estudiantes, su ritmo de aprendizaje, gustos y preferencias (incluyendo la forma en que prefieren recibir la información) es vital a la hora de planear las clases. Es esencial recalcar que existen diversas maneras en las cuales el profesor puede transmitir información incluyendo material auténtico, material educativo y objetos de la vida cotidiana, los cuales sirven como medio para suscitar un ambiente más favorable. Con el propósito de investigar la manera en que los profesores brindan información durante la clase de inglés e identificar las ventajas y desventajas del material utilizado, los investigadores realizaron un estudio de caso basado en el enfoque cualitativo. Dicho estudio tuvo lugar en las secciones 9-5 y 9-6 del Liceo Nocturno de Pérez Zeledón donde información valiosa fue adquirida por medio de observaciones, cuestionarios, entrevistas, y recolección de muestras. Entre los resultados encontrados durante el análisis se destaca el desbalance en los tipos de aprendizaje tomados en cuenta a la hora de diseñar actividades y material y que el enfoque de la clase es únicamente lectura y escritura. Tomando lo anterior en consideración, se diseñó un plan de acción que sugiere actividades y materiales que brindan un balance entre la información auditiva y visual que se transmite en la clase de inglés.

Palabras clave: información transmitida, lengua extranjera, capacidad lingüística, balance, plan de acción

Abstract

Through time, there have been arguments regarding the way students receive input and whether it is comprehensible enough for them to be able to perform different tasks in English. In the case of foreign language contexts, instructors need to pay careful attention to students' linguistic needs when developing a variety of activities in the classroom. This is why students' background, likes and dislikes, learning pace, and input preferences are the most trustworthy sources for teachers to plan the lessons appropriately. Regarding input, which refers to the auditory and visual language to which the learner is exposed (Gass and Selinker, 2001, p. 200), the stimuli students receive may take the form of authentic material, teaching material, and realia which teachers can use as a means to provide students with the most favorable learning opportunities. The purpose of this research study was to investigate the types of input ninth graders, more specifically groups 9-5 and 9-6, from Pérez Zeledón Night High School receive when learning English as a foreign language. Another aim was to identify the advantages and disadvantages of the materials used to provide input in the language classroom. The investigation was developed by following a qualitative approach in which the problem is described. In order to gather the information for this study, researchers made use of observations, questionnaires, interviews, and documentary evidence. Some of the findings drawn from this study depict that peripheral learning is not enhanced, activities and materials do not keep a balance when it comes to learning styles, and reading and writing are the main focus of the lesson. Based on these findings, an action plan to promote balanced teaching activities and materials for visual and auditory input was suggested.

Keywords: input, foreign language, linguistic competence, balance, action plan

1. Introduction

Language instruction plays a significant role within any society, and to attain fruitful results teachers need to reinforce every important aspect during the process. In Costa Rica, the teaching of English has been treated as a very important event in the last two decades. The Ministry of Public Education (MEP) is in charge of giving proper training to the teachers of English in this country on different aspects, such as evaluation, didactic resources, teaching strategies, designing of materials, and so on.

MEP, thus, emphasizes the importance of implementing and preparing “different materials and activities to develop their students' learning process” (Ministerio de Educación Pública, 2005, p. 27). This premise has to do with the input that EFL learners receive in high schools. This input must integrate the different linguistic needs and learning styles of the students so as to provide them with balanced loads of information. Therefore, researchers of this case study, keeping in mind that achieving such balance in the input given to learners is a tough task, proposed some possibly useful materials that could help L2 instructors in their classrooms.



1.1. Participant Selection

The target population that researchers selected as a data source is composed of ninth grade students from public night high schools. The sample population is the learners from groups 9-5 and 9-6 at Pérez Zeledón Night High School. In addition, the sampling method used for this research is the convenience one because of the teachers' and students' availability and principal's disposition as well as the institution's location. These two groups (9-5 and 9-6), as all the groups in the high school, take academic English, which is controlled by the syllabus of the Ministry of Public Education (MEP). MEP's syllabus dictates that English has to be taught within the principles of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method. This method establishes that every process and goal present in a classroom should aim at leading to communicative competence (Savignon, 2002, p. 1). Regarding the learners from groups 9-5 and 9-6, their ages ranged from about 17 to 25 years old in both groups. In regard to the linguistic level of students, it could be noticed through the observations that they followed the instructions as required. This is evident every time the teacher gives a command and students' response is positive; they actually perform what she asks them to. On one hand, in group 9-5, there are approximately 19 students; six of which are females and 13 are males. In group 9-6, on the other hand, there are around 13 students- nine males and four females.

Five teachers of English are also participants in this study; they are four females and one male. First, one of the participants has been a language instructor for seven years; four years working for the Ministry of Public Education (MEP) at Pérez Zeledón Night High School and three years working at Unesco High School as part of those seven years, she has labored five years at Universidad Latina de Costa Rica and she holds a licentiate's degree in English teaching. This teacher has taught students from seventh to tenth grade in academic classes and students from seventh to ninth grade in conversational classes. The second participant is a female who has been a teacher for five years, during which she has worked at four different high schools: Uvita High School, Puerto Jiménez High School, Santiago de San Pedro High School, and Pérez Zeledón Night High School- where she is currently working. This participant's academic level is MT6 and she has taught students from seventh to eleventh grade. Furthermore, the third participant is a female who has worked as a language instructor for eight years, six of which she has been a teacher at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension, Pérez Zeledón Campus. This teacher has taught students from all levels at different high schools (academic, night, and technical). She holds a master's degree in Applied Linguistics.

The fourth participant is a male who has been a teacher for ten years; he has worked at Asunción High School. Moreover, he is currently teaching at Pérez Zeledón Night High School and at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension, Pérez Zeledón Campus. He has taught students from all levels, except for seventh grade. This participant holds a master's degree in Second Languages and Cultures. Finally, the fifth participant in this study is the English teacher of groups 9-5 and 9-6 (students participants in this research). She has been teaching for over ten years during which she has taught different levels. She holds a licentiate's degree and is currently working at Pérez Zeledón Night High School and

Platanares High School. The five English teachers who are participants in this investigation provided their insights on the role of input in EFL learning.

1.2. Research Questions

This qualitative study aims at answering the following questions:

1. What types of input do students receive?
2. What are the advantages of the types of input provided?
3. What are the disadvantages of the types of input provided?
4. What type of material and activities can be recommended to teachers that provide effective and balanced input?

2. Literature Review

Many aspects play a significant role in the learning process; going from teaching techniques to how the information is delivered to students (also known as input). Input is a key element in language teaching since it is the basis from which students build the necessary linguistic knowledge to communicate. In Costa Rica, concern for language learning is growing and now almost every educational institution in the country provides students with the opportunity to develop some degree of competence in the English language.

2.1. Costa Rican English Syllabus

Every educational institution must have a program stating relevant aspects related to the teaching-learning process. To do so, a curriculum is designed. Richards and Renandya (2002) stated that curriculum “refers to all aspects of the planning, implementation, and evaluation of an educational program, the why, how and how well together with the what of teaching learning process” (p. 70). During the planning stage, teachers need to focus on students’ differences and preferences. After planning the lesson, the processes of implementation and evaluation go through similar scrutiny. Most of the times teachers have to adapt the way they teach in order to meet students’ needs. The numerous ways in which teachers can provide input to students play a key role in the planning and implementation stages. Therefore, teachers need to be in constant change, update, modification, and improvement of their lessons.

Another aspect to take into account is the method used, which is generally dictated by the school’s policy. One of those methods is the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) which is viewed as “a philosophical approach to language teaching covering a range of methodological approaches which share a focus on helping learners communicate meaningfully in the target language” (Nunan, 2011, p. 212). The CLT method is stated in the Costa Rican syllabus, created by the Ministry of Public Education.

2.2. The Role of Input in Language Learning

For teachers to lead students to success along the process of learning English as a foreign language, it is necessary to take into consideration several factors regarding the way instructors convey messages in the target language. A key element in English teaching has to do with the input that students are exposed to. Input is explained as the “constitutes” of “the language to which the learner is exposed” (Gass and Selinker, 2001, p. 200); it can either be spoken or written. Over the years, some of the most remarkable contributions to this field were made by Krashen. His renowned Input Hypothesis establishes that single exposure to input is not sufficient for the learner to master the language; learners need to be exposed to comprehensible input which is defined as “input that they can understand” (Gass and Selinker, 2001, p. 294). To achieve this, teachers can make some adaptations to help students comprehend the input given.

When making adaptations to the lesson plan, there are some relevant aspects to consider. For instance, Krashen (as cited in Ellis, 2012) stated

[the] condition for language acquisition to occur is that the acquirer understand (via hearing or reading) input language that contains structure ‘a bit beyond’ his or her current level of competence . . . If an acquirer is at stage or level i , the input he or she understands should contain $i+1$. (p. 295)

When enabling students with $i+1$, they start going forward as they learn the different components of the language. Moreover, input data exposed to students need to be far enough beyond their present competence as well as challenging so that progress can take place. The latter means that input data do not have to be too beyond ($i+2$) or too close ($i+0$) to the students’ existing competence because learners might be overlapped or not demanded at any stage (Ellis, 2012, p. 295). When planning which type of input to use, it is not just the level of comprehensibility that is important but also the different ways in which students can process the data provided.

3. Main Body

The most relevant aspects pertinent to the methodology of this study and the data analysis are presented as follows.

3.1. Data Collection

To conduct this qualitative study, a set of instruments were administered in order to gather the information needed to analyze the problem under study and to provide an answer for the research questions. The instruments designed for such purposes are: observations, questionnaires, interviews, and documentary evidence. The questionnaires and observations are directed to both the collaborative teacher and the students. The instruments are administered to students from groups 9-5 and 9-6 at Pérez Zeledón Night High School within

a period of a month, approximately. These instruments are given to the sample populations during the class development for them to fill them out. Furthermore, the instruments are suitable for the purpose of this research by dint of their contribution to triangulation, which will provide support and trustworthiness to the results.

3.2. Data Analysis

This section aims at analyzing the different ways in which students from groups 9-5 and 9-6 at Pérez Zeledón Night High School receive input during the learning process that takes place in the classroom. Moreover, the researchers identify some of the most relevant disadvantages of the material currently used to teach a foreign language. Throughout the section, researchers provide a careful analysis supported by graphs, tables, and figures used to illustrate the data collected. Furthermore, this section attempts to provide a wider picture of what is happening in the English classroom, especially in night high schools environments, and how this can affect successful language learning.

3.2.1. Types of Input

Even though students from groups 9-5 and 9-6 at Pérez Zeledón Night High School receive both visual and auditory input, the one that prevailed during the research process was the visual input. In the questionnaires administered to students, it was noticeable that the great majority agreed on the fact that the didactic resource used the most by the teacher to provide input was photocopies (See Table 4.1). On the other hand, the questionnaire administered to the teachers of English also showed the prevalence of visual input, but mainly in the form of reading-writing exercises.

Furthermore, researchers identified the lack of auditory input during most of the classes observed since the teacher stuck to the use of copies of the didactic unit compiled by herself. This material was used throughout the development of every class witnessed during the investigation process, except for two games and two listening activities. These aspects show negligence to the other skills and little relationship with the approach promoted by the Ministry of Public Education (MEP), the Communicative Approach, which states that the goal of language instruction in high schools is successful communication in real life situations outside the classroom (2005, p. 14). To achieve a balanced class in terms of input, oral tools such as videos, songs, and educational audio tracks, ought to be used along with the visual material. Reason why, even when photocopies do provide visual input, there are plenty of sources (posters, flashcards, presentations, etc.) that can fulfill such purpose.

3.2.2. Advantages and Disadvantages of the Teaching Material

The material instructors use to provide input has both positive aspects and downsides. One advantage that emerged during the interview performed to the teacher is that “they get new learning which helps them [students] to put into practice in the real life, in different situations” (V. Vargas, personal communication, October 11, 2013). In contrast, one disadvantage expressed by the teacher was that “they [students] need more technological tools to get and improve their input” (V. Vargas, personal communication, October 11, 2013).

The former shows that the instructor had a defined goal when she designed her teaching material, and the latter entails that the teacher is aware of the weaknesses of the material she uses. In the same way, the artifact collection instrument also showed that since exams focus on the reading skill, the teaching is mainly based on reading exercises, which lack dynamism and balance in every stage of the lesson plan. Contrary, thorough the observations, it was noticed that the material was useful whenever students needed to go back and forth as many times as it was necessary to complete the tasks solicited by the teacher. Two disadvantages discovered by means of the observations were that students tended to forget the copies at home and that learners went off-task very frequently because of the aforementioned lack of dynamism.

	Always	Almost Always	Sometimes	Almost Never	Never	No Answer
Flashcards	16%	12%	34%	19%	16%	3%
Copies	78%	9%	3%	3%	3%	4%
Books	0%	6%	3%	12%	72%	7%
Posters	6%	6%	22%	28%	28%	10%
MP3 Player	9%	19%	22%	19%	25%	6%
Computer	19%	3%	3%	16%	47%	12%
Projector	3%	0%	9%	34%	50%	4%
Dictionaries	16%	12%	25%	16%	28%	3%
Realia	0%	6%	12%	22%	56%	4%
Videos	12%	6%	16%	12%	47%	7%
Songs	22%	19%	25%	6%	28%	0%
Games	6%	16%	37%	22%	12%	7%
Body Language	19%	19%	22%	25%	15%	0%
Power Point/Prezi Presentation	3%	0%	16%	12%	67%	2%

Table 4.1 Students' Opinion on the Frequency of Didactic Resources Usage
Note. Responses gathered from the questionnaire for students in groups 9-5 and 9-6.

Regarding the disadvantages of the material that teachers use in the language classes, the most salient point in the questionnaire administered to high school teachers was face validity (See Figure 4.3) since the quality of the copies did not facilitate students learning process as the photocopies sometimes were blurry and thus difficult to understand, especially the images.



Figure 4.3 Teachers' Opinion on the Disadvantages of their Didactic Material

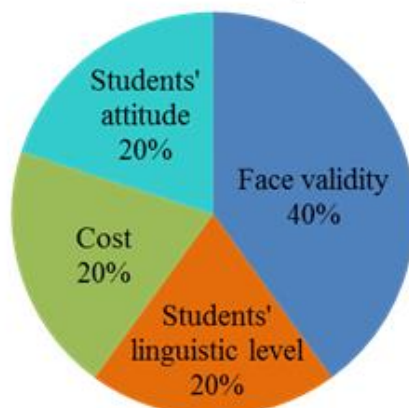


Figure 4.3 Information taken from the questionnaire for teachers.

The opinions of the students in regard to the different disadvantages of the activities used evidenced that for the learners the material is not understandable and complex. These factors reflect the need of constant revision and improvement of the material to satisfy students' needs and interests.

4. Conclusions

After analyzing the data gathered through the instruments chosen, the researchers could draw the next conclusions.

Even though peripheral learning is a great way to provide students with input, it was not present in the classroom observed; there were no posters or flashcards displayed on the walls. In fact, most of the activities developed in the classes that the researchers observed were based on photocopies, which lacked elaboration in their layout. The didactic unit that the teacher and students used was not balanced regarding the level of difficulty of the exercises; some were very hard to solve and others were too simple. The teaching activities did not enhance skills such as listening or speaking; they focused mainly on reading and writing. Moreover, several learners expressed that the way in which input was delivered was monotonous and not proper regarding students' linguistic level and learning styles. The teaching activities used to present the subject matter to students were almost always the same. The teacher based her classes mostly on the exercises included in the didactic unit, leaving aside other activities, such those that can be implemented through games, videos, or songs. However, a positive aspect was the fact that the didactic unit was designed by the teacher herself, thus, she had the opportunity to include activities that met students' linguistic needs. Nonetheless, based on the data gathered through the different instruments, this was not fully achieved. The use of audiovisual resources was not present at all during the classes observed.

Finally, the input given seemed to be comprehensible enough for students to be able to perform all tasks solicited by the teacher.

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Annexes



Natural Resources

Earth Beach Palm tree Sand Sun

Sea River Lake Ocean Waterfall

Grass Cloud Rainbow Birds Woods

Words in Context

You can use some branches to start a fire.
Near Pérez Zeledón, you can find the Nauyaca waterfalls.
When you get to the beach, you can see surfers on the sea.
There is no snow in Costa Rica.



A. Instructions. Read the text "Biodiversity in Costa Rica" and based on it, solve the exercises below.

Biodiversity in Costa Rica

Biodiversity is a resource with enormous potential, both for intellectual and economic purposes and as an instrument for a country's development. The tropical zones of the American continent (Neotropics), where Costa Rica is located, contain a greater diversity of species and ecosystems, as well as a broader range of interactions, compared with other tropical regions of the world. Obviously, this diversity is also much greater than that of temperate and cold regions. With a land area of only 51.100 km² (0.03% of the planet's surface) and 589.000 km² of territorial waters, Costa Rica is considered to be one of the 20 countries with greatest biodiversity in the world. Its geographic position, its two coasts and its mountainous system, which provides numerous and varied microclimates, are some of the reasons that explain this natural wealth, both in terms of species and ecosystems. The more than 500,000 species that are found in this small country represent nearly 4% of the total species estimated worldwide. Of these 500,000 species, just over 300,000 are insects. The institution charged with the task of administering Costa Rica's biodiversity is the Ministry of the Environment and Energy (MINAE), and more specifically to the National System of Conservation Areas (SINAC), which is responsible for the conservation and sustainable use of the country's biodiversity. SINAC has 11 Conservation Areas distributed throughout the country and is headed by a Directorate that provides technical support.

B. Instructions. Match the statements on the left with the words on the right. There are two options left. One option can be used twice.

- | | | |
|--|-----|-----------------|
| 1. It is a resource with enormous potential | () | a. MINAE |
| 2. This country contains a great diversity of species | () | b. Biodiversity |
| 3. This institution administers our biodiversity | () | c. Costa Rica |
| 4. This institution supports 11 Conservation Areas | () | d. Water |
| 5. It's one of the nations with greatest biodiversity in the world | () | e. Cold regions |
| | | f. SINAC |

Country: nation

To support: to sustain/maintain

Task: charge/job



C. Instructions: Read the statements below and choose the correct option based on the previous reading.

- 1 Biodiversity is a/an _____.
 a. () country b. () coast c. () resource d. () ecosystem
- 2 SINAC provides _____ support to the Conservation Areas
 a. () technical b. () little c. () waters d. () tropical
- 3 Costa Rica is located in the _____.
 a. () country b. tropical zones c. MINAE d. wealth



D. Instructions. Listen to the conversation and based on it circle the words you listen to.

wet pants
 sunny act
 problems cloudy
 squirrel funny
 brown deer

climate raining
 world hiking
 wildlife
 thing bear

E. Instructions. According to what you listened, write a title for the track.

F. Instructions. Taking as reference what you listened to, unscramble the next words.

rhnoepb → _____
 nyuus → _____
 rabe → _____

gininiar → _____
 ghinki → _____
 nowrb → _____

nyufn → _____
 santp → _____
 etvr → _____



G. Instructions. Help the tourist guide find the tourists by drawing a path with your pencil. Trace a line on all the words related to technology and computers in order to reveal his path. You can only travel horizontally or vertically.



nature	river	principle	furniture	flower	roses
brown	lake	air	candy	tulips	apple
break	sea	waterfall	moon	morning	sunflower
paper	handkerchief	land	fat	work	Monday
wood	rose	swamp	island	skin	professor
today	door	yesterday	palm tree	nurse	realize
eggnog	apologize	sin	sunset	dawn	lawn
beetroot	share	rude	lilies	bed	grass



H. Instructions. Now, pick out three words from the maze and write down a sentence with each one.

→ _____
 → _____
 → _____



4RS

Refuse

Reduce **Recycle**

Reuse

Trash

Tetra Pak

Styrofoam

To throw away

Cans

Disposable Cups

Words in Context

Recycle: Save the planet.

Avoiding buying disposable cups for parties helps preserve the planet.

In order to help the environment, people can reduce the use of Styrofoam cups.

Throw out the trash.



 **A. Instructions.** Listen carefully to the description of a paradise and draw every single item you recognize.

 **Paradise!** 













B. Instructions. Taking as reference the vocabulary from the previous activity, work with a partner and write down a 15-line dialogue

Writing a Dialogue





Fauna and Flora around Us

 Bear	 Dog	 Cat	 Rat	 Squirrel
 Hen	 Rooster	 Worm	 Ant	
 Plant	 Tree	 Branch	 Leaves	

Words in Context

My friend has 2 pets; a dog and a cat.
I don't like insects, especially worms.
To help the environment, you have to water the plants.
There are many ants in the tree.
There are rats in my house.

A. Instructions. Read the text "Conservation" and fill in the blanks by using the words represented through the images in the flashcards that are on the board.

Conservation

In the time it takes you to read this page, some 32 hectares of the world's tropical (1) _____ will be destroyed. The statistics defy comprehension. One hundred years ago, rainforests covered two billion hectares, 14% of the (2) _____'s land surface. Now only half remains, and the rate of destruction is increasing: an area larger than the state of Florida is lost every year. If the destruction continues apace, the world's rainforests will vanish within 40 years. By anyone's standards, (3) _____ leads the way in moving Central America away from the soil-leaching (4) _____ that plagues the isthmus. The country has one of the world's best conservation records: about one-quarter of the country is under some form of official protection. In 1992, Costa Rica received the Cantico a Todas Las Criaturas--"Song to all Creatures"--award given by the Franciscan Center for Environmental Studies, based in Rome; was one of three (5) _____ of the first environmental award presented by the American Society of Travel Agents; and was named the most environmentally conscious country in the world by the San Francisco-based News Travel Network: in April 1992, the National Biodiversity Institute was also awarded the Peter Scott Award by the International Union for the Conservation of (6) _____. Despite Costa Rica's achievements in conservation, almost the entire country has been deforested outside the (7) _____ and reserves, where deforestation continues at an alarming rate.

To defy: to resist

Apace: quickly; rapidly

Leaching: to empty; drain

B. Instructions. Based on the previous reading, answer the next questions.

1 How many hectares did rainforests covered a century ago?

2 Is the rate of destruction increasing or decreasing?

3 Who gave Costa Rica the environmental award?

4 What did the San Francisco-based News Travel Network say about CR?

5 What happened in 1992?

Personality: A Determining Factor in Becoming a Successful Language Learner

Rodrigo Ignacio Campos Araya
Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica
rodrigo.campos.araya@una.cr

Kevin Armando Brand Fonseca
Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica
kevin.brand.fonseca@una.cr

Edson Enrique Calderón Rodríguez
Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica
edson.calderon.rodriguez@una.cr

Resumen

La presente investigación es un estudio de caso cuyo propósito fue investigar los tipos de personalidad que poseen los aprendices de una segunda lengua exitosos en cinco escuelas primarias del circuito 03 en Pérez Zeledón. La importancia de este estudio se fundamenta en la relación entre la personalidad y el rendimiento académico de los niños en la materia de inglés. Los profesores de dicho idioma pueden recurrir a esta investigación para identificar asuntos de personalidad en los estudiantes con el fin de ayudarles a ser exitosos en su aprendizaje del lenguaje. El instrumento que se utilizó para llevar a cabo el estudio fue un cuestionario. De este, se analizaron las respuestas de los estudiantes con base en las características dadas para los cuatro tipos de temperamento existentes: sanguíneo, melancólico, y flemático. Al final, se pudo concluir que la personalidad es un factor determinante en el aprendizaje de los estudiantes, a pesar de no ser el único, ya que la mayoría de los aprendices con un desempeño lingüístico destacado se podrían adscribir a un tipo particular de personalidad-temperamento. Este documento también ofrece un número de recomendaciones para las autoridades del Ministerio de Educación Pública (MEP), escuelas de I y II ciclo, y maestros de inglés para poder lidiar apropiadamente con los asuntos de personalidad presentes en el aula.

Palabras clave: personalidad, temperamento, adquisición de un Segundo idioma, inglés como lengua extranjera, niños.

Abstract

This research was a case study whose purpose was to investigate what personality types are shown by successful second language learners at five elementary schools of the educational district 03 in Pérez Zeledón. Its importance lies in the fact that it shows the relationship between personality and children's academic performance in English as a subject matter. English teachers might use this research to identify their students' personality traits and, thereafter, help them become successful language learners. The instrument used to conduct the study was a questionnaire in which students' responses were analyzed in the light of the

features entailed in the four different temperament types proposed by Hippocrates: sanguine, choleric, melancholic, and phlegmatic. In the end, the researchers concluded that although personality was not the only determining factor in the students' learning process, most of the language learners with a remarkable linguistic performance could be ascribed into a specific type of personality-temperament. In addition, this paper offers a series of recommendations for the Ministry of Public Education (MEP, as it is referred in Spanish) authorities, primary schools, and teachers to appropriately deal with personality issues in the classroom.

Keywords: Personality, temperament, second language acquisition, English as a foreign language, children.

1. Introduction

Since 1994, the Costa Rican governments have put a strong emphasis on the teaching of English in elementary public schools. The attention given to this subject matter is, as pointed out by Ministry of Public Education (MEP) (2001), a response to the needs of the global economy and an attempt to contribute to the development of the country (p. 16). Some issues concern all the participants that are part of the English as a foreign language (EFL) programs at this point of the educational system; students' personality is one of them. Kinsella's work (as cited in the MEP, 2001) stressed that personality influences people's approach to learning a language. Considering this fact, personality requires more attention in elementary schools, for this factor "may determine even the channels... [that people] use to absorb, process, and retrieve new knowledge" (p. 31). In the end, children's personality in addition to children's strategic age in elementary school is determining to ensure the acquisition of a second language (L2). With this premise in mind, the next research is a case study whose purpose was to investigate what personality types are shown by successful second language learners at five elementary schools of the educational district 03 in Pérez Zeledón.

Scholars have argued that, due to individual differences upon learning a language, personality is a key factor to reach a high linguistic performance. Ellis (1989) sustained that the route which people undergo when learning a second language (L2) is highly influenced by factors such as age, learning style, aptitude, attitude, motivation, and personality (p. 99). In regard to personality, Sepehri, Rakshani, Keshavarz, and Kiani (2013) remarked that "developing understanding of personality typology, personality traits, thinking styles, and learning styles theories is a... useful way to improve teachers' knowledge of motivation and behavior of students" (para. 2). Conducting research on this factor is of utmost importance because teachers may obtain a clearer view of how to deal with the different personality types in the classroom. In this way, the diverse personalities shown by students can be tackled by devising strategies to ensure learners' optimal language learning regardless of their personality traits.

2. Literature Review

The next section explains some theoretical considerations that require to be examined in the light of the existent theory and previous research.

2.1. Defining Personality

Defining *personality* is a challenge given that it is perceived differently depending on the field. However, Child (as cited in Eysenck, 2014) provided a definition that can be applied to different scenarios. This author described personality as “more or less stable, internal factors that make one person’s behavior consistent from one time to another, and different from the behavior other people would manifest in comparable situations” (p. 38). In other words, personality traits are persistent through time and vary in every person; this situation makes creating typologies to better comprehend people’s personality necessary. For instance, it is feasible to find people with *introvert* and *extrovert personalities*. Frey (as cited in Eysenck, 2014) referred to the introvert as “an individual in whom exists an exaggeration of the thought processes in relation to directly observable social behavior, with an accompanying tendency to withdraw from social contacts” (p. 57). On the contrary, the extrovert is considered “an individual in whom exists a diminution of the thought processes in relation to directly observable social behavior with an accompanying tendency to make social contacts” (Eysenck, 2014, p. 57). This dichotomy helps to identify the features that make each person’s personality different, but it is also crucial to be acquainted with the types of temperament that account for people’s character.

Modern psychology specialists still draw many conclusions on people’s personality by resorting to theories like the Four Temperaments by Hippocrates. Childs (1995) summarized the features of each temperament as follows “[1] Choleric (bad-tempered, passionate, and irascible); [2] Sanguine (cheerful, confident, and optimistic); [3] Phlegmatic (stolid, unemotional, unexcitable); and [4] Melancholic (dejected, pensive, and depressed)” (p. 4). All in all, the temperament is simply a component of people’s personality which contributes to explain their behavior. This taxonomy has been especially useful to conduct pedagogic studies because teachers are able to understand what occurs in the classroom in a full-fledged way. In the same vein, it is imperative to remark that the types of personality-temperament are not always immutable, as people can change their behavior due to external factors that influence the way in which life is perceived (Hurlock, 2000). Teachers need to take this aspect into account to be ready when students change their conduct in the classroom. Therefore, the types of temperaments and the eventual changes that people suffer in this regard need to be present in a teacher’s mind to carry out the tasks of their profession successfully. In the case of English language teaching professionals, they must associate personality with the way in which a second language is learned.

2.2. Research on Personality and Second Language Acquisition

Understanding the process by which a person learns an L2 demands knowing the role of personality to acquire linguistic competencies. Many SLA experts, such as Fillmore, Strong, Dulay, Burt, Rossier, and Krashen (as cited in Ellis, 1989) have developed their own studies in order to relate personality to language learning. In their findings, the widely accepted hypothesis that “extrovert learners learn more rapidly and are more successful than introverted learners” could not be proven. Even so, Rossier (as cited in Ellis, 1989) found that there is a relationship between extrovert personalities and learners’ high fluency (p. 220). In the same work, Ellis also made reference to Fillmore’s research, who found that children

interacting with ease progressed faster in their learning process than those who did not (p. 220). Another chief aspect of personality that has been under study is inhibition. According to Krashen (as cited in Ellis, 1989), the hypothesis that learners inhibited to take risks advance more slowly in their learning is true. Regardless of Krashen's recognized authority on the topic, Ellis dared to refuse his arguments claiming that adolescents, who are socially inhibited to take risks, can learn the language without major complications (p. 221). Hence, the research carried out on personality and language learning in the last decades has revealed that there is some degree of relationship between these variables, yet the results are not completely validated.

3. Main Body

This section describes the methodology, the instruments, as well as the setting and the participants of the study and discusses the main findings obtained through the data analysis.

3.1. Methodology

The approach of this research is qualitative. Denzin and Lincoln (as cited in Gall, Gall and Borg, 2003) mentioned that a qualitative research has several methods in its emphasis because it involves an "interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter" (p.24). In the light of this premise, this qualitative study is an attempt to interpret students' personality as a determining factor in their L2 learning process. In addition, this research has a descriptive scope because the information collected will be explained and described using as reference the theory addressed earlier in the study. The design used for this research is case study because the investigators chose a phenomenon as the object of study in order to propose some useful materials that would help sanguine learners to be exposed to activities that fit their types of temperament. Moreover, this case study intends to help language instructors and other researchers to have a wider picture of the influence that a child's temperament may have on his/her L2 learning process.

3.2. Instruments

The instrument used to collect the information needed was a questionnaire with leading questions that would help researchers determine the types of temperament that the learners had. The data garnered were interpreted and analyzed through a triangulation process along with theory and with the help of a professional in the field of psychology.

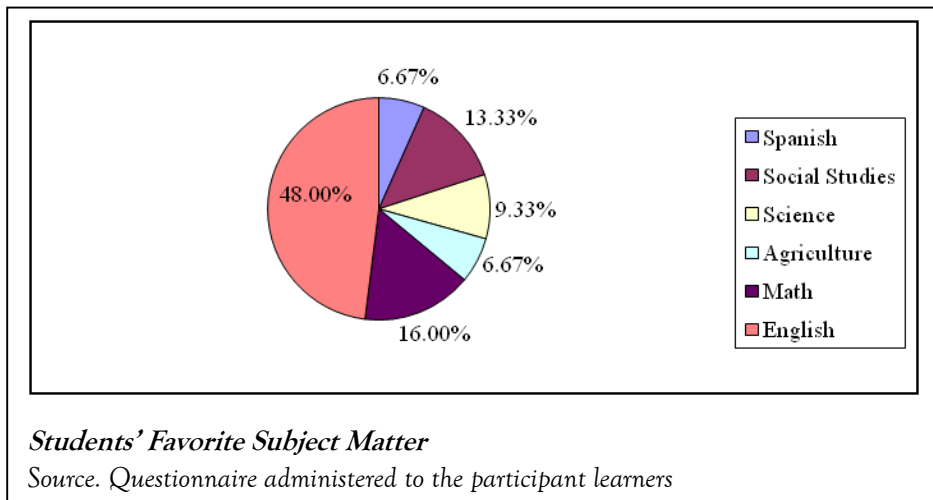
3.3. Setting and Participants

A total of 75 students were selected for this study and their grades were higher than 90. This number was vast enough to validate the administration of the instruments. The participants' ages ranged from nine to 15 years old. However, the predominant ages in the participants were 11 and 12. In order to carry out this case study, the researchers used the convenience sampling method due to the administrative staff and teachers' availability in the five elementary schools where the research was held. The schools visited for research purposes were: José Breinderhoff, Los Ángeles, Daniel Flores Zavaleta, IDA Jorón, and Hernán

Rodríguez Ruiz. All these education centers are part of the school district 03 in Pérez Zeledón County. The researchers went to the previously mentioned institutions to administer the questionnaire to the 75 participants so as to gather reliable data to enrich the main objective of this case study.

3.4. Data Analysis

In this section, the information collected through the questionnaires is analyzed and shown. First, the following graph displays with percentages the participant learners' favorite subject matters in elementary school.



The previous graph makes evident how students preferred the English language over the other subject matters. The fact that English is likeable for students might work to explain why their grades are higher than 90 in this subject matter. The reality is that students show extrinsic motivation. Motivation and personality are related factors to ensure students' success when learning a second language.

Temperament	Absolute value	% of Relative value
Melancholic	18	24
Phlegmatic	11	14.67
Sanguine	40	53.33
Choleric	6	8
Total	75	100

Students' Types of Temperaments
Source. Questionnaire administered to the participant learners

The previous chart shows the absolute and relative values of the types of temperament analyzed in the five schools chosen for this research. This table exhibits data in terms of the

different types of temperament found in the participants of the five institutions altogether. The predominant type was the sanguine. According to the theory of this study, learner with sanguine temperament are cheerful, confident, and optimistic. This predominance of the sanguine temperament supports Krashen's hypothesis that extrovert learners learn faster and are more successfully than introverted learners.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

After conducting this study, two conclusions can be drawn. First, English is a subject matter towards which most successful language learners feel a high degree of affinity. Second, even though personality was not the only factor influencing the students' learning process, most of the language learners with high linguistic performance held a sanguine type of personality-temperament. The previous finding suggests that the successful learners of second language under study were cheerful, confident, and optimistic. Such features also describe people with extrovert personalities. As a result, this research supports those studies that sustain the relationship between extrovert personalities and ease to learn an L2.

In the light of these findings, different suggestions can be provided to MEP's authorities, teachers, and students. First, it is imperative for the curriculum developers at MEP to contemplate that the learning of an L2 is linked to the learners' personality. Theoretical aspects related to personality types must be discussed more in depth in the syllabus for I and II cycles. In the case of teachers, although the current syllabus barely suggests how to deal with personality in the classroom, they must frequently resort to these theories so that they, as language teaching professionals, can assist their students in their learning process by reflecting upon such theoretical considerations when planning a lesson and treating students. Additionally, it is both MEP's and teachers' task to maintain English as a subject matter of preference for any language learner regardless of his or her degree of success. Finally, learners are called upon to look for strategies to facilitate their own learning and develop autonomy. In the beginning, they may need the teachers' guidance to do it, but only under such circumstances can people undertake the route to become fully competent in the target language.

Action Plan

Besides these recommendations, the researchers propose an action plan that tackles the need to involve the different personality types in the classroom with activities that can increase students' joy, confidence and optimism. Augmenting these qualities is essential because they are identifiable in learners with a sanguine temperament and extrovert personalities. Basically, the action plan consists of a sample of engaging activities that can be used at the different stages of the lesson plan format provided by the MEP. It is expected that teachers can implement this plan in 40 minutes. The activities suggested are related to one cognitive target stipulated in the syllabus for II Cycle: "Socializing" for 5th grade. One important aspect that makes these activities appealing to students is that they are based on authentic materials and tasks that resemble real-life situations.

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Appendix 1

Instrumento N° 1 Dirigido a estudiantes de II ciclo

El siguiente cuestionario está dirigido a alumnos de II ciclo. Conteste en cada caso lo que se le solicita, se le agradecerá profundamente la veracidad en las respuestas dadas.

- 1- Escuela: _____
- 2- Dirección: _____
- 3- Edad: _____
- 4- Nacionalidad:
() Costarricense () Nicaragüense () Panameño () Otro: _____
- 5- ¿De las siguientes materias cuál es la que más le agrada?
() Español () Estudios Sociales () Matemáticas
() Ciencias () Agricultura () Inglés
- 6- ¿De las siguientes materias cuál es la que más fácil?
() Español () Estudios Sociales () Matemáticas
() Ciencias () Agricultura () Inglés
- 7- ¿Le gusta compartir con sus amigos el tiempo libre?
() sí
() no
- 8- ¿Si en el aula los compañeros hacen desorden, qué hace usted?
() hace desorden también
() le dice a la maestra o maestro
() se queda en su lugar hasta que pase el desorden
- 9- ¿Considera algunas veces que no puede hacer algo aunque en realidad sí puede?
() sí
() no
- 10- ¿Le cuenta a su maestra o maestro cuando tiene algún problema?
() sí
() no



11- ¿Prefiere algunas veces estar solo?

sí

no

12- ¿Tiende a necesitar más tiempo para elaborar los exámenes?

sí

no

13- ¿Le ha pasado que se encuentra en el aula pero usted está pensando en algo distinto?

sí

no

14- ¿Cuándo sucede una pelea entre compañeros qué hace?

la observa

le dice a la maestra (o)

trata de ignorarla y se retira

15- ¿Cuándo se enoja pierde el control?

sí

no

16- ¿Guarda los secretos que le confían?

sí

no

17- ¿Le ha dicho alguna persona como su mamá, papá o maestra (o) que usted es inquieto?

sí

no

18- ¿Alguna vez se ha peleado con alguien?

sí

no

19- ¿Qué prefiera hacer en su tiempo libre?

ver televisión

leer un libro

practicar algún deporte



20- ¿Ha estado alguna ocasión en la escuela sin querer hacer nada?

sí

no

21- ¿Piense en lo que le gustaría ser en el futuro?

sí

no

22- ¿Cree tener muchos amigos?

sí

no

23- ¿Cuándo se siente mal por algo lo dice?

sí

no

24- ¿Se siente triste cuando su mamá o maestra (o) le llaman la atención?

sí

no

25- ¿Le gusta ser parte de la directiva del aula?

sí

no

26- ¿Se lleva bien con los compañeros?

sí

no

27- ¿Cuál fue la última nota que obtuvo en una prueba de Inglés?

menos de 65

entre 65 y 79

entre 80 y 89

entre 90 y 100

28- ¿Ha vivido alguna vez en un lugar donde se hable Inglés?

no

sí, donde? _____



29- ¿Vive con alguien que hable o y trabaje en Inglés?

no

sí, quién? _____

30- ¿Tienen en su casa el servicio de televisión por cable?

sí

no

31- ¿Le gusta participar activamente en las lecciones de Inglés?

sí

no

32- ¿Recibe ayuda de sus padres cuando tiene que estudiar Inglés?

sí

no

33- ¿Hay en su comunidad bibliotecas?

sí

no

34- ¿Hay en su comunidad campos deportivos?

sí

no

35- ¿Le agrada como su maestro (a) imparte la lección de Inglés?

sí

no

36- ¿Qué materiales utiliza él / ella para ejecutar su lección de Inglés?

la pizarra solamente

carteles

grabadora

televisor

computadora



37- ¿Realiza su maestro prácticas orales en la lección de Inglés?

sí

no

38- ¿Escriben mucho en la lección de Inglés?

sí

no

39- ¿Cuánto tiempo ha recibido inglés?

1 año

2 años

más de 3 años

más de 5 años

Muchas gracias por su colaboración.

Appendix 2

Ministerio de Educación Pública
 Oficina de Lenguas Extranjeras

Sample Unit Plan

School: _____ Teacher: _____

Level: 5th grade Time from: _____ to _____ (40 minutes)

Cognitive Target: *Socializing*

<i>Linguistic Objectives</i>	<i>Functions and Language</i>	<i>Procedures</i>	<i>Values and Attitudes</i>	<i>Evaluation of learning outcomes</i>
<p>LISTENING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding explicit information. Identifying the main points of an oral stimulus. <p>SPEAKING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asking for and giving information about different topics. Maintaining a conversation stating acceptance and denial. 	<p>FUNCTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greeting, introducing and saying good bye. Extending invitations. Accepting and rejecting invitations. Asking for and giving information. Recognizing the importance of English. <p>LANGUAGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal and informal greetings (review) Extending, accepting and refusing invitations <p>EXPRESSIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would you like to 	<p>-Warm-up: Students watch a video about famous people sending greeting to their fans. Students take notes in a worksheet provided by the teacher. Afterwards, students are asked to say who they saw and provide some phrases for greetings and introductions that they could pick from the video. Video taken from</p> <p>-Presentation: The teacher explains some expressions for greetings,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Politeness in the social interaction manners. Respect for differences among people. Self confidence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check pronunciation and listening comprehension Generate questions and answers about different topics. Express ideas, opinions and information on different topics.



	<p>come to my party?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, I would like to... <p>I'd like to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm sorry, I need to study tonight. <p>• What do you do on weekends?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would you like to exchange mail with me? <p>• My interests are ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is English so important in the world today? <p>Because...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would you mind passing me the glue? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please, lend me your notebook? 	<p>introductions and leave-takings by using an illustrated handout.</p> <p>-Practice: Students listen to a conversation of people socializing and complete it with some phrases studied in the presentation. Then, students practice the dialogue in pairs.</p> <p>-Consolidation: Students imagine that they are a cocktail party in which they introduce themselves, greet people and say leave takings. Students take up the role of a famous person mentioned in an information card and make short conversations with their classmates.</p>		
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Taking Notes



Instructions: Watch the video “Celebrities surprising fans” in which famous people greet their fans. Take notes on the people you see and some greeting and introductions mentioned in the video. Use the following chart to write down your notes.

Famous People	Greetings and Introductions





Greetings

Hi!
Hello!
How are you?
How are you doing?
How do you do?

I'm fine, thanks / I'm ok.
I'm very well / I'm not very well



Good morning

Good afternoon



Good evening

Good night



Introductions



Hi! My name is Mark.
What's your name?
Nice to meet you. It's
nice meeting you.

Hi. I'm Lucy.
Nice to meet you
too.
It's a pleasure.



Leave-takings

Bye, bye / Goodbye.
See you later / tomorrow. See you.
Have a nice day / weekend.
Nice to meet you. It was nice meeting you.





Time to Listen and Practice!

Instructions: Listen carefully to the conversations and complete the following dialogues with expressions related to greetings, introductions, and leave-takings. Then, practice the dialogues in pairs.

1. A: Good morning!

B: _____ Anna!

_____?

B: Fine, _____.

How are you?

B: _____

2. A: Good morning Anna!

B: _____, Dave.

_____?

B: I'm doing

_____, thanks.

Coffee?

A: Yes, please.


3. A: Good morning,
everybody.

B: Good morning Anna!


_____?

B: _____, How
are you, Chris?

B: _____



Taking up a Role



<p>You are Pharrell Williams. You are an American singer. You are 41 years old and you live in Virginia. You are single. You like music and fashion.</p>	<p>You are Miley Cyrus. You are an American actress and singer. You are 21 years old and you are from Nashville, Tennessee. You're single.</p>
<p>You are Jennifer Lopez. You are an American singer. You are divorced. You are years old and you live in New York. You like dancing.</p>	<p>You are Cristiano Ronaldo. You are a Portuguese soccer player. You are 29 years old and you are single. You like soccer and fashion.</p>
<p>You are Bruno Mars. You are an American singer. You are 29 years old, and you are from Honolulu, Hawaii. You are single.</p>	<p>You are Demi Lovato. You are and American singer and actress. You are 23 years old, and you have a boyfriend. You are from Texas.</p>
<p>You are Ariana Grande. You are an American singer. You are 22 years old. You are single. You are from Florida, USA.</p>	<p>You are Justin Timberlake. You are an American singer and actor. You are 34 years old, and you are married.</p>

Analysis of the Use of Metacognitive Strategies during Listening Lessons with Young Learners

Johanna Chaves Agüero
Escuela San Pedro, Costa Rica
jchaves72@live.com

Beatriz Gamboa Sánchez
Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica
beatriz.gamboa.sanchez@una.ac.cr

Resumen

La instrucción sobre el uso de estrategias metacognitivas al aprender una segunda lengua permite a los estudiantes asumir un papel más activo, tomando control de los procesos cognitivos propuestos en clase. El uso de estrategias metacognitivas inicia con determinar cómo se llevará a cabo la tarea de aprendizaje, monitorear la comprensión durante la realización de la misma, y finalmente, evaluar el proceso. Conocer sobre este proceso les permite a los estudiantes auto-dirigir su aprendizaje. Los niños pueden beneficiarse de este tipo de instrucción explícita ya que su desarrollo cognitivo aun no les permite adoptar múltiples perspectivas. Más allá de aprender contenido, los estudiantes deben ser guiados para que logran convertirse en aprendices de por vida, es decir, deben aprender a aprender. Poca investigación se ha realizado hasta ahora en este campo en Costa Rica. Considerando el énfasis que es dada a la habilidad de escucha durante la educación primaria, un estudio de caso se realizó para analizar cómo se utilizan las estrategias metacognitivas durante las lecciones de escucha en una escuela pública con niños de segundo ciclo y su docente de inglés. El estudio de caso incluyó 30 observaciones registradas en un diario de campo, una guía de observación estructurada, y un análisis de artefactos utilizados. Este estudio reveló que los estudiantes no reciben mucha exposición a estrategias metacognitivas, dando paso a una propuesta con ejercicios de escucha acompañada de sugerencias sobre cómo incluir la enseñanza de estrategias metacognitivas al trabajar con este tipo de población.

Palabras clave: estrategias metacognitivas, estudiante joven, habilidad de escucha, enseñanza de estrategias metacognitivas

Abstract: The instruction of metacognitive strategies, when learning a second language, allows learners to assume a more active role by taking control of the cognitive process proposed in class. Using metacognitive strategies starts by planning the way that the learning task will be approached, monitoring comprehension as the task is carried out, and finally evaluating the progress. Through metacognitive awareness, students can self-direct their learning. Young learners could benefit from explicit instruction in this area since their cognitive development makes them still unable to adopt multiple perspectives. More than learning content, students should be guided on how to become life-learners, that is, they must learn to learn. Little research has been done in this field within the Costa Rican context up to now. Taking into consideration the emphasis that the listening skill receives during

the elementary school years, a case study was carried out to analyze how metacognitive strategies are applied during listening lessons in a public school with second cycle students and their English teacher. The case study included a total of 30 classroom observations recorded through a researcher's log, a structured observation guide, and a collection of artifacts analysis. The study revealed that students do not receive much exposure to metacognitive strategies giving way to the proposal of listening tasks accompanied with suggestions on how to approach metacognitive strategy instruction when working with young learners.

Keywords: metacognitive strategies, Young learners, listening skill, metacognitive instruction

1. Introduction

Metacognitive strategies help students self-direct their learning. By using these types of strategies, learners becomes aware of what they already know and what they still lack learning. These types of strategies can help language learners become more independent. They can understand what they need to learn for a certain task and how to use the current knowledge they have in order to succeed. However, this ability does not always come naturally to all people, so teachers are encouraged to guide students in this sense. Particularly, young language learners can benefit from instruction in this area because their cognitive development is still limited and needs to be developed due to their age and little experience as L2 learners. Goh and Taib (2006) considered that children need more guidance from their teachers than older L2 students because they are still not capable of understanding that not all tasks can be approached the same way, and thus a strategy that is appropriate for one task is not necessarily effective for another (p. 230). Metacognitive instruction for approaching listening tasks can provide students with tools on how to carry out the assignment, troubleshoot difficulties they encounter along the way, and make them feel more in control of their learning.

Considering that metacognitive instruction can make a difference in young learners' performance, that there is not much research in this field within the Costa Rican context, and that the Ministry of Education entails emphasis be given to listening during the primary school years, a case study was carried out to analyze how metacognitive strategies are applied during listening lessons in a public school. The qualitative study sought to answer the question: How are metacognitive strategies approached in class during the listening lessons? The study was carried out in a public elementary school with 128 school children and their English teacher. There were two groups of fourth, two of fifth and three of sixth graders that were observed for a total of 30 English lessons. These lessons were recorded through a researcher's log (see Appendix 1), and when a listening lesson took place, other instruments like a structured observation guide (see Appendix 2), and an artifact collection analysis (see Appendix 3) were used to collect data to describe how metacognitive strategies were put into practice for the task students were assigned.

2. Literature Review

The teaching of the listening skill has received more attention in recent years causing in its path changes in regard to how it should be approached in the language classroom. Listening is now accepted as a complex and active skill whose teaching should implicate guiding students in becoming autonomous life learners. Exposing students to language learning strategies is not enough. They need to be aware of what strategies can be used and in what circumstances. This means teachers need to raise awareness of strategy use. However, this awareness must go beyond simply exposing learners to these. Learners should reflect on their own learning, that is, to think about thinking through metacognitive strategies. Young learners can benefit from this kind of instruction from a very early stage in the language learning process. Aspects like the importance of strategy awareness, metacognition and young learners, and metacognitive instruction are regarded in this paper.

2.1. Importance of raising student awareness of strategy use

As students try to face the challenge of improving their listening skill, they might experience anxiety and discomfort due to the little control they can have of the input heard. This is why language teachers must carefully plan and carry out the listening lessons, taking into account the processes involved in the teaching of this skill. As students acquire linguistic knowledge, they must also be equipped with tools like language learning strategies to overcome the difficulties encountered when tackling the learning process. Three basic listening comprehension strategies were proposed by O'Malley and Chamot based on cognitive theory: metacognitive (which deal with awareness of learning), cognitive (which allows students to manipulate or transform the target language) and socio-affective (which aid learners in controlling their emotions and attitudes during a task) (as cited in Serri, Boroujeni and Hesabi, 2012, p. 844). Explicitly raising awareness of these strategies can benefit students, making them more strategic learners. With previous instruction in this area, students can make wiser decisions on which strategy to use depending on their needs or the demands of the assigned exercise.

When students analyze and reflect on their learning, they become more effective learners because they do not only acquire and retain knowledge. Most importantly, they discover how to control and evaluate their listening development. Becoming aware about one's own learning is exactly what metacognitive strategies intend. Oxford (1990), explained that this specific type of strategy implies centering, arranging, planning and evaluating ones performance in order to coordinate and control the learning process (p. 135). Thus, when a teacher activates and promotes these strategies, they are engaging in metacognitive instruction. Through time and constant practice, strategies will come to be used automatically and even unconsciously by students (Zhang, 2007, p. 72). Raising students' awareness of strategies can lead to skillful and more independent learners.

2.2. Metacognition and Young learners

Metacognition is considered a higher order of thinking because it includes planning, monitoring and evaluating the cognitive processes engaged in learning. Actively controlling ones learning plays a crucial role in achieving success. Metacognition involves control and executive aspects when employing metacognitive strategies, and knowledge about cognitive states and process. Flavell categorized three types of knowledge as follows:

- *Person knowledge* makes reference to judgments in regard to the individual and universal traits that directly impact learning.
- *Task knowledge* consists on knowing the purpose, demands, and nature of learning tasks as well as being capable of considering factors that might contribute to the difficulty in carrying out the task.
- *Strategy knowledge* refers to choosing the appropriate strategies to be able to achieve the learning goals (as cited by Goh and Taib, 2006, p. 223).

By developing knowledge in these three areas, learners will be able to regulate and manage their learning due to the metacognitive awareness they gain so they can adapt and apply strategies according to the task requirements.

The ability to monitor and control ones learning will expand as young learners grow older and have more learning experiences. Kuhn explained that, early in childhood, children can develop aspects like meta-knowing and theory of mind, but other aspects like meta-strategic knowledge takes more time to develop. Young children can learn some memory or other cognitive strategies, but it is unlikely that they can use them spontaneously. Using ones metacognitive knowledge implies monitoring the performance and deciding which strategy to use, then evaluating its effect. Children will come to accomplish this through experience, practice and support (as cited in Larkin, 2010, p.37). It is in this sense that metacognitive instruction is highlighted. Even though this instruction will take time, the outcome will be learners with a sound metacognitive knowledge base.

2.3. Metacognitive Instruction to develop the listening skill

Metacognitive instruction during a listening lesson provides students with direction on how to manage their listening comprehension. It provides guidance and opportunities for students to reflect on themselves as language learners and the demands of listening in that language. This type of instruction has been qualified as more important than activating cognitive knowledge or teaching strategies, “because using metacognitive knowledge is the bases for selecting and activating the strategy that is necessary when it is necessary” (Paran and Sercu, 2010, p. 102). From this perspective, listening development avoids merely assessing listening comprehension or learning cognitive strategies. It focuses on other variables like cognitive and social processes that do not always come naturally to leaners. Through metacognitive instruction learners engage in self-appraisal and self-management activities guided by the teacher.

Young learners can benefit from metacognitive instruction as much as adults. Vandergrift researched the benefits young learners could have when they are asked to reflect on the processes of listening by having them make predictions and evaluate their performance. He concluded that “the activities sensitized the learners to listening processes and developed their metacognitive knowledge” (as cited in Goh and Taib, 2006, p. 224). Different ways to approach metacognitive instruction have been proposed. Vandergrift and Goh (2012) designed a metacognitive pedagogical sequence for teachers to carry out with well-planned listening lessons. It takes into account activities students should engage in before, while and after listening:

- Pre-listening stage: the teacher provides learners with enough context about the listening text they will encounter. This includes information such as the topic, text genre, and relevant cultural information. The main purpose during this stage is for students to use this information provided by the teacher to make predictions about the text they will hear. For this to be possible, the text must be appropriate for the students’ age level and life experience, providing the opportunity to make logical predictions based on their background knowledge.
- Verification stage: It consists of three moments for students to monitor, evaluate, plan and problem-solve as they listen. During the *first listening* students verify predictions and write down additional information. These notes are shared with another classmate to discuss discrepancies in their understanding. During the *second listening* learners monitor the discrepancies found, make corrections and write down additional details. This information is shared in a class discussion to reconstruct main points and details. The *third listening* is to verify the information discussed in class. It is also suggested to provide students with a text transcript to verify particular sound symbol relationships they had not noticed before.
- Reflection and Goal Setting Stage: After having listened to the aural text, students are asked to reflect on the listening experience and to set goals for future listening activities. At this point in the lesson, the teacher encourages learners to evaluate their approach to the listening task, identify the difficulties encountered and rate their success (Vandergrift and Goh, pp. 109-111).

By following these key metacognitive processes for listening instruction, learners can plan, monitor and evaluate while working on a listening activity. The stages of the process can be carried out with guides or worksheets or even without prompts. Following these steps can facilitate the development of the listening skill and gradually lead learners in taking control of their listening development.

3. Research Findings

To learn about how metacognitive strategies were approached in class during the listening lessons with young learners, a total of 30 lessons were observed. It is important to point out that only four of the 30 lessons were directed to the development of the listening skill. Even though the English syllabus clearly indicates that listening and speaking should be a priority, this was not evident in the case analyzed. As an overview, pre-listening and while listening stages were carried out, but no post listening took place. Thus, metacognitive strategies were only employed during those two stages. This demonstrates how little attention is given to the listening skill and it also indicates that students are not given the opportunity to evaluate their performance after answering the comprehension tasks. Thus the teaching of listening is focused on testing listening comprehension not on developing skilled, independent learners.

The structured observation guide contemplated aspects like student attention, awareness of goals and objectives to be reached, identification of the purpose of the listening task, as well as overviewing and linking with already known material. However, during the lessons observed only the strategies of paying attention and overviewing/ linking with already known material were applied. These two strategies were used in all of the four listening lessons that listening took place, and were initiated mostly by the teacher during the pre-listening or while-listening stages. Through the researcher's log, it was possible to highlight that it was necessary for the teacher to ask for the student's attention at different times during the lesson, particularly in the pre-listening stage. However, during the while-listening stage, the whole group would cooperate and listen attentively while the teacher was providing the information in order to answer the exercises. It was possible to observe that students paid directed attention, which is to concentrate on the task, and selective attention, which is to focus on particular information (Oxford, 1990, p. 154). This stage was the peak point where students were silent and concentrated on the activity and the teacher's input.

During the pre-listening stage, the teacher's main focus was on overviewing and linking the new vocabulary to what had been introduced in previous lessons. An example of this was reported in the researcher's log, when the teacher asked students to look in their notebooks to a specific exercise where they had written down information about ways to greet in different countries (see Figure 1). Later, they used the information they had just recalled to solve the listening exercise proposed for the while-listening stage.

In another lesson, the overviewing took place with posters or images that had been studied in previous lessons (see Figure 2). Here, the teacher would explicitly remind students that the vocabulary had been studied before. For the other two lessons, the drawings made on the board by the teacher also served the purpose of overviewing.



Figure 1. Student's notebook. Picture made during observation #2 as part of the Artifact Collection.

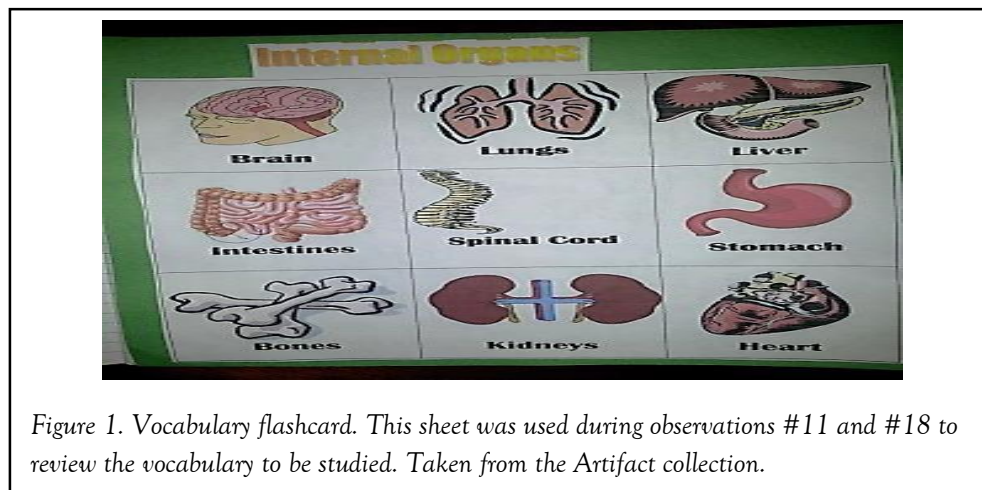


Figure 1. Vocabulary flashcard. This sheet was used during observations #11 and #18 to review the vocabulary to be studied. Taken from the Artifact collection.

The absence of strategies that guide student's learning, such as setting goals and objectives or identifying the purpose of the study, was noted through the information gathered in the structured observation guide and in the artifacts collected. These sorts of strategies provide a compass for students to direct their own learning, but even though the teaching process is carefully planned out before entering the classroom, the teacher never provided students with this type of information. It was found that some of the handouts given to students only gave instructions on how to answer the exercise; no further information about the reason for listening was included. Goh and Taib (2006) assured that YL can benefit from metacognitive strategy, they require explicit teaching of these strategies, "Young learners will [...] need more guidance from their teachers in mediating their perceptions about strategies and task demands," this is due to their cognitive development which makes them still unable to adopt multiple perspectives (p. 230). Teachers can help students plan, monitor and evaluate their learning throughout each of the listening stages.

4. Conclusions

With regard to the strategies that were used, there was not much variation in the type of activities students were asked to perform in order to use the strategy; thus, the same strategy was repeated several times throughout the different listening tasks or even during the same lesson. Also, it was the teacher who initiated or suggested the activity where a strategy was put in practice. There were only a few occasions in which a learner made it explicitly evident that he or she was applying a learning strategy. This revealed that the role students acquired with regard to the use of strategies was passive and no self-evaluation or monitoring was encouraged.

The two metacognitive strategies applied in class were paying attention and over-viewing and linking with already known words. Overall, it is possible to state that students paid attention in class, especially while they were receiving the information with which they had to complete the exercises. At other times during the lesson, the teacher called their attention when it was necessary. On the other hand, over-viewing was used mostly in the pre-listening stage because the activities performed included reviewing vocabulary words from previous lessons. They were not told either what was expected from them or where their learning experience was heading. Having students know what is required from them can be useful because their cognitive development limits their ability to figure out by themselves why they are doing a particular activity or what is expected from them once the lesson is over. If students are aware of the objectives they must reach, they can also self-evaluate their progress and become protagonists of their learning.

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Appendix 1: Researcher's Log

UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL
SEDE REGIONAL BRUNCA

Research topic: Listening Instruction of Second Cycle EFL Students

Program: Applied Linguistics Licentiate Program

Researchers: Licda. Johanna Chaves Agüero, M.Sc. Beatriz Gamboa Sánchez

Background: This instrument records all activities carried out during the English lessons, no matter what skill is developed.

Purpose: To record the activities carried out during the English lesson to collect information that the researcher considers relevant for the research.

Researcher: _____ Date: _____
Time: _____ Amount of Lessons: _____
Grade Level: <input type="checkbox"/> Fourth Grade <input type="checkbox"/> Fifth Grade <input type="checkbox"/> Sixth Grade
Section: _____ Observation Number: _____
Amount of students that attended class: _____

Instructions: Write down the activities observed during the lesson, as well as any comment considered relevant such as teacher's or students' reactions or expressions during the class.

Appendix 2: Structured Observation Guide

UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL
 SEDE REGIONAL BRUNCA

Research topic: Listening Instruction of Second Cycle EFL Students

Program: Applied Linguistics Licentiate Program

Researchers: Licda. Johanna Chaves Agüero, M.Sc. Beatriz Gamboa Sánchez

Background: This structured observation guide permits the observer to detect the listening strategies being applied. With this instrument, it will be possible to identify the metacognitive strategies facilitated by the teacher to aid students through the listening exercise and observe students reaction to the strategies. Not all the activities developed during the lesson will be noted in this instrument because the English syllabus requires teachers to develop all four skills (listening, reading, writing and speaking), and the listening skill will be the sole focus here.

Purposes:

To identify the listening strategies being put into practice during an English class.

To describe particular characteristics of how the listening instruction process takes place.

Observer: _____ Number of students observed: _____ Date: _____ Length of Observation: <input type="checkbox"/> 40 minutes <input type="checkbox"/> 80 minutes Grade observed: <input type="checkbox"/> Fourth Grade <input type="checkbox"/> Fifth Grade <input type="checkbox"/> Sixth Grade Materials used for listening activities: _____
--

Instructions: Check on the event that takes place when developing a listening activity during the English lesson.

Strategy performed in class	Initiated by	Listening Stage
Metacognitive strategies <input type="checkbox"/> Paying attention <input type="checkbox"/> Set goals and objectives <input type="checkbox"/> Identify the purpose of the study <input type="checkbox"/> Overviewing and linking with already known material	<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Student	<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-listening <input type="checkbox"/> While listening <input type="checkbox"/> Post-listening

Appendix 3: Artifact Collection Analysis

UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL
 SEDE REGIONAL BRUNCA

Research topic: Listening Instruction of Second Cycle EFL Students

Program: Applied Linguistics Licentiate Program

Researchers: Licda. Johanna Chaves Agüero, M.Sc. Beatriz Gamboa Sánchez

Background: This instrument aims at analyzing whether the written material facilitated to the students (textbooks, photocopies, notebooks, board) includes metacognitive strategies to aid in the development of the listening skill. The analysis will take place **ONLY** when working on listening exercises.

Purpose: To identify language learning strategies in the materials students use to carry out listening exercises.

Coder: _____ **Date:** _____

Type of material: _____

Material for grade level: Fourth Grade Fifth Grade Sixth Grade

Instructions: Please write a check mark (✓) next to the strategy that is present in the material given to students. More than one option can be picked.

The written material:

Metacognitive Strategies	Observations
1. Gives information about the purpose of the task	
2. Allows over viewing and linking with already known material based on the topic and type of text before listening (Students make predictions on the type of information and possible words they will encounter)	
3. Allows students to monitor their understanding	
4. Promotes self-evaluation on the students' performance.	

Diagnosing the Development of the Listening Skill in Early Education in Public Schools

Johanna Chaves Agüero
Escuela San Pedro, Costa Rica
jchaves72@live.com

Beatriz Gamboa Sánchez Gamboa
Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica
beatriz.gamboa.sanchez@una.ac.cr

Resumen

El aporte lingüístico que el docente provee dentro del aula de inglés en Costa Rica es esencial para lograr competencia en la habilidad de escucha ya que, al darse dentro un contexto extranjero, la exposición de los estudiantes a ésta es limitada. El Ministerio de Educación Pública requiere que los estudiantes sean expuestos a aportes lingüísticos tales como conversaciones, descripciones, instrucciones, canciones, actividades deportivas, videos, y cualquier otra forma de material oral y autentico para que escuchen (Ministerio de Educación Pública, 2012, p. 21). La habilidad de escucha debe recibir prioridad durante la educación primaria, sin embargo, poca investigación se ha realizado en esta área. El siguiente estudio exploratorio pretende describir la situación que caracteriza el desarrollo de la habilidad de escucha con estudiantes de segundo ciclo en escuelas públicas. La investigación responde las siguientes preguntas: cuáles barreras limitan el desarrollo de la habilidad de escucha, cuál es el conocimiento de los docentes acerca de estrategias de aprendizaje y que recursos son necesarios para mejorar la enseñanza de esta habilidad en la escuela primaria. Para obtener la información, veinte docentes de inglés de diferentes tipos de escuelas (grandes, pequeñas, rurales o urbanas) participaron en la encuesta. El estudio reveló que los maestros no cuentan con el material audiovisual y equipo tecnológico apropiado para desarrollar ejercicios de escucha con los estudiantes de segundo ciclo, algunas características de los escolares interfieren en el desarrollo de esta habilidad, y existe una percepción errónea de lo que el término estrategias de comprensión auditiva implica.

Palabras clave: habilidad de escucha, estrategias de comprensión auditiva, material autentico y no-autentico, barreras al escuchar

Abstract

The input that a teacher provides in the English classroom in Costa Rica is essential to accomplish competence in the listening skill since the language is taught as a foreign language and thus, student's exposure to it is limited. The Ministry of Public Education requires teachers to "expose their students to a considerable amount of meaningful language input by listening to conversations, descriptions, directions, songs, sports activities, videos and any other form of authentic spoken material" (Ministerio de Educación Pública, 2012, p. 21). The listening skill should be a priority during the elementary school years; however, little

research has been carried out in this field. The following exploratory study aims at describing the situation embracing the development of the listening skill of second cycle students in public schools. The questions addressed through the research include: what barriers block the development of the listening skill; what is the teachers' knowledge about learning strategies, and what resources do teachers need to improve the teaching of this skill in primary school. In order to obtain the information, twenty English teachers from different types of schools (big, small, rural, urban) participated in the survey conducted. The study revealed that teachers lack appropriate audiovisual material and media devices to develop listening exercises with second cycle students; some learner characteristics interfere in the development of this skill; and there is a mistaken perception of what the concept of listening comprehension strategies entails.

Keywords: listening skill, listening comprehension strategies, authentic and non-authentic material, listening barriers

1. Introduction

In Costa Rica, most of the contact young learners have with the English language occurs mainly within the school environment. According to the Ministry of Public Education (MEP) guidelines, language teaching should take place by following a communicative approach. That is, English teachers are responsible for developing a language-teaching program, where communication is the ultimate goal, and where oral and aural skills should receive particular attention. Actually, during the first three years of formal instruction (known as the First Cycle) students work only on listening and speaking activities. Reading and writing tasks are introduced and developed during the next three years (fourth, fifth and sixth grades), which encompass the second cycle. However, the English syllabus states that listening and speaking should continue to be the main emphasis of the curriculum. Thus, the enhancement of the listening skill in the English classroom is seen as a priority during the elementary school years.

The following research aims at analyzing the listening instruction process of second cycle students by first identifying the barriers that teachers face during this process and then by analyzing the learning strategies that they promote during their listening lessons to aid their students achieve comprehension. Up to now, there is little research in this field within the Costa Rican context. Most investigations have focused specifically on university and high school instruction; and there is no record available on how the listening skill is being developed within the elementary school context. Neither have studies about the use of listening comprehension strategies been done in order to provide insights for the development of this skill in the EFL classroom. Thus, the present study intends to mark a starting point in the specific area of teaching English as a foreign language to primary school students within the public Costa Rican context. Attending to the reality and difficulties faced in the process of teaching listening gives way to understand better this educational phenomenon.

For the present study, twenty English teachers were surveyed about the difficulties they usually find when teaching listening to second cycle students in primary school and their knowledge about the learning strategies they could implement to help their students achieve comprehension. The teachers chosen work in different public schools in the region of Pérez Zeledón. Their teaching experience ranges from seven to eighteen years of working with kids. Furthermore, their schools vary in features such as the size, number of students, and socio-economical context where they are located. Thus, getting insights from teachers who work at different settings (big, small, urban, or rural institutions) gives the possibility of diagnosing the teaching phenomena in a better way. So, the investigation was addressed to answer the following research questions: Which barriers do teachers face in the classroom when working on the listening skill with second cycle students? What is the teachers' knowledge about listening comprehension strategies? What do teachers need to improve the teaching of this skill in primary school? By answering these questions, it was possible to analyze general implications of the listening instruction process of second cycle students in the region of Perez Zeledón.

2. Literature Review

The process of listening requires a person to pay attention to a speaker, decode a given message, interpret its meaning, and in most cases, give a response to what has been heard. In the case of foreign or second language learning this task can become more complicated due to the differences between the L1 (native language) and L2 (second language) since the target language rules regarding grammar, intonation, and pronunciation, among other aspects, may significantly differ from the speaker's native one. Xiao-yun and Gui-rong (2011) supported this premise by stating that "listeners should make complex processing to the language signals that they hear, and make it consistent with the speaker's real intention and store it in short-term memory" (p.316) to finally achieve comprehension. Furthermore, since in a foreign language context, students do not usually have many opportunities to receive input in the target language besides the one they get at school, the practice provided during class time is key for the development of the listening skill. Mendoza (2005) concluded that since "classroom listening is not real-life listening" (p. 1), the activities proposed should allow learners to get in contact with at least some of the features of real-life-situations.

2.1. Factors that Affect Listening Comprehension

During the last decades, researchers on first and second language learning have studied a series of factors that influence listening comprehension. Rubin (1996) related learners' difficulties to understand a message to variations in aspects such as the listening passage, the purpose for listening, the personal features of the speaker and the listener, the nature of the interaction between the participants or cognitive activity to be done. She summarized these five factors as text, task, interlocutor, speaker, and process characteristics (p. 199). On the other hand, Underwood stated that comprehension problems might be related to different cultural and educational backgrounds. He explained that situations like problems of interpretation, limited vocabulary, lack of control over the speed of the speakers, failure to

recognize the "signals" of conversation, difficulty to concentrate, and lack of appropriate learning habits can affect the learner when confronted to tasks based on recorded conversations or texts (as cited in Chen, 2005, p. 2). Any of these aspects that Underwood enlisted or a combination of them is going to result in problems to comprehend the message transmitted.

In the same way, Xiao-yun and Gui-rong (2011) claimed that second language learners deal with a series of listening barriers. They enlisted psychological obstacles, phonetic obstacles, misunderstanding of intonation, wrong pronunciation, unknowing about the phonetic phenomena, vocabulary and grammar obstacles, and non-linguistic handicaps as the main sources of interference that prevent learners from achieving listening comprehension (pp. 316-318). Although displayed under different categories, the sources of interference that students encounter are numerous and directly affect the listening process, evidencing that achieving listening comprehension is not an easy task. Teachers are then challenged to help students deal with and overcome those difficulties. Many decide to expose the learners to a wide range of listening input during the first years of formal language instruction so that they can become familiar with different accents, types of intonation, genres, and types of text organization.

2.2. Language Learning Strategies

Language learning strategies are thoughts and actions, consciously selected by learners, to assist them in the completion of specific language tasks and in learning and using the language in general. Oxford (2003) stated that "language learning styles and strategies are among the main factors that help determine how -and how well -our students learn a second or foreign language" (p. 1), as she remarked the importance of training learners in this field. Therefore, exposing students to plenty of input is not enough to ensure comprehension. Students need to be trained on what to do and how to handle all that input so that they can be involved in an effective learning experience.

Former studies in this field reveal the existence of different types and classifications. For instance, Cohen (1996) established two main categories, "language learning strategies" and "language use strategies" where the former help learners improve their knowledge of the L2 and the latter aid students when using the language that is part of their current interlanguage. Students may choose to use either type or make a combination of both in the process of learning and using the target language (pp. 2-3). Thanks to the application of these strategies, daily life events, which not necessarily have teaching purposes, can be turned into significant learning experiences. However, learners need previous instruction on this area in order to make wise decisions on which strategies to use.

There are specific learning strategies that can be used to address the different language skills as well as the multiple language purposes that a student can have in his learning process. In 1990, Oxford proposed an inventory of strategies for language learning, which has actually served as the basis for other researchers to carry out further studies due to its high validity, reliability and utility. Her proposal on strategy types can be summarized as follows:

- Memory strategies have a highly specific function of helping students store and retrieve new information.
- Cognitive strategies enable learners to understand and produce new language by many different means.
- Metacognitive strategies allow students to control and coordinate the learning process.
- Compensation strategies favor the use of the language despite the learners' gaps in knowledge that are so common in the interlanguage.
- Affective strategies help students regulate emotions, motivations, and attitudes.
- Social strategies promote students' learning by interacting with others. (Oxford, 1990, pp. 37-135)

The final goal of all these strategies is to aid the second or foreign language students in overcoming the obstacles that they will possibly find in their attempt to learn the language when confronted to the different macro and micro skills. Teachers who are aware of these strategies and their corresponding classification can direct their teaching practice better towards helping students become skilled users of the new language.

3. Research Findings

Listening is a core activity in any language learning environment. The Ministry of Public Education in Costa Rica seems to acknowledge this given the directions that it has stated in the English syllabus. The MEP requires teachers to “expose their students to a considerable amount of meaningful language input by listening to conversations, descriptions, directions, songs, sports activities, videos and any other form of authentic spoken material” (Ministerio de Educación Pública, 2012, p. 21). In addition, as explained before, listening and speaking should receive the main emphasis during the six years of primary school instruction. Through the survey conducted, it was possible to get important insights about the teaching of this skill when working with second cycle students in primary schools. The teachers who answered the questions belong to different settings, have a different a range of teaching experience, and their schools are located in different socio-economic contexts. However, their responses showed many similarities regarding the three main factors analyzed through the survey: the barriers they face when teaching listening, their knowledge about listening comprehension strategies and the resources they need to favor the development of the skill.

3.1. Which Barriers Are Faced in the EFL Classroom when Developing the Listening Skill?

According to the information provided by the teachers, the lack of suitable materials to teach listening to their students constitutes their main obstacle. A hundred percent of the informants expressed that besides the English syllabus, the MEP does not provide a particular

book, manual, or any other source to aid teachers when planning listening activities. This means that English teachers encounter the challenge of finding resources to implement in their classes and provide students with the input needed to develop communicative competence in this area. Some teachers explained that this search for appropriate materials is time consuming, and they do not have enough time to do this since they deal with a lot of paperwork at their schools and they should plan activities and look for resources to teach the other skills too.

The challenge of developing listening activities to teach the contents included in the English syllabus becomes even bigger when encountered with the need of finding materials that meet both the students' linguistic level and their interests. When asked what their main problems were, teachers explained that, often, authentic audiovisual resources present language that is too advanced for their students. Also, native speakers usually in the videos or tracks talk too fast and it is hard for the children to get the gist of what is going on. On the other hand, authentic sources in which the language used is simpler and easier to understand do not catch the attention of second cycle students since those audiovisual materials are usually addressed to very young native speakers, pre-K for instance. Informants added that, due to their age, students do not like to get involved in games, songs, and role-plays as they used to during the first cycle. Figure 1 shows how the majority of the informants expressed that it is difficult for them, when planning listening activities, to find suitable resources that meet the characteristics just mentioned. Only very few teachers expressed that they do not have difficulties in this area since they have collected a series of materials through their years of teaching experience.

Other barriers that teachers identified relate to the environment in which teaching takes place and to characteristics of the learners. In first place, the main external factors mentioned include the absence of adequate technological devices, noise and distractions outside the classroom, and noise caused by the students themselves. Some teachers stated that their schools lack a TV, computer, or speakers that they can use to play movies or other type of audiovisual material. Other informants explained that the equipment they have does not meet the requirements for students to carry out the tasks properly. Others expressed the need of having a language lab where interruptions and outer noise could be avoided. Finally, some said that their groups are numerous and noisy so practicing listening becomes really difficult. On the other hand, regarding students' characteristics, teachers said that there is a "negative attitude" toward the listening activities since some learners reject the aural input that appears in videos or other recorded sources preferring their teacher's voice instead. Finally, some teachers believe that there is a general lack of interest in learning English from students' part. Figure 2 shows the barriers that the informants considered to be the most important in their teaching situation.

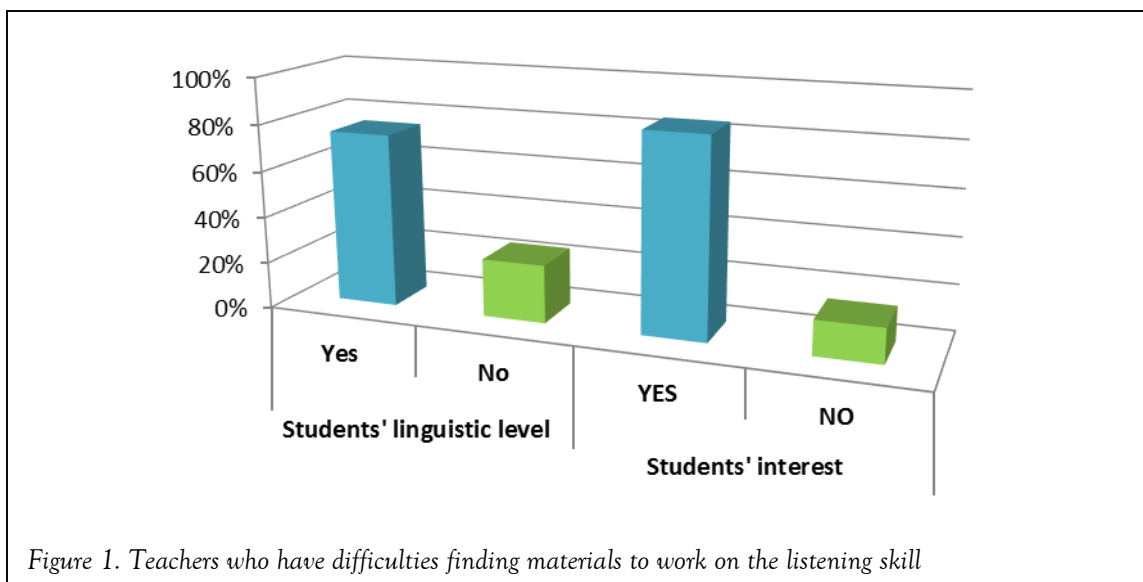


Figure 1. Teachers who have difficulties finding materials to work on the listening skill

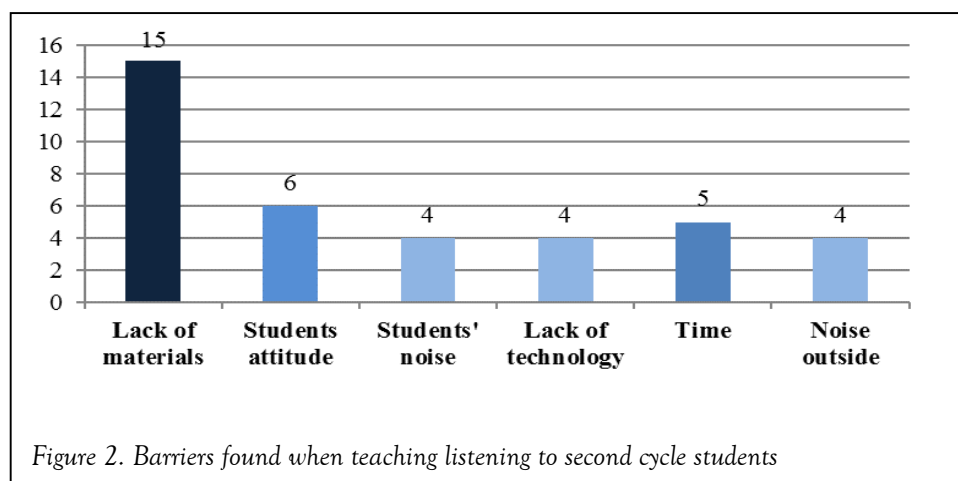


Figure 2. Barriers found when teaching listening to second cycle students

3.2. What is the teachers' knowledge about listening comprehension strategies?

The process of learning how to listen in a foreign language, has been described as “an encoding and decoding process in which the listeners make use of a set of techniques to reach comprehension” (Bozorgian and Pillay, 2013, p. 106). These researchers used the term “technique” to refer to those means learners use to approach the aural material so that they can achieve comprehension in a more effective way. The reason why the application of listening strategies is important lays in the fact that, using them at the beginning stages of learning can lead to skillful and more independent listeners since through time and constant practice, strategies will evolve and students will use them more automatically. The present survey also got insights about the acquaintance of teachers with these ways to assist students in the completion of listening language tasks, and their application in the English class. Figure 3 shows how the majority of the teachers claimed to put into practice listening comprehension strategies in their classes.

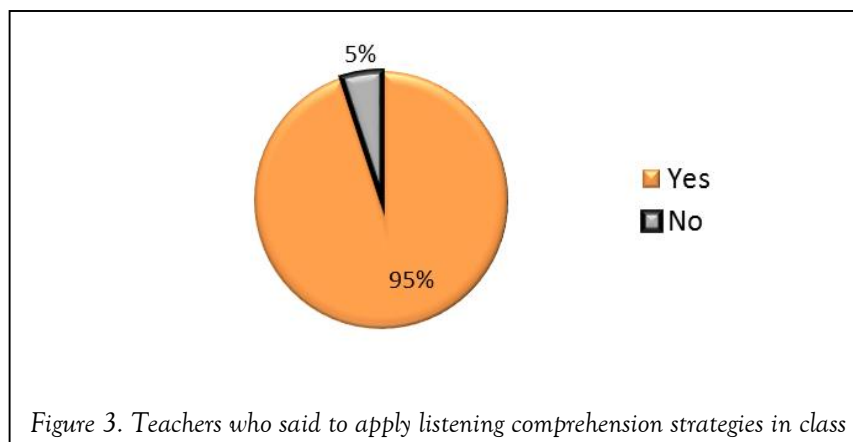


Table 1
Teachers' view of listening comprehension strategies

Correct responses	Mistaken views of strategies	
	As activities	As assessment
"Ways to help learners' improve their listening comprehension skill and to assess their progress."	"Activities through which students may show their listening skills."	"Set of actions to measure listening abilities"
"Techniques that contribute directly to comprehension and recall of listening input."	"All the listening activities done to develop student's ability to listen."	"The different ways a teacher may use to teach and evaluate this skill."
"Methods you implement in the classroom for the students to improve the level of understanding."	"These are the activities or materials suitable to assimilate better a target content and achieve adequate interest"	"Students listen to something and solve some exercises based on it while the teacher grades them."

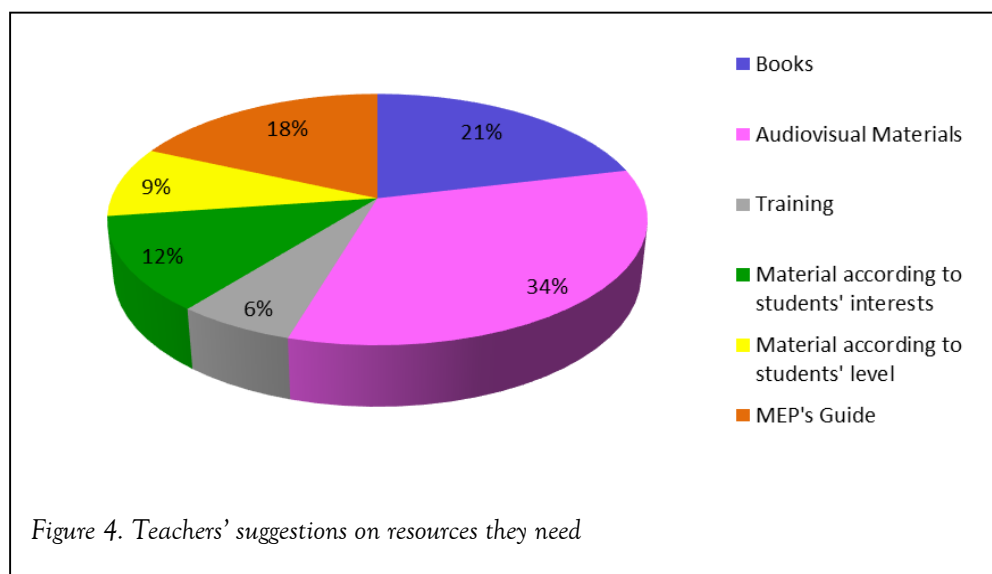
Note. Sample definitions provided by the surveyed teachers when asked, What do you understand by listening comprehension strategies.

Through the questionnaire, nonetheless, it was possible to see that most teachers have a mistaken perception of what the application of listening comprehension strategies really entails. When asked to provide a definition of the term, most of the informants described examples of either activities or materials used to work on the listening skill. There was also a tendency to relate the term to ways to evaluate or measure students' aural ability. Just four out of the 20 teachers viewed listening strategies as tools addressed to aid comprehension. Table 1 shows some of the definitions those teachers provided. Due to these faulty views, there is a possibility that most students in the schools of the participants might be receiving listening input without getting any additional aid on how to take control of their own learning, act on the input received, and thus become better language learners. Teachers mentioned that, in the past two years, they have not received any training on how to teach the listening skill or how to put into practice listening comprehension strategies in class.



3.3. What do teachers need to teach listening in a better way?

Informants acknowledged that teaching listening to second cycle students is a difficult task. As children grow older, their interests change, and they do not like to get involved in role-plays and songs as much as they used to during the first cycle. In addition, the level of difficulty of the contents in the syllabus increases. Teachers explained that some topics are not attractive at all even to them. Also, they have to spend time introducing and teaching reading and writing skills, which means that they cannot take as much time to work on listening as they did in first, second, and third grades. The survey, requested the participants to enlist a series of resources that are missing and that they considered would significantly help them when teaching listening to these young learners. Figure 4 shows how teachers' responses mainly addressed the need of books and audiovisual materials to implement listening activities in their classroom. Similarly, teachers agreed that the MEP should provide a general guide with listening sources. In this way, students in different contexts would receive a similar amount of exposure to listening input, because up to now they are working with what their tutors are able to find since teachers are on their own when looking for materials.



4. Conclusions

The development of the listening skill in a foreign language class can be a challenging task. Following are the conclusions that the research brought about in regard to barriers teachers must overcome in this process, their knowledge about the application of listening comprehensions strategies, and their needs related to ways in which they can favor the development of this skill. First, with regard to the barriers found, the lack of suitable audiovisual materials and technological devices are the main issues that prevent teachers from exposing their students to an appropriate amount of aural input. Also external factors such as the noise coming either from the children themselves or from outside the classroom

are interfering with the process of achieving understanding. Finally, students' attitude towards listening activities and their lack of interest in the subject is also interfering in the learning process.

Second, there is a mistaken understanding of what listening comprehension strategies are. Most participants confused this term with specific activities to work on or to assess this skill. If most teachers are not clear about the meaning and use of these strategies, it may be inferred that their students do not have idea of what these techniques are or how useful they can be. Therefore, there is a possibility that those kids are being confronted with aural input in the target language but cannot approach the tasks in a way that they ensure comprehension. Taking into consideration, that English teachers lack suitable resources to develop the listening skill, and that the tasks applied to second cycle students may lack the application of comprehension strategies, it may be inferred that the listening instruction process is not being carried out in a way that helps children become independent listeners. In other words, these learners might be far from reaching the objectives proposed by the Ministry of Public Education. There is an urgent need of providing these teachers with the necessary materials and tools to properly work on the enhancement of the listening skill.

Finally, the research at hand serves as a diagnosis for future studies in the field of the development of the listening skill in primary schools. Further research could include a deeper analysis of the situations stated throughout this paper by carrying out a set of case studies at different schools in the region of Perez Zeledón. In this way, it would be possible to get a better view of the reality that second cycle students live when attempting to develop this aural skill. It is important to mention that the diagnosis carried out in this work represents a small-scale study; so the findings in this paper are limited to the information provided by the 20 participants. Since in the region there are around 110 English teachers working at primary schools, the situation with regard to the type of barriers found and the application of learning strategies might change in those cases that were not included in the survey. Likewise, there might be cases of second cycle students who are developing appropriate listening skills without any exposure to listening comprehension strategies on their teachers' part.

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Appendix 1

UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL SEDE REGIONAL BRUNCA

Research topic: Diagnosing the development of the listening skill in early education in public schools

Researchers: Licda. Johanna Chaves Agüero, M.Sc. Beatriz Gamboa Sánchez

Practical Background Diagnostic

This questionnaire aims at gathering information about the situation English teachers face in public schools when working on the listening skill with second cycle students.

Your ideas are of great value and your cooperation is appreciated. The data collected will only be used for this research and it will remain confidential. Feel free to share your ideas when answering the questionnaire, the information provided will be very important for

Instructions: Provide the information throughout the questionnaire as required.

PART A: Personal Information

1. Degree: _____
2. Years of Teaching Experience in elementary schools: _____
3. Grades you currently teach:

First Grade ()	Second Grade ()	Third Grade ()
Fourth Grade ()	Fifth Grade ()	Sixth Grade ()

PART B: Research topic information

1. Do you encounter barriers when developing the listening skill with second cycle students?
Yes () No () Go to question 3.



2. What kind of barriers do you frequently face?

3. When planning listening comprehension activities for second cycle students, do you have difficulty finding suitable material according to their linguistic level?

Yes () Which? _____

No ()

4. When planning listening comprehension activities for second cycle students, do you have difficulty finding material that appeals to students' interest?

Yes () Which? _____

No () Go to question 6.

5. Which are the reasons that cause those difficulties?

6. What do you understand by *Listening Comprehension Strategies*?



7. Do you apply Listening Comprehension Strategies in your classroom?
Yes ()
No ()
8. Have you received any training dealing with the application of listening comprehension strategies in the past two years?
Yes () How many? _____
No ()
9. Have you received any training dealing with the development of the listening skill in general in the past 2 years?
Yes () How many? _____
No ()
10. Is there a particular book or manual provided or suggested by the MEP that aids you when planning activities to work on the listening skill with II Cycle students?
Yes () No ()
11. Do you consider that you need more resources to help you develop the listening skill of your students?
Yes () What kind? _____

- No ()

EFL Learners' Preferences in the Implementation of Direct Learning Strategies in Learning Grammar

Viviana Fallas Gabuardi
Universidad de Costa Rica
vivi.gabuardi@hotmail.com

Karla Fonseca Sánchez
Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica
karla.fonseca.sanchez@una.cr

Resumen

El objetivo del presente estudio fue identificar las estrategias de aprendizaje directas empleadas por los estudiantes de segundo año matriculados en el curso Gramática II, de la Universidad de Costa Rica en el Recinto de Golfito para aprender la gramática del idioma inglés. Por otra parte, la percepción de los estudiantes hacia la importancia de este componente del lenguaje así como las prácticas de enseñanza, los principios y percepciones del profesor a cargo del curso se analizaron con el propósito de comprender el entorno en el que el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje se lleva a cabo en cursos de esta naturaleza. Para obtener la información necesaria, diversos métodos de recolección de datos tales como observaciones no participativas, cuestionarios y una lista de comprobación fueron implementados. Los resultados demostraron que los estudiantes aplican los tres tipos de estrategias directas; a saber, estrategias de memoria, cognitivas, y de compensación. No obstante, se demostró que las estrategias cognitivas y de compensación se utilizan con más frecuencia que las estrategias de memoria. Es de suma importancia mencionar que este estudio contribuyó, en gran medida, a que el docente encargado del curso de gramática y sus estudiantes tuvieran una idea más amplia acerca de la pertinencia de la aplicación de las estrategias directas de aprendizaje. Se espera que bajo la luz de los resultados, tanto instructores como alumnos, mejoren y adopten nuevas tácticas para la enseñanza y aprendizaje de la gramática en miras de un desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa en el idioma meta más efectivo.

Palabras claves: aprendizaje de lengua extranjera, gramática, el papel de estudiante y del instructor, estrategias directas de aprendizaje

Abstract

The purpose of the following research is to report on a study which aimed at identifying the direct strategies employed by second-year foreign language learners enrolled in the course Grammar II at Universidad de Costa Rica, Golfito Site to learn grammar. Moreover, the students' perceptions toward current grammar teaching practices as well as the professor's grammar teaching principles and beliefs were analyzed for the purpose of better understanding the environment in which the learning process was taking place. In order to obtain the data of interest, different qualitative instruments such as non-participant

observations, questionnaires and a checklist were used. In the first place, this research has greatly contributed to the identification of many students' beliefs about grammar teaching and the learning process in general. Additionally, the results demonstrated that students implement the three kinds of direct strategies; namely, memory, cognitive, and compensation, but at different levels of frequency. In fact, they use cognitive and compensation strategies more often than memory strategies. It is also relevant to mention that this study may provide teachers and students with valuable insights about the implementation of direct learning strategies in learning grammar. As a final point, it is expected that in the light of the findings discussed in this paper, both instructors and students can adopt new tactics to facilitate the teaching and learning process and develop students' communicative competence in a more effective way.

Key words: foreign language learning, grammar, students' and teachers' role, direct learning strategies

1. Introduction

The purpose of learning a language is to use it effectively in real-life situations. That is why learners must be exposed to different learning processes that contribute to the development of the linguistic skills. Nevertheless, focus should also be paid to the language components that play a key role in learning the target language. Such is the case of grammar. Teaching grammatical structures and making students use them in a communicative fashion is a hard task, though. In some cases, instructors separate this essential component from the rest of the linguistic skills; that is, they make pupils learn the rules without providing them with tasks that allow students to use those structures effectively. Therefore, finding out the best way not only to learn but also to use simple as well as complex grammatical structures is one of the main goals teachers as well as students should devote attention to.

Instructors as well as pupils have to participate actively in the process of learning. However, teachers have been regarded as the ones who have the responsibility to make students learn the language. It is true that the professor has to provide learners with different resources to make the process more meaningful and useful, but there are tools students can implement to help themselves learn the language easily. Such is the case of the learning strategies proposed by Oxford. She developed a set of strategies based on empirical research to help language learners learn English without difficulty. These strategies are “steps taken by students to enhance their own learning” (Oxford 1). These learning strategies are “especially important for language learners because they are tools for active, self-directed involvement, which is essential for developing communicative competence” (1). By means of learning strategies, learners “encourage greater overall self-direction,...which is particularly important for language learners because they will not always have the teacher around to guide them as they use the language outside the classroom” (10).

In view of the important role learning strategies play when assisting students in developing language learning, this study was intended to explore the impact that direct learning strategies exerted on facilitating second-year students' grammar learning process.

This study was based on a case study which was carried out with a group enrolled in the course Grammar II of the English Major at Universidad de Costa Rica, Golfito Site. With the main purpose of providing a whole picture of the kind of learning implemented to learn grammar in that specific setting, the investigators went deeper into the instructor's teaching grammar beliefs and principles as well as his practices in the classroom. In addition, the researcher deeply analyzed the students' role and their perceptions toward the current grammar teaching instruction they were being provided with.

Research Questions

- What are the instructor's teaching beliefs and principles and the students' perceptions towards grammar and grammar instruction?
- What is the role the English professor plays in encouraging students to implement direct learning strategies to use grammar communicatively?
- What kind of direct learning strategies do pupils implement to learn and use grammar?
- What recommendations can be provided as a way to improve grammar teaching and the learning process?

2. Literature Review

2.1. The role of grammar in the learning process

The purpose of teaching grammar either in an ESL or EFL context has been for decades a major issue for students and teachers alike. Al-Mekhlafi and Ramani claim that "researchers have debated whether grammar should be taught in the classroom, and students, for their part, have generally looked upon grammar instruction as a necessary evil at best, and an avoidable burden at worst" (69). That is, teachers have different perceptions about how it should be taught, and pupils consider it, although difficult, a necessary component for language learning to be successful.

According to Ellis, grammar teaching "involves any instructional technique that draws learners' attention to some specific grammatical form in such a way that it helps them either to understand it metalinguistically and/or process it in comprehension and/or production so that they can internalize it" (84). This means that teaching grammar does not necessarily mean just teaching the rules, but integrating different processes to make students capable of incorporating these rules when communicating. Therefore, not only tasks or classroom activities are mandatory. Providing students with tools out of class for learning and practicing a language becomes even more significant.

Even though there are strong arguments about particular ways of how grammar should be taught, there is no one single or clear approach to follow in the teaching and learning process. However, since the ultimate goal of learning a second language is to use it properly,

language professors must look for effective methods that allow pupils to directly interact with the target language or to ease the process of learning. As Oxford explains, the ultimate goal should be the promotion of communicative competence, and one tactic students can employ in order to achieve this is through the implementation of direct learning strategies.

2.2. Teacher's beliefs and role in the process of teaching grammar

The role the English professor plays when teaching grammar is crucial since he or she is the one who builds the students' knowledge through his or her teaching practices. In many circumstances it becomes difficult for language instructors to look for the most suitable teaching practices to help learners grasp the target language. Shavelson and Stern say that "what teachers do in the classroom is governed by what they believe and these beliefs often serve to act as a filter through which instructional judgments and decisions are made" (Abdullah 171).

Nowadays, there are some grammar teachers that perceive grammar as a set of rules to be learned in order to be reported in a paper-and-pencil test. What most language professors do, as stated by Al-Mekhlafi and Ramani, is to develop students' declarative knowledge, which is related to the knowledge about grammar itself, while leaving apart procedural knowledge, that is "the ability to use that grammar in actual communication" (78). They explain that this perhaps happens because instructors are asked to follow the institutions policies in which it is established that grammar has to be taught inductively (pattern drills, rule memorization). However, the teacher has the possibility to enhance the students' understanding and use of grammatical structures by identifying the most suitable ways of learning. Oxford explains that instructors can "identify learning strategies, conduct training on learning strategies, and help learners become more independent" (10). She suggests that when the instructor takes this role, "learners take more responsibility, more learning occurs, and both teachers and learners feel more successful" (11).

2.3. Learning Strategies

Learning strategies are "operations employed by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of information" which "make learning easier, faster, and more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (Oxford, 8). The main goal of learning strategies, as stated by this expert, is to attain communicative competence¹ since they help pupils "participate actively in authentic communication" (8).

Oxford summarizes the benefits of learning strategies; she explains that such strategies are problem-oriented, are specific actions taken by the learner, involve many aspects of the learner, not just the cognitive, support learning both directly and indirectly, are often conscious, can be taught, and are flexible (9). Also, the role the language instructor plays changes from teacher-fronted to more learner-centered classes.

¹ Speakers' capability to speak a language with linguistic proficiency and to use language appropriately in different social contexts" (qtd. in Wong and Barrea-Marlys 62).

There are direct and indirect learning strategies. The former refers to the ones that “directly involve the target language” while indirect strategies “support and manage language learning without directly involving the target language” (Oxford 37-135). However, for the purpose of this research, direct strategies such as memory, cognitive, and compensation were the ones considered in order to explore the extent to which second-year-language learners employ them in order to facilitate the learning of grammar.

2.3.1. Direct Learning Strategies

Direct strategies require “mental processing of the language” (Oxford 37). They are divided into memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies. Each of them includes different processes and different activities are suggested.

2.3.2. Memory Strategies

Memory strategies have a specific function; they assist learners in storing and retrieving new information.

Creating mental linkages

Grouping: Classifying or reclassifying material into meaningful units.

Associating/elaborating: Relating new language information to concepts already in memory.

Placing new words into a context: Placing a word or phrase in a meaningful sentence, conversation, or story in order to remember it.

Applying images and sounds

Using imagery: Relating new language information to concepts in memory by means of meaningful visual imagery.

Semantic mapping: Making an arrangement of words into a picture, which has a key concept at the center or at the top, and related words and concepts linked with the key concept by means of lines or arrows.

Using key words: Remembering a new word by using auditory and visual links.

Representing sounds in memory: Remembering new language information according to its sound.

Reviewing well

Structured reviewing: Reviewing in carefully spaced intervals.

Employing action

Using physical response: Physically acting out a new expression or meaningfully relating a new expression to a physical feeling or sensation.

Using mechanical techniques: Using creative but tangible techniques, especially involving moving or changing something which is concrete, in order to remember new target language information.

2.3.3. Cognitive Strategies

These strategies “enable learners to understand and produce new language by many different means” (Oxford 37). That is, learners manipulate or transform the language.

Practicing

Repeating: Saying or doing something over and over.

Formally practicing with sounds and writing systems: Practicing sounds in a variety of ways, but not yet in naturalistic communicative practice.

Recognizing and using formulas and patterns: Being aware of using routine formulas.

Recombining: Combining known elements in new ways to produce a longer sequence.

Practicing naturalistically: Practicing the new language in natural, realistic settings.

Receiving and sending information

Getting the idea quickly: Using skimming to determine the main ideas or scanning to find specific details of interest.

Using resources for receiving and sending messages: Using print and non-print resources to understand incoming messages or produce outgoing messages.

Analyzing and reasoning

Reasoning deductively: Using general rules and applying them to new target language situations.

Analyzing expressions: Determining the meaning of a new expression by breaking it down into parts.

Analyzing contrastively: Comparing elements of the new language with elements of one’s own language to determine similarities and differences.

Translating: Converting a target language expression into the native language or vice versa.

Transferring: Directly applying knowledge of words, concepts, or structures from one language to another in order to understand or produce an expression in the new language.

Creating structure for input and output

Taking notes: Writing down the main ideas or specific points.

Summarizing: Making a summary or abstract of a longer passage.

Highlighting: Using a variety of emphasis techniques to focus on important information in a passage.

2.3.4. Compensation Strategies

Compensation strategies “allow learners to use the language despite their often large gaps in knowledge” (Oxford 37). These strategies “are intended to make up for an inadequate repertoire of grammar, and especially, of vocabulary” (47).

Guessing Intelligently

Using linguistic clues: Seeking and using language-based clues in order to guess the meaning of what is heard or read in the target language.

Using other clues: Seeking and using clues that are not language-based in order to guess the meaning of what is heard or read in the target language.

Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing

Switching to the mother tongue: Using the mother tongue for an expression without translating it.

Getting help: Asking someone for help by hesitating or explicitly asking for the person to provide the missing expression in the target language.

Using mime or gesture: Using physical motion.

Avoiding communication partially or totally: Avoiding communication when difficulties are anticipated.

Selecting the topic: Choosing the topic of conversation in order to direct the conversation to one’s own interests and make sure the topic is one in which the learner has sufficient vocabulary and grammar to converse.

Adjusting the message: Altering the message by omitting some items of information, making ideas simpler or less precise.

Coining words: Making up new words to communicate the desired idea.

Using a synonym: Getting the meaning across by describing the concepts or using a word that means the same thing.

It is relevant to explain that for each of the previous strategies described, there is a variety of activities and exercises students can implement when learning a language.

3. Main Body

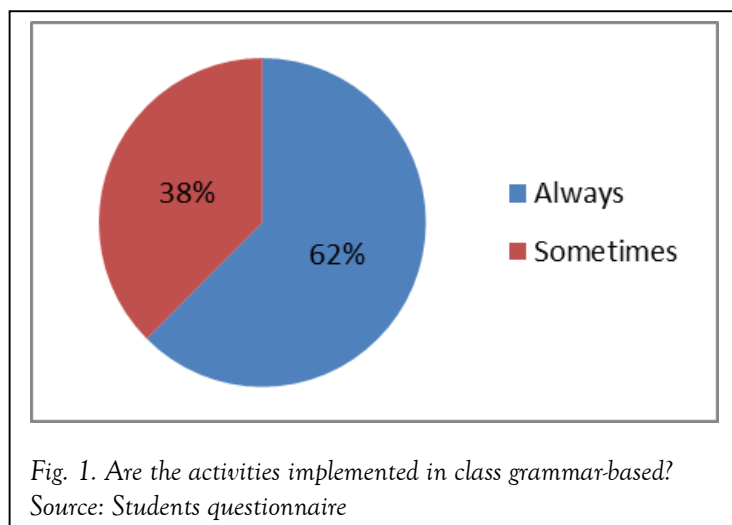
3.1. The instructor's grammar teaching beliefs and principles

Language instructors play a significant role in the process of learning. Their beliefs and teaching principles toward grammar instruction, specifically, influence their teaching practice. Shavelson and Stern have explained, that “what teachers do in the classroom is governed by what they believe” (qtd. in Abdullah). In order to test that theory, the professor in charge of the Grammar II course was asked different questions regarding his perceptions and principles toward grammar instruction in order to be tested with his current grammar teaching practices observed during the non-participant observations.

Regarding the teaching methodology, the professor explained that students must be provided with “teaching by doing” since “theory should lead to practice so that students may be able to internalize and spontaneously use the target language.” When this instructor was asked if his teaching philosophy matched with how he was taught, he made clear that not exactly because “after years of teaching experience, every professor develops his own eclectic method.” This teacher considers that grammar “ought to be taught thoroughly because it constitutes the core of the language; it is the base upon which students build both oral and written communication.” He also explained that he plays the role of a “guide to the students to discover the intricacies of the language by themselves.” He made clear that “it is around pupils that the class should center upon because they are the basic element teachers work it.” This participant also explained that the best way to teach grammar to students “is through the Communicative Approach.” He pointed out that his students use grammar communicatively “when they interact with each other and try to correct their own mistakes; the same occurs when they work in groups.” Therefore, he was asked about the activities that he implemented to teach grammar. He replied that he applies “different techniques such as individual, group, or pair work suited to the necessities of a particular group.” He also mentioned that “peer correction is a very useful technique because students analyze and try to correct their own mistakes, and it also fosters oral communication.” He was asked if his students were provided with communicative tasks in order to foster grammar understanding; he said that they are when they interact with each other and try to correct their own mistakes; the same occurs when they work in groups; oral communication is fostered as well.

According to the information described above, it can be concluded that this professor implements activities for pupils to develop communicative competence. However,

throughout the observations, none of these processes or procedures could be observed. First, the instructor said that the best way for students to be taught is through the communicative approach, but all the teaching and learning practices he carried out during the four observations were totally grammar-centered in which the professor was the provider of knowledge and the students were just passive receivers. Moreover, he explained that his role is of a guide while the students' role is of active participant. Nonetheless, it could be proved that he implemented activities and exercises in which learners had to write sentences in isolation and complete fill-in-the-blanks exercises. Students were also asked about the kind of activities the professor implemented during the lessons in order to triangulate the information. This information is represented in the following graph.



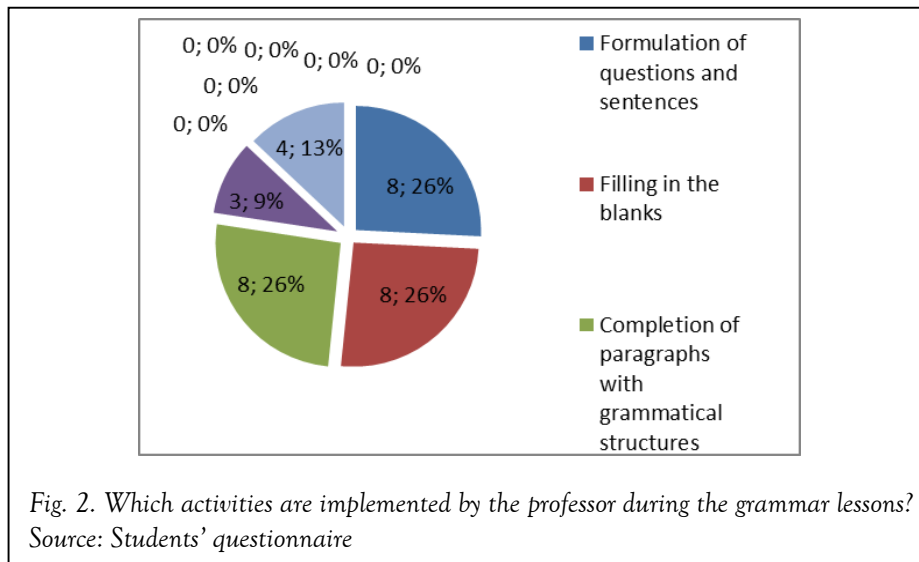
The previous graph shows that 62% of the students say that the teacher always implemented grammar-based exercises while 38% state that he did it only sometimes. However, when pupils were asked about the activities that the professor applied during the lessons, they chose grammar-based exercises only. This information is shown in the following graph.

As it is shown, most of the learners chose grammar-based exercises. For instance, the eight students chose such activities as formulation of questions and sentences, fill in the blanks, and completion of paragraphs with grammatical structures. Information gap activities and writing paragraphs were also implemented. However, during the period of observations, none of these two activities were implemented. Moreover, when the students were asked if the activities used by the English professor were enough to learn and use the language appropriately, all of them explained that they were not. They mentioned:

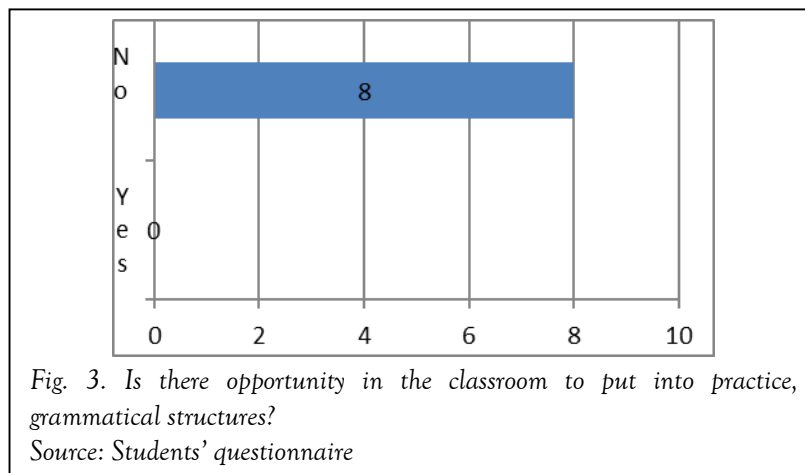
“No, because the classes are so repetitive and the professor just focuses on one kind of practice.”

“No, I believe that for this course the teachers should implement such activities as writing short paragraphs even though the course is about grammar.”

“In my opinion, they are not enough since the abilities are not studied as a whole. It is necessary to include all of them, not only grammar.”



In order to verify what the professor said about his communicative teaching practices and what the researcher observed during the observations, pupils were also asked if there was opportunity in the classroom to put into practice, in a communicative fashion, the grammatical structures studied. The following figure represents the students' responses.



The previous graph shows that the 100% of the students said that there is no opportunity to practice the structures they are exposed to; that is, the activities implemented do not resemble real-life situations. Students were asked why, and the following was what they answered:

“In the grammar class that does not happen; it is the only thing that is missing since the professor explains the rules very well. However, it is important that he provides a more interactive environment.”

“Sincerely, I do not remember if the teacher uses activities that resemble real life.”

“In the grammar course II those kinds of activities do not exist; there is only emphasis on short practices like writing sentences.”

“What the professor does is to ask us to write sentences based on real-life situations.”

This portrays that the English professor did not use communicative activities, and that he just provided students with grammar-based activities.

3.2. The students’ perceptions toward grammar and grammar instruction

The population chosen for the study believed that grammar plays a key role when learning English. Therefore, they were asked in which ways they considered it influences the process. Students gave similar opinions. For example, they mentioned:

“With a good grammar command, one can dominate the other areas.”

“It helps us to form logical structures.”

“Grammar is the only way to learn how to say things correctly when writing and speaking.”

“Grammar is so important; without grammar, there is no effective communication.”

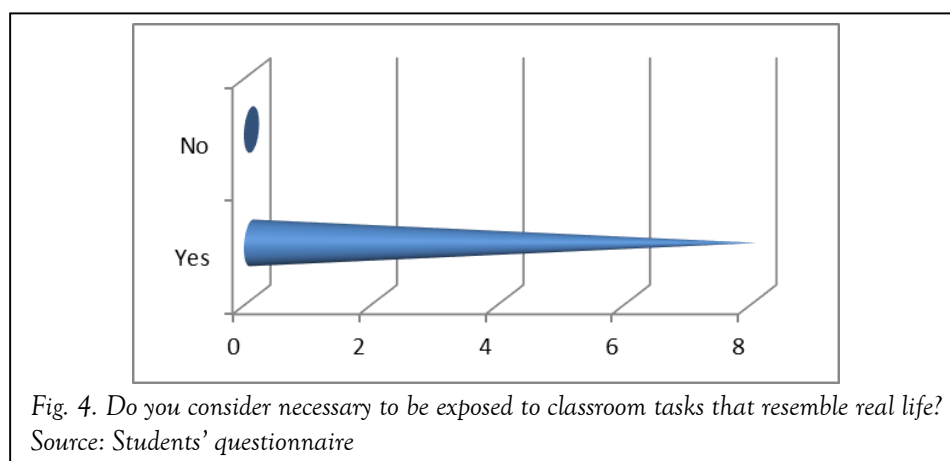
“I considered that grammar is the basis of language because it is the guide that tells the student how to speak and how to write correctly.”

Principally, what students consider is that without a formal instruction of grammar, no one can speak the language accurately and effectively. After pupils gave their opinions about what grammar meant for them and the importance it has when learning English, they were asked about their beliefs and perceptions toward the grammar instruction. The following table contains the answers they provided.

Table 1 shows that what students like the most about the grammar lessons is the way the professor explains. The majority of the students said that the professor explains clearly and that it facilitates the comprehension of the grammatical rules studied. On the other hand, they clarified that what they do not like is the amount of contents they are exposed to, the quantity of grammar practices, the similar classes they are immersed in, and the amount of time spent to complete grammar exercises; some explained that it is so little. Therefore, it is concluded that the professor provides the learners with clear explanations of the grammatical structures, but he just provides pupils with similar activities in which the learners have to use the patterns in a non-communicative fashion like formulation of questions and sentences, fill-in-the-blanks exercises, practice on the whiteboard, correction of sentences, identifications of logical order of sentences.

Table 1	
What students like about the grammar classes	What students do not like about the grammar lessons
The teacher explains very well, and it is easy to understand.	Classes are always the same and that makes them tiring.
To learn the grammatical structures because they are essential for using the language.	When the professor explains a topic, we have to develop the exercises quickly with no interactive activities.
The kind of grammar exercises because in that way I can realize that I have learned.	There are a lot of topics and little practice and the topics cannot be studied deeply.
	We have to learn a lot of details, a lot of information.
<i>Source: Students' questionnaire</i>	

To make clear if students were aware of the necessity to improve the grammar lessons, they were asked if they considered necessary the implementation of communicative activities, such as being exposed to real-life situations. The graph below clearly represents their answers.



It is noticed that 100% percent of the students consider that being provided with activities that allow them to use the language communicatively is pertinent. In order to support their answers, they explained that it is important to be provided with such activities since:

“We learn more because the language is being used as in real life.”

“We get more familiar with the language.”

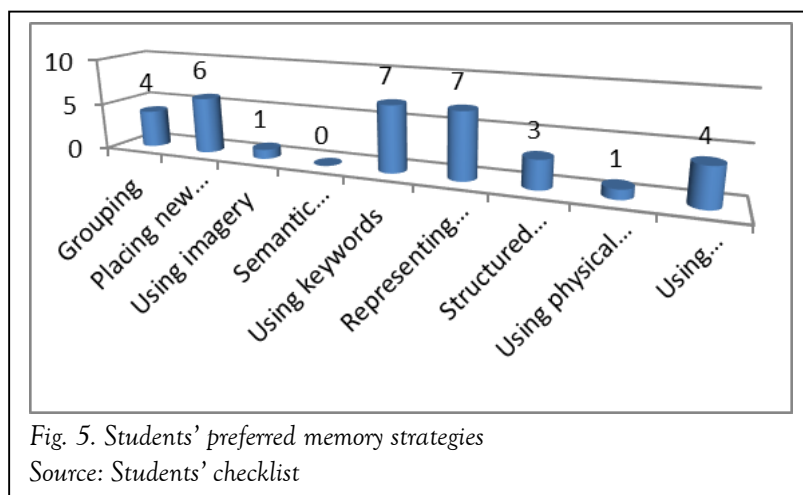
“Most of the activities must be related to real life because in that way we will be ready to face different real job situations.”

3.3. Direct learning strategies implemented to learn grammar

Before asking the subjects which direct learning strategies they implement to learn and use grammar effectively, they were asked if grammar was difficult for them, and what was the most difficult part. All the students said grammar is difficult, and that among the factors that make grammar hard for them is the amount of information they have to study, and sometimes they have to work quite fast in order to study all the contents established in the course program. During the observations, the researchers could notice that the professor explained the topics very fast. He started to explain the use of an auxiliary, for example, and then asked the pupils to write sentences using that structure. Then, he started with another auxiliary and did exactly the same without giving students time to ask or use the pattern in a different exercise.

3.3.1. Memory strategies

These strategies help learners to cope with the difficulty of remembering such elements of a language as vocabulary. There is an interesting phrase Oxford uses to describe these strategies. She says that students have to take care of their memory, and their memory will take care of them (39). In order to get data regarding memory strategies, the researcher provided the subjects with a checklist in which they had to choose the kind of activities they employed. The checklist was classified into the categories and activities in which memory strategies are divided.

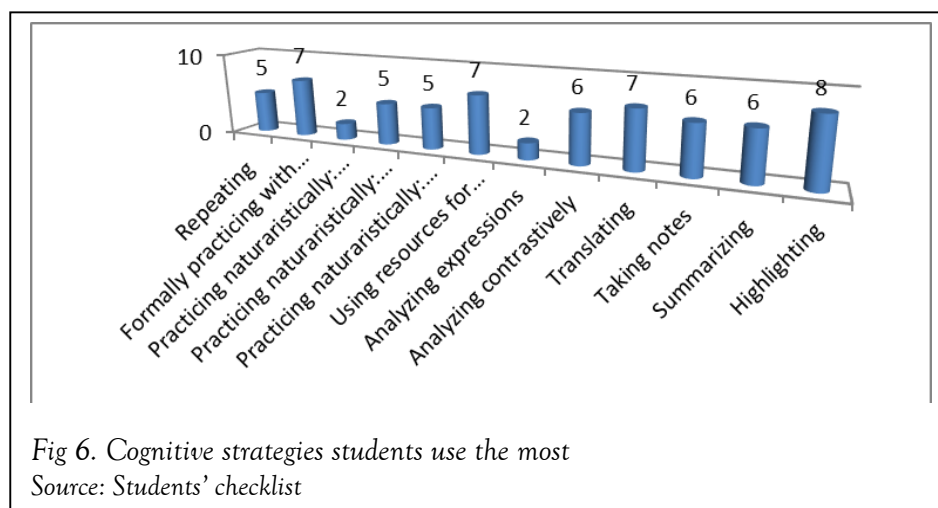


The previous exhibit represents the activities that students chose as the ones they use to learn grammar. Grouping, placing new words in context, using imagery, using keywords, representing sounds in memory, structured reviewing, using physical response, and using mechanical techniques were the one implemented by the students. The only one that is not used by learners is semantic mapping. Only four students out of eight chose grouping. An example of such a strategy is classifying language material into meaningful units. Then, six students out of eight selected the strategy of placing new words into context; they place a word in a meaningful sentence in order to remember it. Only one student chose that he uses imagery as a way to facilitate learning. In this strategy what students basically do is to relate

words to mental images to easily remember those words. Seven students out of eight said that they use keywords; that is, they associate the sounds of native words to the sounds of the foreign words to remember them more easily. In the same way, seven students said that they implement representing sounds in memory. In this case what learners commonly do is to remember new language information according to its sounds. The graph also shows that three students apply structured reviewing; in this kind of strategy what they do is to review in carefully spaced intervals; that is, they go over the information at first close together and then more widely spaced apart. The two final memory strategies that the subjects implement are using physical response and using mechanical techniques. In the former only one student chose that one and in the latter, four out of eight selected it as a way to assist their learning of grammar. As a result of this information, it is concluded that learners implement more such strategies as placing new words into context, using keywords, and representing sounds in memory.

3.3.2. Cognitive strategies

The main feature of cognitive strategies is the manipulation or transformation of the target language by the learner (Oxford 43). The following graph shows the kind of cognitive strategies pupils use to enhance the learning of English.



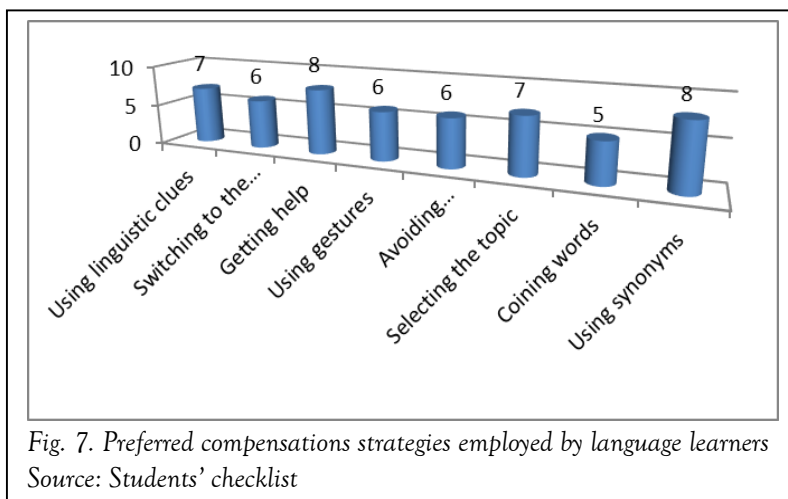
The previous graph depicts that five students out of eight implemented repeating. In the case of formally practicing with sounds, seven students stated that they implement this strategy. In practicing naturalistically, students implement different activities such as speaking with native speakers, listening to music, and testing. In the case of texting in English, five students chose it. When using resources for receiving information such as reading magazines, list of verbs, and using dictionaries, grammar books, and newspaper, seven students out of eight selected these. In the case of analyzing contrastively, six students agreed on its use; what students do in this case is to compare English to Spanish to remember them easily. The graph represents that the majority of the learners, seven exactly, chose translating as one strategy they commonly implement. Then, six students out of the eight

chose taking notes and summarizing as some cognitive strategies they apply. Finally, all of the subjects use highlighting as a strategy to help them grasp grammar in an easier manner.

The information clearly shows that most of the students implement cognitive strategies to facilitate their learning process as opposed to memory strategies. That is, more than half of the subjects selected cognitive strategies. On the contrary, in memory strategies there were pupils that did not choose some strategies like semantic mapping. Moreover, few students chose such memory strategies as using imagery and using physical response.

3.3.3. Compensation strategies

These strategies “enable learners to use the new language for either comprehension or production despite limitations in knowledge” (Oxford 47). They are intended to “make up for an inadequate repertoire of grammar, and, especially, of vocabulary” (47).



The previous chart clearly portrays the type of compensation strategies students implement. In the case of using linguistic clues, such as guessing the meaning of words through context, seven students out of eight chose it. Six students expressed that they switch to Spanish when they do not know how to say a word or phrase in the target language. Moreover, all of the students said that they look for help when they do not know how to say something. In the case of using gestures and avoiding communication when they do not know the topic of discussion, six students expressed that they implement this. Seven learners said that they select the topic which they know better in order to avoid making mistakes. Moreover, students used to coin words; that is, making up new words to communicate the desired idea. Five pupils out of seven chose this. And finally, all of the students expressed that they use synonyms when they do not know a word in the target language.

It is interpreted that the majority of the participants implement compensation strategies since these kinds of strategies help students overcome knowledge limitations; the subjects try to compensate the lack of knowledge.

3.4. The role of the English professor in the implementation of direct learning strategies

In order to identify the participation the language instructor has when encouraging students to implement learning strategies to learn grammar, he was provided with a checklist that included the three kinds of direct strategies. He was also asked if grammar was difficult for his students and why, and what the most difficult for his students regarding grammar was. First, he said that his students find grammar difficult since they have difficulties internalizing and using the structures of the target language in an automatic way. He explained that the most difficult for them is the exceptions to the rules because they are very numerous. He basically used formulas and taught grammar inductively and deductively.

Table 2		
Memory Strategies		
Memory Strategies	Yes	No
Acting out words to facilitate learning.		x
Rewriting rules and words or structures to facilitate learning.	x	
Relating words to mental images to facilitate learning.		x
Associating the sounds of native words to the sounds of the foreign words.		x
Classifying language material into meaningful units.	x	
Placing a word in a meaningful sentence in order to remember it.	x	
Making an arrangement of words into a picture, which has key concepts.	x	
Reviewing in carefully spaced intervals.		x
<i>Source: Teacher's checklist</i>		

Table 3		
Cognitive strategies		
Cognitive Strategies	Yes	No
Listening to music.		x
Saying or doing something over and over.	x	
Practicing sounds in a variety of ways.	x	
Reading magazines, list of verbs, using dictionary, grammar books, and newspaper.	x	
Speaking with native speakers.		x
Texting in English.	x	
Comparing English words to Spanish words to remember them.	x	
Translating words.		x
Writing down what the professor explains.	x	
Summarizing rules or information of the course book.	x	
Highlighting important information to remember it easily.	x	
Analyzing the parts of a word or sentence to understand its meaning.	x	
<i>Source: Teacher's checklist</i>		

It is concluded that the language professor implements more cognitive strategies than memory or compensation. The instructor prefers that pupils manipulate and transform the language in order to learn grammar better. Yalcin and Yalcin explain that language leaning strategies, “while non-observable, consciously or unconsciously used in cases, give language teachers valuable clues about how their students assess the situation, plan, appropriate skills so as to understand, learn, or remember new input presented in the classroom” (155). That means that professors have the responsibility of helping students find the ways to improve their language learning process to become more effective language users.

Compensation Strategies	Yes	No
Guessing the meaning of words through context.	x	
Using Spanish when you do not know how to say that in the target language.		x
Asking for help when you do not know how to say something.	x	
Using body gestures to explain what you what to express.	x	
Avoiding saying something when you do not how to say it in English.		x
Choosing the topic of discussion in which you have more knowledge.		x
Making up new words to communicate the desired idea such as <i>paper holder</i> for <i>notebook</i> .		x
Getting the meaning across by describing the concept or using a word that means the same.	x	
<i>Source: Teacher's checklist</i>		

3.5. Recommendations for improving the teaching and learning of grammar

As Savage, Gretchen, and Donna explain, grammar is regarded as a “necessary “master” skill that enables competence to develop in the areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing” (2). That is, this language component is essential for any language learner to really understand and use a language properly. According to Larsen-Freeman, “grammar knowledge is important, but only insofar as it enables students to communicate “accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately” (cited in Savage, Gretchen, and Donna 2). Therefore, it is quite advisable that the language instructor becomes aware of the multiple ways he can implement to allow pupils to really accomplish the ultimate goal of learning a second language, which is speaking it communicatively.

Different approaches as well as methods have emerged as a way to contribute to helping language learners to learn and use the grammatical structures in factual communication. However, it is quite important to keep in mind that the kind of approach and methodology chosen have to be based on the kind of learners language instructors work with because, in that way, they can make sure they are attaining learners’ immediate needs and interests. For instance, in the case of this specific study, it was shown that the participant students consider that being provided with grammar-based exercises do not allow them to develop competence

in language use. They are aware of the fact that being exposed to communicative or real-life situations certainly helps them to improve their oral skill, and thus, communicate effectively. All of them expressed that this kind of exposure is quite essential because in that way they can get familiar with situations they might face outside the classroom. For these kinds of students, communicative activities are the ones that satisfy their needs.

When teachers become aware of the necessities of the population they have, it is highly advised to look for ways in which they can assist learners more meaningfully. When students are not in the classroom, they have to cope with the language difficulties by themselves. That is why it is recommended that teachers train students in using strategies to enhance the learning process. The promotion of learning strategies does influence positively the learning process; therefore, defined action plans that encourage the implementation of such strategies is an excellent option to empower pupils during the process of learning.

4. Conclusions

After carrying out a thorough analysis of the information gathered, the investigator arrived at the following conclusions:

Even though the program of the Course II designed for second-year English students sets the parameters for the language professor to implement an eclectic approach to teaching, and activities in which students use in context what they learn, both were not fully implemented by the instructor observed since he did not employ an eclectic approach. The teacher just used the same methodology (teacher-based lessons) during all the lessons observed even though he made clear in the questionnaire that he implemented a communicative approach. The professor did not provide students with communicative activities as it was shown in the students' responses, which portrayed that the professor just applied such activities as formulating sentences and questions, filling in the blanks, or completing paragraph with the underlined structure. This can be contrasted with the observations carried out. The professor just followed the same approach to teaching; that is, a traditional approach in which grammatical structures were taught in isolation.

It was also found that students find grammar quite useful for them to develop competence in language use. They made clear that without this language component, they cannot speak or read the language accurately. The language learners generally said that grammar is the basis to develop the ability to speak the target language. However, they claimed that without effective learning and communicative tasks, effective learning cannot take place. They considered that being exposed to tasks that resemble factual events is quite important because, in that way, they can be trained to succeed in language use outside the classroom.

Another conclusion from this study is that students find grammar difficult because they have to learn a lot of contents in a short period of time. Students commented that each topic is studied fast and that little practice is given, which makes the process of learning the

grammar difficult. Therefore, in order to find what students did in order to bridge that gap, they were asked about the kind of learning strategies they implement. Regarding memory strategies, the most useful tactics were placing new words into context, using keywords, and representing sounds in memory. Second, referring to cognitive strategies, most of the strategies proposed by Oxford were applied by the language learners. That is, the majority of the pupils chose repeating, formally practicing with sounds, practicing naturalistically, using resources for receiving information, analyzing contrastively, translating, taking notes, summarizing, and highlighting as the preferred ones. Finally, regarding compensation learning strategies, the students agreed on implementing such strategies as using linguistic clues, switching to the mother tongue, getting help, using gestures, avoiding communication, selecting the topic, coining words, and using synonyms.

However, among the three different direct strategies; namely, memory, cognitive, and compensation, the two latter are the ones that are used the most by the learners as opposed to memory strategies. And among all the direct strategies that pupils use to enhance the learning of grammar, highlighting (cognitive), and getting help and using synonyms (compensation) are the preferred strategies chosen by the students. Nevertheless, from all the information obtained, it can be concluded that, even though students find grammar difficult, and state that they employ different learning strategies to improve the acquisition of the language, this could not be supported with what they actually did in the classroom. During all the observations, students just played the role of passive receivers of information. They did not ask any questions or comment on the topic; they did not employ any strategies. The only strategy that was implemented was that of taking notes.

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Error Correction Techniques and their Impact on Beginner EFL Learners at Universidad Nacional, Coto Branch

Karla María Fonseca Sánchez
Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica
karla.fonseca.sanchez@una.cr

Federico Soto Peralta
Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica
fd24p@hotmail.com

Resumen

El análisis y la corrección de errores han arrojado luz sobre los procesos que conlleva el aprendizaje de una segunda lengua. En el pasado los errores eran estigmatizados y vistos de manera despectiva por los profesores. Hoy por hoy tal perspectiva ha cambiado; los errores son considerados como una fuente valiosa de información. La aceptación de esta nueva visión radica en el cambio de las perspectivas tradicionales acerca de la adquisición de una segunda lengua. Debido a la importancia de los conceptos anteriores en el campo de la adquisición de una segunda lengua (ASL), el presente estudio tiene la finalidad de 1) identificar las diferentes técnicas de corrección de errores empleadas por los profesores de la Universidad Nacional Campus Coto en el curso Inglés Integrado II, 2) determinar si la técnica realmente ayuda a los estudiantes a internalizar un segundo idioma. A la luz del paradigma cualitativo, esta investigación sigue el método de estudio de caso, ya que se examinó la situación particular de un grupo de estudiantes dentro de su contexto natural: el aula. No obstante, es imperativo mencionar que también se utilizaron métodos cuantitativos para recolectar datos de manera más exacta y confiable. Los métodos de recolección de datos empleados fueron observaciones, un cuestionario y una entrevista semi estructurada. En relación con los resultados obtenidos, se descubrió que los estudiantes prefieren ser corregidos al final de las actividades orales. También, los estudiantes están a favor de las técnicas de reformulación, corrección posterior y señalamiento puesto que ellos consideran que esas son las técnicas más adecuadas para su aprendizaje.

Palabras clave: técnicas para corrección de errores, señalamiento, rectificar, reformulación, enseñanza del inglés.

Abstract

Error analysis and correction have been very productive fields that have shed light on the processes involved in learning a second language. In the past, errors were highly stigmatized and pejoratively seen by teachers, but now they are viewed as a valuable source of information. The acceptance of such errors nowadays has to do with a shift from the traditional view of how a second language is acquired to a more integrative perspective. Due to the importance of this topic in the field of second language acquisition (SLA), the present study aims at 1) identifying the different error correction techniques employed in the

Integrated English II course at Universidad Nacional of Costa Rica, Coto Extension and 2) determining to which extent those techniques contribute to beginners' second language development. In the light of the qualitative research paradigm, this investigation followed the case study approach due to the fact that the specific situation of a small group of learners was examined in their naturally occurring setting, the classroom. Notwithstanding, it is necessary to point out that some quantitative data gathering methods were also used for the purpose of collecting more accurate and reliable data, which in turn contributed to a better understanding of the phenomenon under scrutiny. The data-collection instruments employed were classroom observations, questionnaires and a semistructured interview. Among the findings obtained, students overtly expressed that they liked being corrected at the end of their performance tasks. They were in favor of reformulation, recast, delayed correction, reactive teaching and pinpointing since they thought that these techniques were appropriate and nonthreatening.

Keywords: error correction techniques, pinpointing, recast, reformulation, English teaching.

1. Introduction

This study was conducted at Universidad Nacional, Coto Branch with first-year students of the English Teaching Major who were enrolled in the course Integrated English II and their professors. The rationale for this investigation lies in the need to address the treatment that has been commonly given to learners' errors. In past decades, errors were highly stigmatized, seen sometimes as terminal diseases, and, unfortunately, they are still considered as such by some instructors. However, the notion of completely freeing students from errors has changed thanks to the different studies conducted by remarkable scholars such as Pit Corder, Jack C. Richards, Rod Ellis, and Douglas Brown. Now, there is a more open perspective about the way errors should be treated in the classroom. In today's new language teaching models, errors are an indication of the active learning progress being made by a student (Yule, 1996, p. 166). Above all, an error shows that something in the learner's cognitive process is developing to ultimately become like the target language form.

1.1. Research Questions

- What are the techniques used by professors to address learners' errors in the classroom?
- In what ways do these error correction techniques contribute to students' learning?
- How do students perceive the error correction techniques employed by professors?

1.2. General Objective

To inquire into the nature of the error correction techniques employed in the course Integrated English II for the purpose of offering suggestions for error correction techniques for English Teaching beginner majors.

1.3. Specific Objectives

- To identify the error correction techniques used in Integrated English II.
- To determine if the error correction techniques used by professors aid students' learning.
- To analyze students' perceptions about the error correction techniques used by their professors.

2. Literature Review

According to Ellis (2002), errors give good reasons for paying attention to learners' errors (p. 14). He mentions that errors are noticeable features of learners' language and making errors can facilitate learning when learners correct errors they commit by themselves. In addition, errors are important for both teachers and learners. Corder (1981) states that the making of errors benefits learners in that they are allowed to test their hypothesis about the nature of the language they are learning (p. 11). Also, Smith, as cited by Ellis (1997), states that when learners test a hypothesis, there must be the possibility of being wrong (p. 15). A wrong hypothesis leads to errors. This makes learners know what they have not learned from the target language.

2.1. Types of Errors

When learning a second language, people tend to commit many different types of errors when they speak. Such errors are seen as important for linguists because they think mistakes reflect the learners' development in the language they are exposed to. Before mentioning the types of errors that are going to be presented in this paper, it is important to clarify that there are what linguists call *interlanguage errors*, which are the errors caused by the interference of the mother tongue and *intralingual and developmental errors*, which reflect the learner's competence at a particular stage.

2.2. Intralingual and Developmental Errors

These intralingual and developmental errors are the type of errors expected from any individual learning a second language. They are the errors that persist from week to week. In some cases such errors reflect the final grammatical competence of the individual; in other instances, they may be indicators of transitional competence. Among the most well-known developmental and intralingual errors, there are four types of errors, which are overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules and false - concept hypothesis.

Overgeneralization errors are those errors that take place when the learners create a deviant structure on the basis of their experience of other structures in the target language. For instance, *he can sings, it is occurs*, and so on. According to Richards (1970),

overgeneralization generally involves the creation of one deviant structure in place of two regular structures; this may be the result of the learner incapacity to handle all the grammatical forms and linguistic burden (p. 6).

The other type of error is the **ignorance of rule restrictions**. This one occurs when the learner applies a rule in a context where it does not apply. For instance, *the man who I saw him, I make him to do it, or he explained me the book*. In the first case, the learner violates the limitations on subjects in structures with *who*, then in the second one the learner ignores the restrictions of the verb *make*, and in the third case what happens is what Richards calls a “misuse in preposition.” A misuse in prepositions happens when the learner encounters a particular preposition with one type of verb and then he attempts by analogy to use the same preposition with similar verbs; another example could be *he said to me and he ask to me*.

Incomplete application of rules shows that the learner’s deviancy represents the degree of development of the rules required to produce acceptable utterances. For instance, when making questions the learner may ask *How long it takes?* or when replying to questions the learner may answer “*what was she saying?*” (teacher) “*she saying she would ask him*(student). According to Richards (1970), the second language learner is mainly interested in communication. He realizes that he can achieve efficient communication without the need of mastering the necessary rules of question usage; motivation to achieve communication may exceed motivation to produce grammatically correct sentences and questions (p. 12). These are some more examples:

<i>Teacher’s questions</i>	<i>Student’s Response</i>
1. <i>What does she tell him?</i>	<i>She tell him to hurry</i>
2. <i>What does he have to do?</i>	<i>He have to do write the address</i>

Finally, there is the fourth type of error which is the **false-concept hypothesis**. A contrastive approach carried out by Richards (1970) shows that there is a class of developmental errors that derives from faulty comprehension of distinctions in the target language, in better terms there is a building of false systems and concepts by the learner (p. 14). For instance, some teachers may think that a good way to introduce the simple and continuous forms is by showing its contrast as in *is = present state, is+ing = present action*, but when the past is introduced it is often introduced as a past state as in *I was sick*. Thus, the learner completes his understanding by analogy:

is = present state

is+ ing= present action

was= past state

was+ing= past action

Thus, past state = I was sick

Past action = *he was climbed the tree* instead of *he climbed the tree*, and *I was going downtown yesterday* instead of *I went downtown yesterday*.

Ellis (2002) has also shed light on this type of error when he says that in some classroom contexts teachers or textbooks can lead the students to make faulty hypotheses about the language and Stenson, as cited in Ellis (2002), termed this as *induced errors* (p. 179).

2.3. Interlanguage Errors

One major exponent of these types of errors is Stephen Pit Corder, who established the steps to be followed in order to analyze errors. According to him, the first stage is the selection of the corpus (real world texts). Then, the following stage has to do with the identification of errors. The third stage is concerned with their analysis. The fourth focuses on their classification, while the fifth concentrates on their evaluation (Corder, 1981, p. 11).

Dulay and Burt, cited in Alonso (1997), refer to only one type of interlingual error, which they call interference errors, which are defined as those reflecting mother tongue structures and which do not appear in the L2 acquisition data of the target language (p.8). Nevertheless, neither Corder's, nor Dulay and Burt's classification are thorough enough to take into account every type of interlingual error.

In contrast, Lott, as cited by Corder (1981), proposes a more precise classification. Three types of Interference errors are distinguished (p. 37). They are overextension of analogy, transfer of structure, and interlingual/intralingual structures. The first one is defined as overextension of analogy, and it occurs when the student misuses a vocabulary item because it is similar, either phonetically, orthographically, semantically or syntactically, to another form in the L1. For instance, the word *actually*, which is really similar to the Spanish word "actualmente."

Transfer of structure deviant forms constitutes the second group. This happens when the student commits a grammar error because the mother tongue rules are followed. Learners may make errors because they assume that the target language and their native language are similar, and they are not. Among some examples are the followings:

- a. *because the parents of the two boys robed in a Institute some papers very important.*
- b. *this woman visited his girlfriend for speaking other boyfriend.*
- c. *the rector wanted that Leone was in prison for ever and made him a lot of bad things.*

According to Alonso (1997), the word order is altered, sentence two shows the translation of the Spanish structure *para hablar de* instead of the English one to speak about (p. 10). In example number three, the verb form wanted should be followed by the preposition to + infinitive, but instead the Spanish structure que + infinitive is employed.

Pronouns are the second reason for transfer of structure errors. The syntactic and morphological complexity of this word class in Spanish makes it difficult for students to cope with its use in English. (Alonso, 1997, p. 10).

2.4. In the Classroom Error Correction Virgil Oller's Model

There are many strategies and styles of error correction that teachers can use; this choice usually matches the teaching method that the language professional is using. While early L2 teaching methods focused on rote learning, emphasized students creating perfect output (for example the Audio-Lingual Method), and used error correction excessively, newer models based on a natural approach emphasize communicative competence and recognize that not correcting all student errors is more productive. (Fang & Xue-Mei, 2007, p. 23).

2.5. When and How?

When correcting errors it is important to highlight the positive in learners' journeys to success. Notwithstanding, it is up to the teacher to discern when to or not to correct the student. One of the criteria when deciding when to correct student errors is whether the error is global or local. Burt as cited in Ellis (2002) defines global errors as those that hinder communication; they prevent the hearer from comprehending some aspect of language (p.194). On the other hand, a local error, at the decision of the teacher, can often be overlooked for the purpose of not hindering students' learning process. This is because "local errors do not prevent the message from being heard, usually because there is only a minor violation of one segment of a sentence, allowing the hearer/reader to make an accurate guess about the intended meaning" (Ellis, 2002, p. 194). On the other hand, when a student makes a global error, this is probably an error that should be corrected. This is because, as it was previously mentioned, global errors hinder communication, so they need to be corrected in some way since the message may otherwise remain distorted (Ellis, 2002, p. 194).

Notwithstanding, Ellis (2002), highlights that the matter of how and when to correct errors has turned exceedingly complex. He adds that research on error correction methods is not at all conclusive on the most effective methods or techniques for error correction (p. 194).

2.6. Error Correction Techniques

Some teachers correct every mistake made by their students. Other teachers rarely or never correct their students' mistakes. Depending on the approach the teacher uses, this may make students nervous, lead them to a lack of fluency and, in worst cases, this can lead students to speak, but using an English that is hard to understand.

It is better to avoid either extreme. Teachers should try to find an in-between approach. They need to choose the right time to correct and the right time to let students speak freely. In this line, Ramirez (2007) recommends the following techniques:

- a. **Avoid negative feedback:** Teachers must avoid negative feedback. For instance, saying “No” gives no clues to a student of what he/she did wrong. Besides, such technique may have a negative effect on the students’ affective filter.
- b. **Utterance repair:** This is a correction in which the teacher corrects the student’s erroneous utterance; it is a correction in the strictest sense of the word. Teachers might do this because they are interested in maintaining the flow of the conversation, but at the same time remind students that they also have to focus on form (Ramírez, 2007, p. 117).
- c. **Pinpointing:** This is another widely used technique in which the teacher is expected to repeat the sentence for the student to identify the error. Knop suggests that the best way to do this is by emphasizing the last word before the error (cited in Ramírez, 2007, p. 117). There is also a brief change in the tone of voice, and some teachers tend to lengthen the vowel to allow students to catch the idea that the fragment needs to be refined or corrected.
- d. **Request for clarification:** Some common expressions used by teachers using this technique are *I’m sorry, I didn’t understand, He what?, Excuse me?* This technique is very friendly to students. Research suggests that when learners re-cast their message after receiving a clarification request, the message tends to improve despite not giving any explicit explanation of the mistake (Thornbury, 2000, p. 20).
- e. **Literal interpretation:** This has to do with the literal interpretation of the student’s erroneous form in order to show the unintended meaning expressed. The teacher expects that the learner appreciates the difference between the erroneous form and the correct form (Ramírez, 2007, p. 119). For example:

S: He has a long hair.
T: Just one like this (draws a bald man with one hair)
Or
S: He had a heart (pronounced as hair) attack.
T: The teacher points at girl’s hair and changes his intonation in the word attACK?
- f. **Reactive teaching:** This takes place when the teacher usually takes the students’ mistakes to make an impromptu teaching point. In better terms, part of the class is going to be based on the mistakes the students make. (Ramírez, 2007, p. 119)
- g. **Reformulation:** This is basically what parents do with children. Parents have a tendency to correct their children and provide a correct version of what the child has said.
- h. **Delayed Correction:** In this type of technique, the teacher writes down the students’ errors for future reference and discussion. The purpose is to provide feedback in order not to disrupt students’ fluency.

3. Data Analysis

For the purpose of this investigation, the researchers conducted a series of classroom observations of professors' and students' behavior in their natural setting, which was the Integrated English II class, so as to record the type of errors that students made and the different correction techniques that were used to address them. Students' insights into the implementation and effectiveness of error correction techniques in this particular course were also analyzed since it is always relevant to tackle the participants' own appraisal of the processes into which they are immersed when attempting to learn a second language.

A discussion of the main findings, as obtained through the different data-collection instruments employed as well as the triangulation technique, follows in the next sections with respect to the order in which the research questions that guided this study were formulated.

3.1. Types of Error Observed

Among the most common types of errors observed, interlanguage errors were present in all the observations conducted. L1 interference was also present at the morphosyntactic and phonological level.

At the morphosyntactic level, for instance, when giving a speech that they prepared at home, some students said the following:

peoples instead of *people*

electrics appliances instead of *electrical appliances*

comprobate instead of *to prove*

talk about of instead of *talk about*

actually instead of *currently / nowadays*

for receive instead of *to receive*

At the phonological level, errors were more frequent, with instances like these:

child pronounced with /i/

our pronounced with /ɔu/

first pronounced with /i/

sausage pronounced with /au/

because pronounced with /ε/



socialize pronounced with /s/

ghost pronounced with /ɔ/

danger pronounced with /eɪ/

met pronounced with /i/

took pronounced with /ɔ/

exam pronounced with /ks/

karate pronounced with /e/

weather pronounced with flap /ɾ/

lasted omission of /ɪd/

since pronounced with /aɪ/

lived with extra vowel /d/

Then, among the intralingual and developmental errors, students frequently said:

They are fallen in love instead of *They are falling in love* (**overgeneralization**)

He is a house wife instead of *She is a house wife* (**ignorance of rule restriction**)

Many people thinks instead of *Many people think* (**ignorance of rule restriction**)

They wants instead of *They want* (**overgeneralization**)

places which teach instead of *places where teaching* (**overgeneralization**)

Old TVs was instead of *Old TVs were* (**ignorance of rule restriction**)

To don't harm instead of *not to harm* (**overgeneralization**)

They have them still instead of *They still have them* (**ignorance of rule restriction**)

We was working instead of *We were working* (**ignorance of rule restriction**)

He didn't the homework instead of *He did not do homework* (**false-concept hypothesis**)

He can to play instead of *He can play* (**overgeneralization**)

I don't like children too instead of *I don't like children either* (**ignorance of rule restriction**)

I like teach instead of *I like to teach* (**incomplete application of rule**)

I've studied a lot of things last week instead of *I've studied a lot of things since last week*
(**ignorance of rule restriction**)

Some errors were committed only once and others were repeated very often; mainly those pronunciation errors caused by L1 interference such as *child*, *our*, *first*. The type of error that was rarely perceived was the false - concept hypothesis category.

3.2. Types of Error Correction Techniques

The first technique observed was delayed correction. While the students were giving speeches, the professor sat at one side of the students and wrote down the mistakes they committed. Such procedure, according to Ramirez (2007), is recommended when students are involved in communicative activities (p. 120).

On some occasions and with some students, the professor asked them for clarification. Perhaps, the purpose was to 1) tell them in a friendly way that a mistake had been made and 2) prompt more interaction. Never did the professor interrupt students nor correct their erroneous utterances during an oral presentation.

Another technique employed was reactive teaching. When the students finished their impromptu talks, the professor wrote on the board all the errors committed by the students and started to give a sort of magistral class. Among the expressions or corrections he made are the following:

T: *What is wrong here guys? "Impact"*

SS: *The stress, Professor*

T: *Career is different from major, when you start working, you develop your career.*

T: *The word "Job" is not used as a verb. It is "work."*

Utterance repair in which the teacher corrected the student's erroneous utterance was also observed. This is a correction in the strictest sense of the word. For instance, when a student mispronounced a word such as *took* as /tɔk/, she immediately corrected the erroneous utterance by saying /tu:k/; you have to say / tu:k/. This type of direct correction probably took place in order to save time.

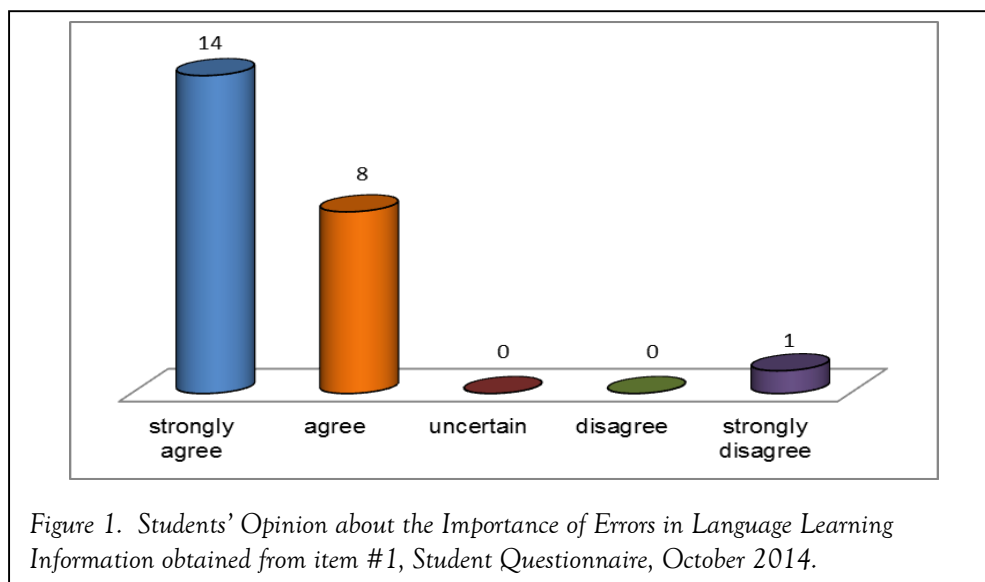
The last error correction technique implemented was pinpointing. For example, when a student said a present perfect tense sentence without the word *since*, the professor repeated the same sentence for the student to identify the error and provided the right sentence by emphasizing the word *since*.



3.3. Students' Perceptions

A questionnaire was given to students for the purpose of eliciting their perceptions and attitudes about 1) the role of errors in language learning, 2) the importance of error correction as a tool to improve their English proficiency level, and 3) the way their professors correct errors in the classroom.

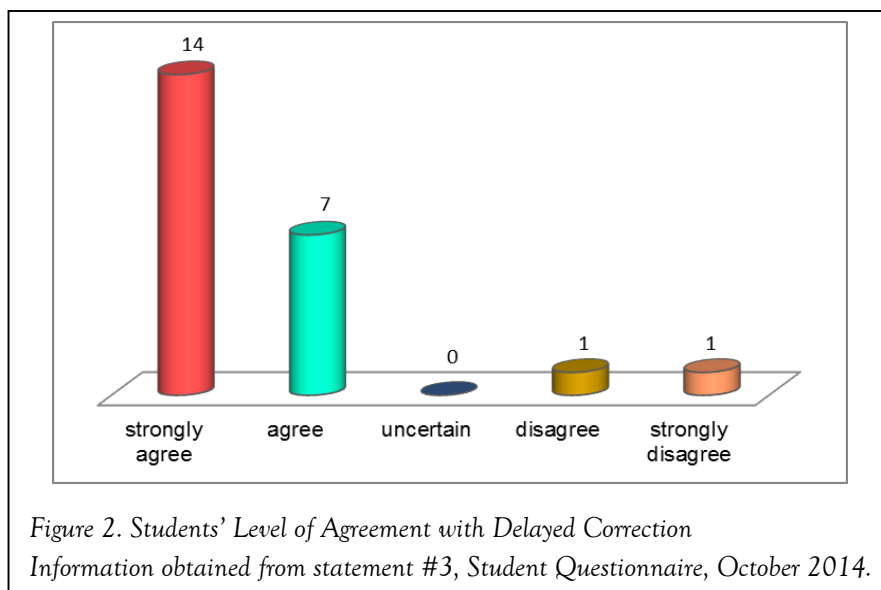
The results obtained suggest that these learners were aware of the fact that errors are relevant and necessary for language learning to take place. The following graph shows that the students' responses were highly positive in this case:



They also manifested that they like to be corrected and that they like this to be done right on the spot, which in turn was supported by their negative appreciation toward delayed correction techniques. This is illustrated in the graph below.

The last section of the student questionnaire contained three open-ended questions which asked the participants to state exhaustive information about 1) their favorite error correction technique, 2) their appraisal of the way their professors corrected errors, and 3) suggestions for improvement.

With regard to the specific way learners liked to be corrected when they made an error, two contrasting patterns were found. The most common one was immediate correction in oral form in front of peers. Many students found it useful when the professor addressed their error right on the spot. They also asked for clarification of the type of error they had made and an explanation of the rule that they had failed to apply. The other pattern identified was discrete error correction. In this case, some learners explained that they preferred to be corrected in person, with the professor approaching them to inform them about the error that they had committed. These pupils emphasized that they felt embarrassed when corrections were conducted in front of peers.



A new pattern, which was not expected though it became recurrent, was found in terms of the way such corrections, be it oral or written or whole-class or personal, had better be made. Many students were emphatic that any sort of error correction needs to be sensitive to the person's feelings; in other words, professors have to try to correct pupils in a polite and cordial way so that they do not feel "ignorant" or "stupid."

On account of the students' appreciation of the techniques employed by their professors, the majority of them said that they were satisfied with the way they had done it so far because they thought that their learning had benefited from such corrections. Only one participant suggested alternate ways to address errors on the grounds that s/he thought that professors could use several resources and techniques to foster learning. These are the most salient recommendations for professors of Integrated English II as reported by learners:

- Use oral error correction techniques
- Be polite
- Explain the rules
- Be patient
- Handle students' confidence

In general terms, it can be said that this particular group of learners were quite satisfied with the error correction techniques employed in the classroom, but they were more concerned about the affective variables that resulted from such practices. This interpretation is supported by the fact that most of the suggestions that they provided dealt with patience, time, politeness, and confidence, which are factors that can bring about emotional consequences of various sorts in students.

4. Conclusions

Based on the analysis of the information gathered from the different data-collection instruments, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Beginner students seem to have a preference for immediate error correction.
- A great amount of students were in favor of the following techniques because they consider them appropriate and non-threatening: reformulation, delayed correction, and reactive teaching and pinpointing.
- This study shed light on different areas that need further examination, namely, fossilization and its prevention.
- In order to answer research question 2, it is necessary to conduct a new study with a different research design because the one adopted by this investigation did not allow the researchers to determine how the error correction techniques used by the course professors contribute to students' learning.
- Students are highly aware of the way they should be corrected without affecting their dignity. Teachers should therefore ask them how they want to be corrected so that affective variables can be accounted for while correcting errors in the language classroom.

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The Impact of Native English Speaker Teaching on Beginning College English Students' Writing: A Case Study at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension

Barbara Jean Hall
Georgia State University, USA

Cinthya Olivares Garita
Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica

Resumen

El aprendizaje del inglés como idioma extranjero es un reto para los estudiantes cuya exposición al contacto con nativos hablantes de este idioma es escasa. Esta exposición limitada puede impedir el logro de un desarrollo lingüístico exitoso. Los estudiantes principiantes del Diplomado en Inglés de la Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica, Sede Regional Brunca no son la excepción a esta realidad. Sin embargo, se seleccionó un grupo de veinte estudiantes del curso Inglés Integrado I (Gramática y Escritura) del Diplomado en Inglés como la población clave para llevar a cabo una investigación exploratoria después de haber mantenido contacto con una profesora nativa hablante por 60 horas durante un semestre. Este estudio intenta determinar el impacto de la enseñanza del inglés impartida por un nativo hablante en las producciones escritas de estudiantes principiantes a través de un análisis de un estudio de caso. El primer instrumento es un cuestionario cuyo objetivo es recolectar las experiencias de aprendizaje, el uso y actitudes hacia el lenguaje y la motivación de los estudiantes. El segundo instrumento es una guía de observación para determinar los comportamientos y actitudes reales de los estudiantes durante el tiempo de clase así como también las estrategias de enseñanza utilizadas por la profesora. El tercer instrumento garantiza la recolección de las impresiones y experiencias de los estudiantes después de llevar el curso a través de entrevistas cara a cara. Además, se recopiló información cuantitativa para examinar la fluidez en el uso del lenguaje, la variación léxica y la precisión a través de la comparación de productos escritos antes y después del proceso de exposición al contacto con la profesora nativa hablante. Las conclusiones que se deriven de este estudio proveerán argumentos y recomendaciones para la enseñanza del inglés como idioma extranjero.

Palabras clave: enseñanza del inglés por un nativo hablante, exposición, productos escritos.

Abstract

Learning English in an EFL environment is challenging for students who lack exposure to contact with native English speakers (NES). This limited exposure may hinder the achievement of successful linguistic performance. Beginning students of the Associate's Program in English at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension are not an exception to this reality. However, after being given the opportunity to have a native English speaker as a teacher for 60 hours during one semester of course work, a group of twenty students of the course Integrated English I (Grammar and Writing) of the Associate's Program in English was chosen as a key population to conduct exploratory research. This study attempts to

determine the impact of native English speaker teaching on beginning students' written products through the analysis of a case study. To collect data, three instruments were designed and implemented. The first instrument was a questionnaire, the goal of which was to gather the students' English learning experiences, language use, language attitudes, and motivation. The second instrument was a classroom observation guide to determine actual students' behaviors and attitudes during class time as well as particular teacher's strategies. The third instrument aimed to record the students' impressions and experiences after taking the course through face-to-face interviews. Furthermore, quantitative data examining language fluency, lexical variation, and accuracy were analyzed by comparing the results of pre-test and post-test writing products. The conclusions drawn from this research study will contribute to providing insights and recommendations to the teaching of English in an EFL context.

Keywords: native English speaker teaching, exposure, writing products.

1. Introduction

In operational terms, this exploratory study provides the English teaching practitioner a profile of the beliefs of one EFL class in Costa Rica as well as a contrastive report (pre and post-tests) of the students' written products. Although, in fact, this study looks closely at one group of 20 EFL learners and one native speaker teacher, the hope is that the resulting information may inform NNES professionals about student preferences for English classroom practices and may suggest ways for NNES teachers to replicate practices and methods that L2 students reported to be useful and effective.

The principal objectives of this study were to explore what kind of impact a native speaker English teacher might have on one population of Spanish-speaking students who were beginning students of English at one public university. These students reported early on that they had very few interactions with native speakers of English and had not had, for any extended period, a native English speaker teacher. In fact, since this particular NES college teacher was the first English-speaking professional as a classroom teacher, most students initially elected to take the English class from the Spanish speaking English instructor. This novel situation (Native English Teacher for beginners) seemed ripe for inquiry about teaching practices, student preferences, and language gains in written production.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Approaches to the Teaching of Writing and Grammar in an EFL Context

Traditional models of writing have their own flaws. Some studies evince that "students plagued by writer's block are often the victims of the inappropriate instruction they received from teachers and books that adhere to the traditional model of teaching writing" (Oliver, 1982, p. 164). Writing in English not only places a burden on the student's shoulders but

also on the teacher's. On the student's part, the writing skill places the learner with the overwhelming task of expressing ideas in another literacy system. On the teacher's part, this ability places a great responsibility since research indicates that wrongly applying the composing process provokes in the students blocking and anxiety. Composing in a foreign language involves a thinking process where planning, prefiguring and brainstorming for initial ideas are elements of paramount importance for the students' successful writing progress.

Wallas (as cited in Lee, 2003) concurred that writing a composition requires a three-step thinking process ranging from preparation and incubation to illumination (p. 125). As Lee (2003) posed, *preparation* implies presenting the subconscious mind with a problem. *Incubation* is the stage at which the writer's subconscious mind actually produces a new idea. The result of incubation is *illumination*, actually the emergence of the new idea (p. 127). These stages evince the way writing can be treated in EFL classrooms; however, there are other approaches teachers can use to make the learning of grammar and writing more effective according to their preferences and styles.

2.1.1. Implicit or Explicit Grammar?

How English grammar is taught has engendered distinct stances. Whether it has to be taught one way or another in the foreign language classroom still remains a debatable issue, which is decisive to the optimal oral or written use of English. From Puji's point of view (2006), "grammar gains its prominence in language teaching, particularly in English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL), inasmuch as without a good knowledge of grammar, learners' language development will be severely constrained" (p. 122). For better or worse, a grammar-based method has reigned in the EFL setting for a long time. Puji (2006) affirmed that "in the context of EFL, teaching grammar has traditionally been dominated by grammar-translation method for which the use of the mother tongue is clearly important to elicit the meaning of target language by translating the target language into native languages" (p. 123). This preference for explicit grammar or conscious grammar (Klein as cited in Puji, 2006, p. 125) has been the norm in most EFL classrooms. According to Ellis (2004) explicit knowledge or explicit grammar can be defined acknowledge [dealing] with language and the uses to which language can be put. This knowledge facilitates the intake and development of implicit language, and it is useful to monitor language output. Explicit knowledge is generally accessible through controlled processing. (p.229). Contrary to this, other teachers are more inclined to teaching grammar implicitly. This is the knowledge of grammar rules that shows when performing in more unstructured, natural, unprompted and automatic tasks. Brown (2000) affirmed that "Implicit knowledge is unconscious, internalized knowledge of language that is easily accessed during spontaneous language tasks, written or spoken" (p. 285). The internalization of language rules happens when speakers of the language have been exposed to enough natural input, and in the case of EFL students, to enough classroom practice.

2.1.2. Deductive and Inductive Approach

There are two core ways to present grammar to EFL students. On the one hand, the deductive approach appeals to the introduction of grammar rules explicitly. This knowledge is made conscious by putting emphasis on error correction and the direct presentation of the syntactical rules. According to Puji (2006), “the deductive approach maintains that a teacher teaches grammar by presenting grammatical rules, and then, examples of sentences are presented. Once the learners understand the rules, they are told to apply the rules given to various examples of sentences” (p.126). The learners tend to gain more confidence when knowing the rule and the application of it. The explicit knowledge enhances the rule-driven process in which learners apply a rule that has been already understood by practical exercises.

On the other hand, the inductive approach “relates to subconscious learning processes similar to the concept of language acquisition” (Puji, 2006, p. 128). In this regard, learners are exposed to enough input in the classroom from which they get the grammar rules. They grasp the rules, as children in a natural environment, by interacting extensively. Meaning is emphasized over the forms as a way to internalize the rules in a natural manner. Which of the two approaches is best is still a topic of high relevance and much contradiction among EFL teachers. This preference for one or the other may be justified by the type of learning style, specifically, the students’ cognitive style. Puji (2006) highlighted that “a study of various language learners shows that some learners achieve better in deductive language classes; on the other hand, others perform better in more inductive classes” (p. 129). This assumption leads to understand that teachers should conduct a previous analysis about how learners may grasp grammar rules more easily the first time they meet their students in the foreign language classroom.

2.1.3. From Product Writing to Process Writing

Writing is an art, and as such, more attention should be given to it. As mentioned before, grammar as well as writing are approached differently to provide the learners with abundant opportunities to communicate in written form. Students writing compositions or any written product are led to write following either a process-driven or a product-driven approach. From Hasan and Moniruzzaman’s standpoints (2010), process writing takes the text as a resource for comparison, uses ideas as starting points, demands the writing of more than one draft, is more global, focuses on purpose, enhances collaboration and involves a creative process whereas product writing imitates the model text, sets the organization of ideas as more important than ideas themselves, demands the writing of one draft, includes controlled practice of features highlighted, is meant to be individual, and emphasizes on end product (p.80). Over-emphasis on the final written product has downplayed the role of writing “as a recursive process rather than a linear one” (Hansan & Moniruzzaman, 2010, p. 84). Teachers as well as students focus their attention on mechanical aspects of the language such as the correct usage of grammar, a range of vocabularies, meaningful punctuation and accurate spelling (idem). There is no ideal approach to writing in an EFL context. Teachers are accountable for the choices of the methods they bring to the classroom to facilitate their students’ language learning. A balanced approach seems to be one of the most suitable

approaches for EFL learners. Drawing from the conclusions of the use of a more balanced approach, Qian (2010) affirmed that “a teacher should be eclectic, drawing from all methods available. A balanced approach to the teaching of [...] writing skills should take into account all of the factors which are involved in good writing” (p. 14). For process writing, Cavkaytar and Yasar (nd) identified five stages:

- *Prewriting*: Prewriting is a planning stage for writing. Planning is an important step of the writing process; it allows the writers to organize their writing before they even begin.
- *Drafting*: In the draft stage, students are expected to put the arrangement they did in the planning stage on to paper. In this stage, spelling rules for the written text are ignored. The students primarily try to create the content.
- *Revising*: This stage consists of the students’ review of the written draft, sharing the draft text with a writing group that was formed in the classroom, and rearranging the content according to feedback from friends in the writing group
- *Editing*: Up until this stage, the focus is on the content. In this stage spelling rules and punctuation, which are called the mechanical aspect of writing, are checked. Different evaluation materials might be used in teaching students about the third and fourth stages.
- *Publishing*: This is the last stage of the writing process. In this stage, the students share the text they have written with the readers they determined in the prewriting stage. What is important here is that teacher makes writing meaningful for student. (p. 2)

Besides the relevance that the different approaches to grammar and writing teaching have acquired, it is worth stating that teachers’ and students’ own beliefs to the teaching of this skill take paramount importance as well.

2.2. Teachers' and Students' Attitudes and Beliefs about the Teaching of Writing and Grammar in an EFL context

2.2.1. The Case for Grammar Correction

English teaching relies on different approaches and methods. The major linguistic skills demand a careful approach to ensure students’ effective learning. Writing is one of the major skills that requires the most attention and dedication. As a matter of fact, “writing is a skill that has not been accorded the attention it deserves in [schools]...Teachers who want to help their students gain confidence in writing should try to follow a writing process that takes the student from insecurity to success” (Cimcoz, 1999, para.1). Nevertheless, not everything lies with the teacher’s approach. As Daly noted (as cited in Lee, 2003), “how one writes, indeed, whether one writes—is dependent on more than just skill and competence” (p. 112). Certainly, affective factors come also into play when a student sets to write in another

language. These factors deserve a careful analysis to build up a comprehensive approach to students' difficulties in writing in a foreign language. Based on the teacher's tactful ways to approach the writing teaching situation, various methods and strategies can be called upon.

Some teachers are more inclined to using grammar correction and spend most of their teaching time providing students with this type of instruction. Studies on this matter have pointed out that “grammar correction and instruction are not only ineffective, but also harmful” (Truscott as cited in Lee, 2003, p. 119). The teacher's role in this regard should be that of a facilitator providing corrective feedback to build up confidence on the students to improve their writing performance. Ferris (as cited in Lee, 2003) debated that students' opinions consistently suggest that error correction is a key element in this process (p. 120).

As previously presented, most EFL teachers rely heavily on grammar correction. This position leads teachers, most of the time, to overcorrect a student's composition. The result can be detrimental on the student's writing performance in a foreign language. Truscott (1996) suggested that no grammatical correction should be marked in the student's written product (p. 328). Although this compelling argument may provoke opposing views, one cannot deny that this teaching attitude may jeopardize students' perceptions of the error correction process. Indeed, they may end up using the number of errors marked as a justification for the grade earned (Dohrer, 1991, p. 49). This, to some extent, may discourage the student's efforts and provoke a feeling of apprehension when being asked to produce something in a written form.

Keh (1990) noted that “red marks on students' papers may also ‘prove’ the teacher's superiority over students and demonstrate that the teacher is ‘doing his/her job’” (p. 294). Leki (1991) added her view by stating that “the literature abounds with proof of the futility of marking errors in both native and non-native student writing” (p. 204). Why teachers keep on doing it is still an unanswered issue. One compensation strategy teachers can use to change the students' attitudes towards the writing and the error correction process per se is to concentrate more on how they respond to those errors instead of just marking them. Based on Ferris' (2002) illuminating viewpoints, “mechanical errors can be dealt with in a number of alternative manners, from error logs to focused mini-lessons” (p. 19).

2.2.2. Native English Speaker Teaching

In recent decades, debates in the research literature about who makes the most effective teacher of English – native English speaker (NES) or non-native English speaker (NNES) – have continued with data abounding across countries, levels, and program types. These debates have focused on student and learner perspectives, administrators' perspectives, and teacher education programs. When the basic tenet of the dichotomy – that the ideal English teacher is the native speaker – was established in the 1960's, it immediately provoked scholars to prove otherwise (Meadows & Muramatsu, 2007, p. 97). The often-cited “native speaker fallacy,” suggesting that abilities of native speakers (fluency, idiomatic control, correct usage) do not necessarily lead to more effective teaching, soon became the focal point for a growing body of research by non-native speakers, culminating in international colloquiums, the

NNEST Caucus in TESOL starting in 1998, 500 plus scholarly articles, and book length research, such as *The NNEST Lens: Non-Native English Speakers in TESOL*.

With the increase of the teaching of English happening all over the world, the question “Is the best teacher of English a native speaker?” continues to surface in many countries and across programs. On the one hand, native English speaker teachers bring native fluency, “first-hand knowledge,” and exposure to correct pronunciation as well as appropriate expressions, common idioms, and authenticity of language use (Murtiana, 2011, p.29-30). In addition to these strengths, the NES teachers often motivate students to improve their levels of English due to the fact that students are forced to use L2 as a means of communication (Madrid & Perez Canado, 2004, p. 129). On the other hand, many researchers have noted that NNEST teachers bring other equally valuable aspects to their teaching. These aspects include sharing of the same mother tongue and the testing culture of the learners. Also, non-native teachers often have a far superior metacognitive knowledge of English grammar than their native speaker counterparts (Madrid & Perez Canado, 2004, p. 129). In addition, many researchers point out that NNEST teachers having gone through the complex process of learning English have first-hand insights into the difficulties and complexities of language learning (He & Miller, 2011, p. 430). In other words, NNEST serve as representative models of English language learners and can inspire new learners of English to excel.

Certainly, a native speaker teacher of English in whatever setting changes the dynamic at an institution and of the English class abroad. The atmosphere of the EFL class with a native speaker teacher can have both positive and negative effects. At times, beginning students may feel hesitant from speaking or interacting, feeling tongue-tied or shy. They can also feel that the native English speaker will correct every single utterance and can feel intimidated. Many of these affective variables of EFL student learners when exposed to NES teachers have not been previously explored in the research.

2.2.3. Students' Preferences of Native Speaker Teaching and Nonnative Speaker Teaching

Much of the recent research about student preferences has come from the more democratic, the more student-centered approaches in second language teaching in the last twenty years. In other words, professionals in the field have responded to the answers to the simple question: “What do students want in the instructor of an English language class?” Some researchers have argued that the mismatch between the expectations that students have for classroom teaching and the teachers and the reality presented can negatively affect L2 student performance and satisfaction (Brown, 2009, p.46). Sometimes this mismatch can end in disillusionment or high failure and attrition rates.

One area mentioned quite frequently in the literature is the perception by students of how much of the target language will be used by the English teacher. Researchers have discovered that many beginning level English students maintain unrealistic expectations about how much native language will be used and how much the target language will be used. Particularly in the case of beginning L2 English students, according to Levine (2003),

students may feel target language anxiety which may interfere with their language learning (p. 346). These high levels of language anxiety are particularly acute when classes are instructed by NES teachers. Although a majority of L2 students feel comfortable practicing their English with native speakers (Murtiana, 2011, p.39), many still feel nervous when they must be judged in speech or in writing by their NES professors, and thus student preferences for NES teachers are mixed.

Additional factors and classroom practices noted by student preference surveys, particularly from beginning students, concern these areas: whether students are corrected orally or in written form from the beginning of English language learning; whether teachers require beginning students to speak/use L2 on the first day of class; whether teachers use small groups or pairs for practice (Brown, 2009, p. 51). In one study, these preferences by students differed greatly from what teachers themselves believed about effective teaching practices. Whereas teachers generally were patient and slow-moving about correction and use of L2 immediately, students preferred that these practices were implemented directly from the beginning (Brown, 2009, p. 51).

One other aspect of student preferences involves when L2 students move from NNES teaching to a preference for NES teaching. In the study by Madrid & Perez Canado (2004), the findings are that as the academic level of the L2 learner increases as they continue to more difficult and more advanced English courses, their preferences for native speaker teachers also increases or becomes stronger (p. 134). As one college level L2 student writes, “Natives are better teachers because they master the language they teach, have a profound knowledge of it, have a greater self-confidence, and all this exerts an influence on the results” (Madrid & Perez Canado, 2004, p. 133).

2.3. Students' Affective Variables

Learning a foreign language implies more than cognitive demands; it also involves psychological and emotional barriers regarded as affective variables. In the learning context of English as a foreign language, distinct affective factors come into play. For the analysis of this study, attitude, motivation and self-confidence are relevant affective variables to describe.

2.1. Attitude

Students' perceptions, emotions and beliefs are part of what specialists have named language attitudes. Montano and Kasprzyk (2008) indicated that “Attitude is determined by the individual's beliefs about outcomes or attributes of performing the behavior (behavioral beliefs), weighted by evaluations of those outcomes or attributes” (p. 71). Attitudes towards the target language may favor or disrupt learners' successful language achievement. Language attitudes include three different dimensions: behavioral, cognitive, and affective. The behavioral dimension of language attitude is composed of patterns of behavior that help the speaker to identify himself/herself with the language of the target community. Based on this assumption, Kara (2009) determined that

Positive attitudes lead to the exhibition of positive behaviors toward courses of study, with participants absorbing themselves in courses and striving to learn more. Such students are also observed to be more eager to solve problems, to acquire the information and skills useful for daily life and to engage themselves emotionally. (p. 102)

The cognitive dimension is composed of the learner's views of his understanding and knowledge developed of the target language. According to Jafre, Pour-Mohammadi and Alzwari (2011), this dimension embraces four steps of connecting the previous knowledge and the new one, creating new knowledge, checking new knowledge, and applying the new knowledge in many situations (p.122).

The affective dimension deals with the emotions provoked by the different situations and events while learning the target language. These emotions influence the success in language learning. This learning process generates different perspectives and attitudes that shape the way the learner develops understanding of the foreign language. Choy and Troudi (2006) determined that the inner feelings and emotions of FL learners influence their perspectives and their attitudes towards the target language (p. 121).

2.2. Motivation

For the most part, motivation has always played a predominant role in the learning of a foreign language. It may also serve as a predictor of second language performance (Wei, 2007, p. 3). Several authors have explored the definition of the term to specify the different types of existing motivation. From Douglas Brown's perspective (2000), instrumental motivation stands for "the acquisition of a language as a means for attaining instrumental goals" (p.62). Instrumental or extrinsic motivation drives the learner to achieve mastery of a second or foreign language in order to apply for a job or travel abroad, for instance. Conversely to this, integrative or intrinsic motivation accounts for "a desire to learn the language in order to relate to and even to become part of the target language culture" (Arnold & Brown, 1999, p.13). Success in a second or foreign language cannot be said to be caused by any of the types of motivation described, but by "the degree of energizing and firmness of the direction it provides" towards the attainment of the goals (Arnold & Brown, 1999, p.13). Thus, an intrinsically motivated learner might be able to obtain as good and as satisfactory results in his way to foreign language success as an extrinsically motivated learner might too. Other variables within the learner may strengthen the type of motivation developed as well.

2.3. Self-confidence

Self-confidence is an affective factor that may boost language learning, impede or deprive it. Yashima, Zenk-Nishide and Shimizu (2004) asserted that self-confidence is the most essential factor that determines learners' willingness to participate in oral activities in

language classrooms (p. 135). From this line of thought, two different types of learners are drawn:

Self-confident learners take risks at speaking another language even if they do commit mistakes. They engage in different oral activities regardless of the topic discussed and the number of students in class. They learn from mistakes, work hard and eventually, they increase their language proficiency. On the other hand, low-confident learners usually look away from the instructor to avoid being called on. They feel uncomfortable when using the language orally because they are concerned about being criticized or disapproved of. As a result, they tend to perform less successfully. (Al-sibai, 2004 as cited in Mohammad, 2012, p. 61)

It is a paramount goal for language teachers to foster self-confidence in the classroom and enhance it. Diverse strategies and resources can help improve low confidence in the EFL classroom. Teachers should approach students tactfully to enable them to either boost or enhance this attitudinal factor. Certainly, teachers must consider the fact that strategies operate differently for each learner in the classroom.

2.4. Language Gains in Written Production

Writing teachers across a variety of levels and programs constantly struggle with the question of how students can best progress in writing development over time. What different types of instruction work to ensure that language gains will occur in writing over time? Research on time distribution (amount of hours of instruction per student) and time concentration (more intensive hours of class versus the “drip-feed” kind of courses) has suggested that more concentrated time produces more L2 gains in writing (Serrano, 2011, p. 212). How language gains are measured is another factor.

Serrano in her research on L2 gains in written production measures writing output in three areas: fluency, lexical complexity, and accuracy. Studies of this kind which attempt to determine the kind of instruction that enhances L2 writing performance are valuable contributions to the field. Another noteworthy body of research surrounds the issue of lexical complexity and development and how L2 writing teachers can move students from writing that generally uses basic words repetitively to more complex and sophisticated features and vocabulary (Breeze, 2008, p.53). Lower-level and beginning students of English who generally are instructed in a communicative approach tend to write like they speak. Thus, beginning L2 writing may convey the impression of simplicity, where the vocabulary is limited in range, lacking precise terms and highly informal in register.

Concerning measures of learners’ accuracy in production, it is generally assumed and reasonable to expect that L2 writers gain control over grammatical features and idiomatic language over time, as their knowledge of the L2 increases. However, this generalization does not prove true consistently as some writers decrease in accuracy when their complexity increases (Serrano, 2011, p. 222). This phase of “trial and error” production is a useful one for L2 writing development and progress, and often prevents fossilization of simple and basic

writing patterns. Research on the continued connections between fluency, accuracy, and lexical variety, and studies on the connection to L2 language gains are ongoing as researchers continue to examine best practices for effective writing development.

3. The Purpose of the Study

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

- What are some implications provoked by native English speaker teaching on the written products of beginning students of the Associate's Program in English at UNA, SRB?
- What are some beginning students' perceptions regarding native English speaker (NES) teaching and nonnative English speaker (NNES) teaching?
- What recommendations can be suggested based on the comparisons between native English speaker (NES) teaching and nonnative English speaker (NNES) teaching?

3.1. Research Methodology

This study entails an analysis of qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data are collected through the observation and administration of instruments in order to describe the perceptions, beliefs and feelings of the subjects. The quantitative data are used to reveal the improvement of the subjects after they have been in contact with the NES.

The specific locus of this study is the classroom where the major events happen and which provides significant information for the analysis of the results. This exploratory study relied on the development of a case study. Case studies “provide a relatively formal and fairly definitive analysis of a specific aspect of teaching behavior or classroom life” (Hopkins, 2002, p.143). The results yielded by the observations made and the questionnaires and interviews conducted are complemented with the results of the analysis of a pre and a post test. The pretest provided the researchers with the actual writing skills students had when they first arrived at the class. While being exposed to the native speaker teacher, one of the researchers conducted some observations during a four-month period to garner data on the native speaker teacher's techniques and the students' reactions and patterns of behavior. After this exposure, one group of students selected were interviewed to gather their insights and perspectives of the process of native speaker teaching. A post-test was also administered at the end of this teaching and learning process to compare and contrast the students' writing skills with those they had before being exposed to the native English speaker teaching.

3.1.1. Setting

This study takes places at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension, which is one of the five state universities across the country. This is a university oriented towards the philosophical principles of humanism, rationalism and constructivism. Specifically, this research centers

on a group of students taking one of the courses of the Associate's Program in English. This is a two-year language program whose utmost objective is to prepare students to use the language communicatively by teaching them the four skills in an integrated fashion. Students graduating from this program are expected to acquire a B2 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (The Council of Europe, 2011, p. 27).

3.1.2. Population

The target population of this study was composed of 20 students, 9 girls and 11 boys. Their ages range from 18 to 26 years old. These students were taking the course Integrated English I of the Associate's Program in English at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension. The level of the students is beginning. This course, taught by two professors, lasted approximately 17 weeks of the first period of the school year. One professor, who is a non-native English speaker (NNEST), taught one section of the course listening, speaking and reading. The native speaker teacher (NEST) taught the other section on grammar and writing. It is worth saying that the exposure to the native speaker teacher lasted 10 weeks (60 hours) of the whole school period.

The study focuses on the analysis of these twenty students' writing skills and their impressions and attitudes towards the teaching of English by a NEST before, after and while they took the section of the course on grammar and writing, and had contact with the native speaker teacher. Through the administration of a pre-test, the researchers garnered the students' actual writing skills before exposure to the NEST, and through a questionnaire, the students' perceptions and attitudes towards English, the NNEST and the NEST were also gathered; by administering a post-test and conducting an interview, the students' impressions were recorded after having contact with the NEST. Through four classroom observations, the researchers collected the students' perceptions and patterns of behavior while being exposed to the teaching of writing by a NEST.

3.1.3. Instruments

To carry out this study, several instruments were devised and used to collect detailed and extensive data. For the administration of the instruments, three stages were key for the gathering of the information:

First, students taking the course Integrated English I of the Associate's Program in English, specifically the grammar and writing section, filled in a questionnaire in order for the researchers to gain familiarity with the students' actual perceptions about language use, language attitudes, and their motivation just before being exposed to the native English speaker teaching. Right after that, a pre-test was administered. It consisted of students' written products on an open-ended topic. They were just asked to write a composition in thirty minutes. To evaluate these compositions, the researchers evaluated three elements: fluency, lexical variation, and accuracy. The criteria used to analyze fluency in the students' compositions were word count, *t*-units, and number of clauses. For the analysis of lexical

variation, the number of word types was divided by the number of word tokens multiplied by 100. To examine accuracy in the students' written products, the researchers considered the count of mistakes divided by the number of words. This same rubric was used to scrutinize the results of the posttests.

Second, the researchers made observations of four different classes taught by the native English speaker teacher to the target population. To this purpose, a classroom observation rubric was devised. This rubric included several teaching aspects such as the language mostly used during the activities, the lesson setting, and the lesson focus. Furthermore, the researchers sought to gain insights of the students' performance and patterns of behavior while they were attending classes taught by the native English speaker teacher. Holding this in mind, the rubric contained other aspects that helped analyze the students' actual feelings and reactions while being taught: the ability to follow directions, the comprehension of the topic, participation and engagement, the use of written material, their attitude towards the teacher's personality, and the attitude towards the teacher's choice of strategies.

Third, after ten weeks of native speaker teaching exposure, the researchers carried out an in-depth interview with ten students from the twenty in the class. The interview consisted of six open-ended and free response questions. They were related to students' preferences for the activities the native English speaker teacher did, the challenges faced and some insights on the comparison of the styles of non-native and native speaker teaching. Right after the culmination of the native speaker teaching exposure, students were required to write another composition, which was used as the post-test. The same task constraints (thirty minutes, open-ended topic) for the pretest and the post-test were applied.

3.1.4. Data Analysis

The analysis of the data seeks to determine the impact of native English speaker teaching on the students' written production. In order to scrutinize the results of this study, the research questions will be analyzed one by one.

- a. Analysis of the research question 1-What are some implications provoked by native English speaker teaching on the written products of beginning students of the Associate's Program in English at UNA, SRB?*

For the pre and post-tests, the students' written products were analyzed on three different aspects: fluency, lexical variation, and accuracy. The criteria used to analyze fluency in the students' compositions were word count, t-units, and number of clauses. Table 1.1 depicts the results of word count on students' pre and post-tests.

From the information displayed above, it is worth noting that 16 out of the 20 students, which represents 80% of the target population, doubled word count, and 8 out of the 20 students, which represents 40% of the total of students, tripled word count. It is remarkable to point out that the range of words students wrote at the beginning of this process for the pre-test was from 42 to 132 words, which represented a mean of 87 words. On the other hand, the word range students wrote for the post-test was from 81 to 411 words,

which represented a mean of 246 words. Students increased 243%, or the increase in fluency was more than double, almost 2 ½ times from the pre-test.

Table 1.1
Results of Word Count from Pre/post tests

Student Number	Pre-test	Post-Test
S1	59	160*
S2	54	153**
S3	42	155**
S4	66	195**
S5	94	120
S6	64	236**
S7	101	145
S8	60	183**
S9	76	178*
S10	69	139*
S11	71	251**
S12	60	81
S13	72	175*
S14	112	167
S15	72	141*
S16	132	411**
S17	51	168**
S18	66	140*
S19	69	155*
S20	92	253*

*Notes: * = word count is double, ** = word count is triple.*

In addition to word count, it was necessary to analyze the number of T-units fulfilled by each of the twenty students of this study in both the pretest and the post-test in order to determine the students' writing fluency reached in their compositions. A T-unit or a terminable unit, according to Hunt (1965), is "a main clause plus all subordinate clauses and nonclausal structures attached to or embedded in it" (p.20). The results displayed below (see Table 1.2) revealed the corresponding results of T-units in the pre and posttest of the population under study.

The numerical data displayed show that 9 out of the 20 students doubled in the writing of T-units in the post-test. That amounts 45% of the total of students. Five students out of 20 tripled in T-units count, which totals 25% of the whole number of students. The next Figure 1.1 aids to the visualization of these numerical data with ease.

Table 1.2
Results of T-units Pre/post test

Student Number	Pre-test	Post-Test
S1	6	9*
S2	4	5*
S3	4	8**
S4	5	15***
S5	8	8
S6	8	14*
S7	11	8
S8	5	10**
S9	6	11*
S10	6	7*
S11	4	17***
S12	6	5
S13	3	9***
S14	6	8*
S15	6	7*
S16	4	22*****
S17	5	13**
S18	3	11***
S19	5	8*
S20	8	19**

*Notes: * = increase, ** = T-unit count is double, *** = T-Unit count is triple.*

The range of T-units in the pretest goes from 3 to 11, which recorded a mean of 5.65 T-units reported. The range of T-units in the post-test extends from 5 to 22, which revealed a mean of 10.7 T-units. To sum up, the T-unit measure overall was close to doubling.

The third component of writing fluency under scrutiny is clause count. The researchers counted the number of clauses written in both the pre and post-tests and made comparisons of both results. The next Table 1.3 indicates the comparison drawn between the results of clause count in both the pre and posttests.

The data shown reveal that the range of clauses in the pre-test extends from five to 17, which recorded a mean of 9.7, resulting in 7.4 words average. On the other hand, the clause range in the post-test goes from two to 21 clauses, which represented a mean of 6.65, resulting in 180 words average. It is worth noting that 15 out of 20 students decreased in the use of clause structures in the post-test. A possible reason of this decline detected might be that in the post-test, students may have been trying to achieve more control with structures and choosing to simplify rather than attempting problematic structures. This is a common developmental stage of writing as beginning writers opt for more control over syntactic structures.

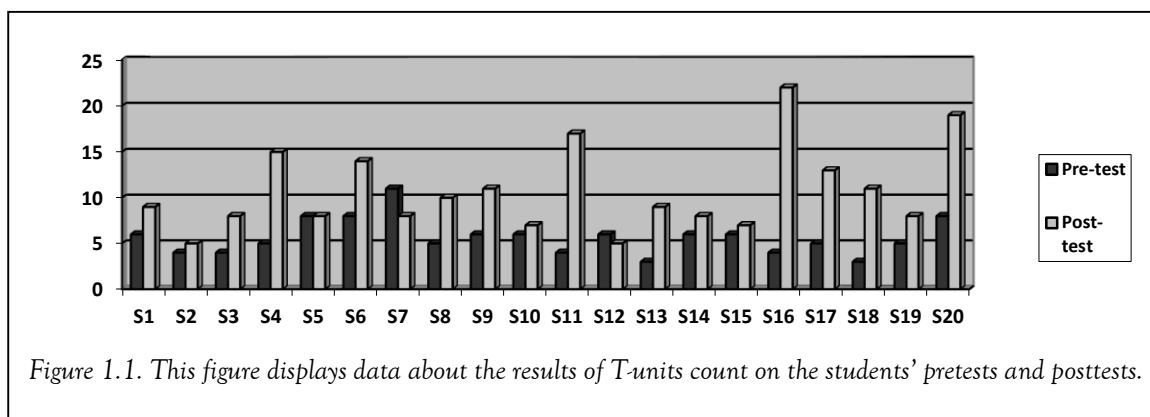


Figure 1.1. This figure displays data about the results of T-units count on the students' pretests and posttests.

Table 1.3

Results of Clause Count Pre/post test

Student Number	Pre-test	Post-Test
S1	8	9*
S2	6	7*
S3	7	4#
S4	8	8
S5	12	5#
S6	9	4#
S7	15	4#
S8	7	2#
S9	9	8#
S10	9	6#
S11	11	14*
S12	7	2#
S13	10	6#
S14	17	4#
S15	9	7#
S16	13	21*
S17	5	4#
S18	9	4#
S19	10	6#
S20	13	8*

Notes: * = clauses increased, # = clauses decreased.

The second aspect analyzed in the students' written products was accuracy. To this purpose, the researchers considered the count of mistakes divided by the number of words (see Table 1.4).



Table 1.4
Results of Pre/Post-test Accuracy

Student Number	Pre-test	Post-Test
S1	0.14	0.08#
S2	0.17	0.09#
S3	0.05	0.12*
S4	0.09	0.05#
S5	0.07	0.08*
S6	0.05	0.06*
S7	0.04	0.05*
S8	0.10	0.04#
S9	0.09	0.08#
S10	0.06	0.03#
S11	0.06	0.05#
S12	0.12	0.07#
S13	0.07	0.06#
S14	0.09	0.10*
S15	0.11	0.06#
S16	0.06	0.04#
S17	0.14	0.06#
S18	0.06	0.01#
S19	0.06	0.02#
S20	0.02	0.02

*Notes: * = errors increased, # = errors decreased. 15 out of 20 decreased or had the same number of errors.*

The previous numerical data display significant information for this study. First, the accuracy calculated in the pretest ranges from 0.02 to 0.14, which accounts for a mean of 8.25, resulting in 8% of errors recorded in the students' pretests. Second, the range of the accuracy calculated in the post-tests extends from 0.02 to 0.12, which represents a mean of 5.85% giving as a result 6% of errors recorded in the students' post-tests. It is important to note here that a higher score means less accuracy. Fewer errors mean more control. In the pre-test, the mean obtained 8.25 equals 74 words, which represents 11% error count. In the post-test, the mean recorded 5.85 equals 180 words, which totals 3% error count. These data indicate that students exhibited more control in the post-test writing.

The third and final aspect analyzed in the students' writing products is lexical variation. This aspect was calculated by dividing the number of word types with the number of word tokens multiplied by 100. The next Table 1.5 exhibits the results of the analysis of lexical variation in the pretests and posttests.

Table 1.5
Results of Pre/Post-test Lexical Variation

Student Number	Pre-test	Post-Test
S1	0.69	0.64#
S2	0.76	0.65#
S3	0.64	0.73*
S4	0.83	0.68#
S5	0.68	0.56#
S6	0.75	0.64#
S7	0.69	0.80*
S8	0.77	0.74#
S9	0.82	0.69#
S10	0.71	0.68#
S11	0.80	0.63#
S12	0.73	0.80*
S13	0.78	0.68#
S14	0.67	0.59#
S15	0.69	0.81*
S16	0.63	0.75*
S17	0.72	0.63#
S18	0.68	0.60#
S19	0.83	0.69#
S20	0.73	0.68#

Notes: * = increase; # = decrease. 25% 5 out of 20 showed increases in lexical complexity.

According to the data displayed, the lexical complexity recorded in the pretests ranges from 0.63 to 0.83, giving a mean of 0.73, which stands for 73%. On the contrary, the range of lexical complexity found in the post-tests extends from 0.63 to 0.81, resulting in a mean of 0.68, which accounts for 68%. In the light of these data, it is worth noting that the mean is lower in the post-test, but not significantly. There exists an in-built bias in the measure itself, because longer texts inevitably repeat more high frequency words – prepositions, articles, auxiliaries, pronouns – than shorter texts. In the same vein, Breeze (2008) stated that “The basic rule is that the shorter the text is, the higher the index of lexical variation” (p. 54).

Briefly, the aspects on fluency, accuracy and lexical complexity facilitated the analysis of the results of the students’ pre and post-tests. The results are displayed in the following Table 1.6.

Table 1.6

Overall results of fluency, accuracy and lexical complexity in pre/post-tests

Aspects under study	Pre-test results Mean	Post-test results Mean
Fluency (word count)	74	180
Fluency (T-units)	5.65	10.7
Syntactic Complexity (clauses)	9.7	6.65
Lexical Complexity	0.73	0.68
Accuracy (errors)	8.25	5.85

The numerical data shown above demonstrate the progress of the students of this study. Their written products for the post-test show an increase of words used and more complete terminable units. However, the results also show a decrease in amount and use of clauses (complex structures). It is likely that the students, toward the end of the semester, were attempting to control structures, rather than just to “free write” their ideas. What is promising, it must be noted, is that this strategy seems to have worked as the error count per paper decreased significantly. The little change in lexical complexity needs to be reviewed further, as the students were also taking an intensive reading course with new vocabulary. Here, we must note, though, there was little incorporation of the reading material into the grammar/writing course.

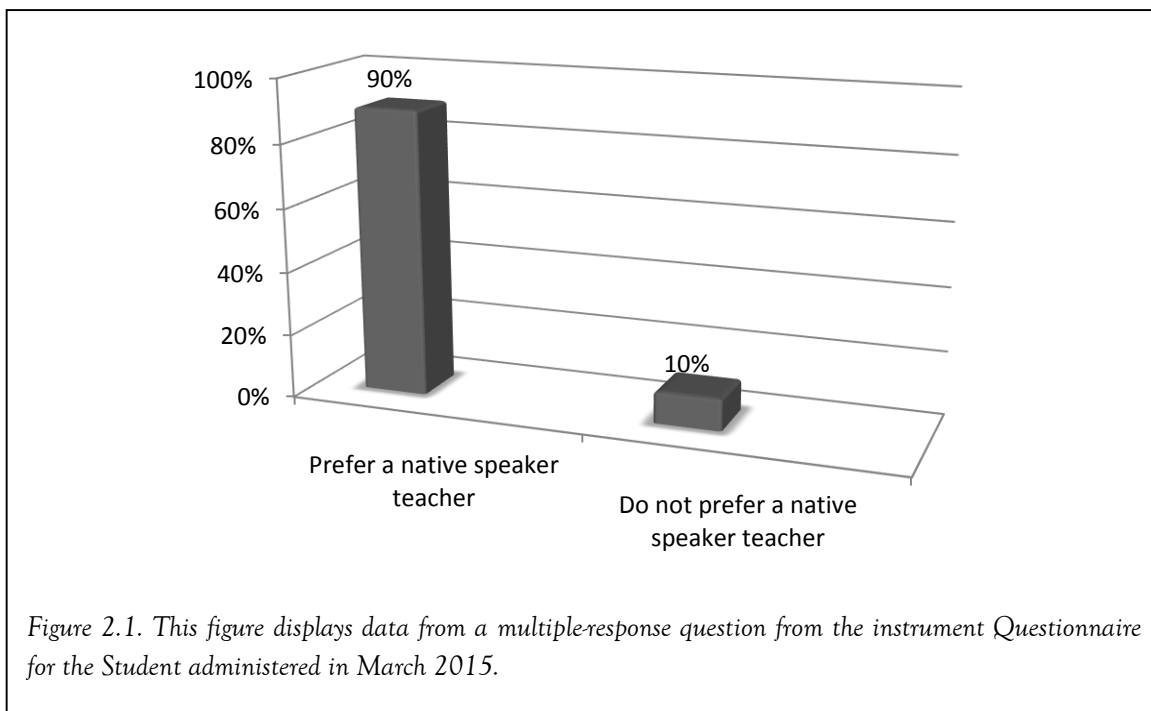
- b. *Analysis of the research question: What are some beginning students’ perceptions regarding native English speaker (NES) teaching and nonnative English speaker (NNEs) teaching?*

After being exposed to 60 hours of native speaker teaching, the twenty students were all asked about whether or not they prefer a native English speaker as a teacher based on any previous experience (see Figure 2.1).

The graph reveals that 18 students prefer a native English speaker as a teacher which makes up for 90% whilst two of them do not; that was equivalent to 10%. This information illustrates that students’ acceptance towards the figure of a NEST in the language classroom was high. This type of acceptance could be conducive to successful English learning while being exposed to a NEST.

In addition to the information garnered by the students’ questionnaires, students were asked about some marked differences between the NEST and the NNEs during a face-to-face interview. It is worth noting that the course under study was a collegiate course. The NEST taught the grammar and writing part while the NNEs taught the students listening, speaking and reading. The students’ answers for the inquiry on differences between these two teachers were very similar. Some of the differences pointed out for the NEST were that she seemed to be more dynamic (she changed the activities during class and kept students active), was more encouraging, taught them more about the target culture, was more patient, brought a lot of materials and explained more. On the other hand, the NNEs was said to

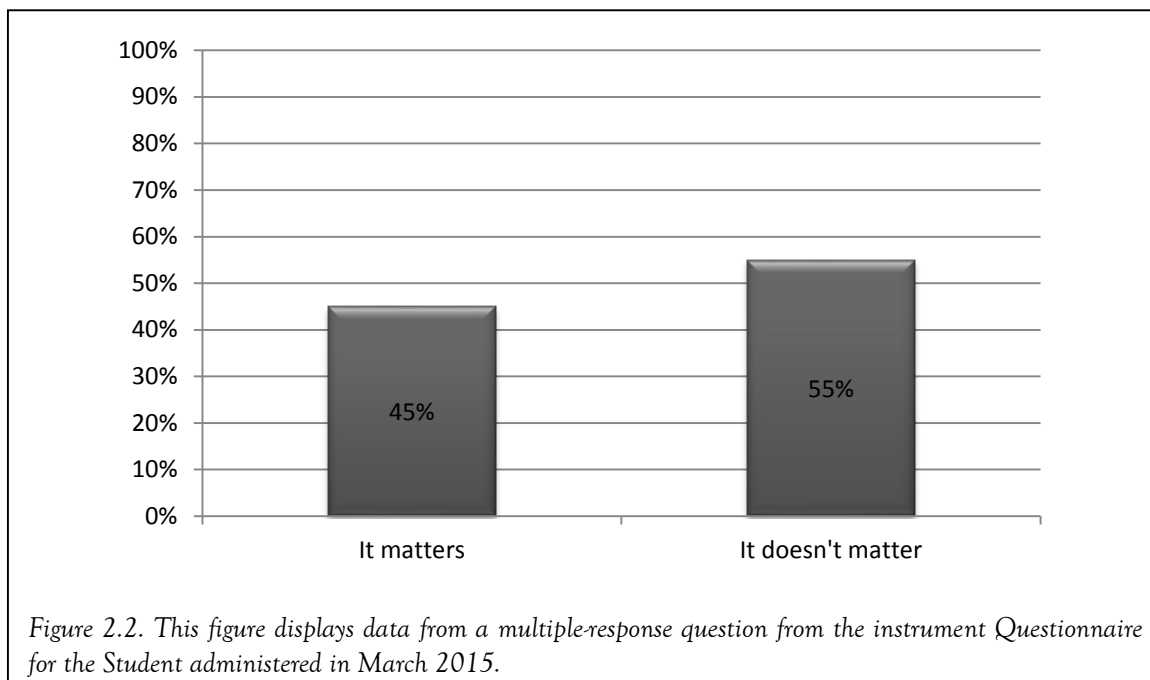
explain more clearly, did several activities, spoke slowly, gave better explanations, looked more serious, and did not practice enough before the tests.



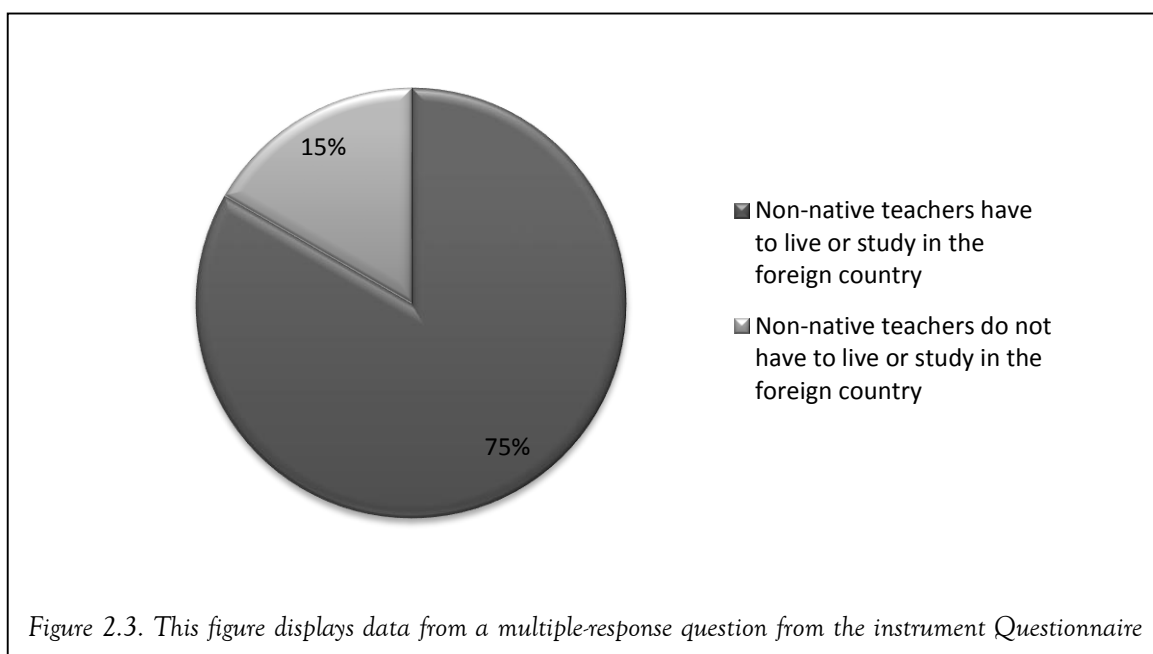
During class observations, the researcher could recognize most of the aspects students mentioned in the interview. The NEST brought an array of different activities each session observed. She concentrated on keeping students on task all the time. Dead time was not possible. She constantly changed the activities and had the students work in groups. Interaction was a must among students and between the teacher and the students as well. There was an opportunity for students to construct their answers to the exercises all together. Some features of meaningful learning were observed. Students participated in the construction of big projects in gradual steps like in the case of the writing of a letter and design of a newspaper with its different sections. The NEST's lessons were communicative and participatory at the same time.

Although students seem to prefer a native speaker teacher, a number of students answered that it would not matter whether the teacher was a native speaker or not (see Figure 2.2).

Actually, there is a slight difference between the students who care about their teacher being a native speaker and those who do not care. According to the previous chart, nine students out of the twenty reported that they care about this. This represented 45% of the students. The other eleven students, which represented a 55%, stated that they do not care whether the teacher in charge of the class is a native speaker or not. It does not make a difference to them. This could also guarantee that more than the half of the students could achieve successful English learning during the period they were exposed to the NEST.



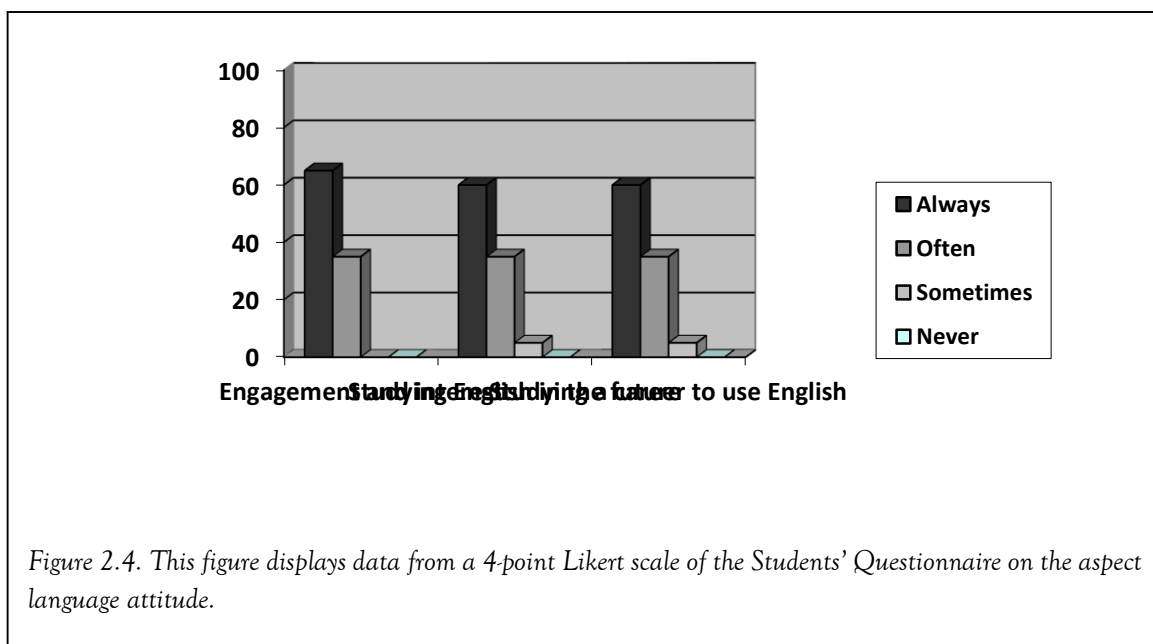
The majority of students also reported that they believe that a non-native English teacher is qualified if she or he has lived and/or studied in the country where the language is spoken (see Figure 2.3).



There is a high preference for non-native English teachers who have lived or studied in the country where English is spoken. This majority represents 75% of the whole target population. Indeed, 15 students out of the 20 answered positively to this inquiry. The rest of the students, answered negatively. In fact, just 5 students out of the 20 did not object to

the fact of having a non-native English teacher who has not lived or studied in an English speaking country. This demonstrates the positive orientation of this group of students towards an English class taught by someone more knowledgeable of the target culture and language. In the interview, this last feature was pointed out as one outstanding characteristic of the NEST. They reported that she taught them more about the target culture. During the class observations, the NEST asked students to write informal letters and to create a newspaper as they are actually done in the target culture. These two activities exposed students to compare and contrast features of the target and mother culture.

Students were also questioned about whether or not a native English speaker teacher would make them more interested in learning. All students answered positively. The total number of students were sure that their interest and motivation would rise if they had the opportunity to have a native speaker as a teacher. Furthermore, students were asked about their attitudes towards the language while they were exposed to the NEST and took the course Integrated English I (see Figure 2.4). They were asked about their engagement and interest as well as their desire of studying English in the future and studying a career to use English while they took classes with the NEST.



The categories “always” and “often” were the most chosen. The majority reported that their engagement during the classes they took with the NEST was always positive. In fact, 13 out of the 20 represented the majority of students. They felt motivated and their interest was high, enough to be open to the strategies used by the NEST. Furthermore, the same number of students selected the aspects “studying English in the future” and “studying a career to use English”; actually, the number recorded was 12 out of the 20. Concerning students’ engagement and motivation, they detailed some reasons why they liked the NEST’s classes during the face-to-face interviews. They stated that the NEST included games, songs, and chants in her classes to keep their attention focused. They also informed that the NEST

worked on their mistakes and helped with corrections, brought lots of practices, motivated them to write at home, and always used index cards as a technique to concentrate on the instructions of the exercise.

During the class observations, most of the activities that students mentioned were done. In addition, the NEST always wrote the agenda for the class in one of the board's four corners. This helped students to visualize the class routine, and give them a sense of accomplishment every time they moved to the next activity listed. Some of the strategies the NEST used were top-down strategies, from the general to the specific. For instance, students were asked to analyze some sentences in strip of paper, determine the use of the prepositions and reported it to the rest of the group. After that, the teacher presented the rules for preposition use. Furthermore, the teacher facilitated the use of critical thinking by having the students proofread their compositions and peer edit their partners' writing products. Students were encouraged to write the different sections of a newspaper by following all the stages of the writing process. They all participated in the design and content of the newspaper. In the last observation made, the students were very excited to see the final edition of their newspaper. They recalled all the steps they went through in the creation of the newspaper. They reported that they had selected a "winner" article, or as they called it a "feature" article. The winner student read the article aloud that day. These activities demonstrate the level of engagement students had while taking the classes taught by the NEST.

The students' impressions on their use of the language were also analyzed. To this purpose, a 4-point Likert scale was used to determine how affirmative or negative their impressions were. The next Table 2.1 illustrates the results of the mean of each aspect considered for students' impressions on language use.

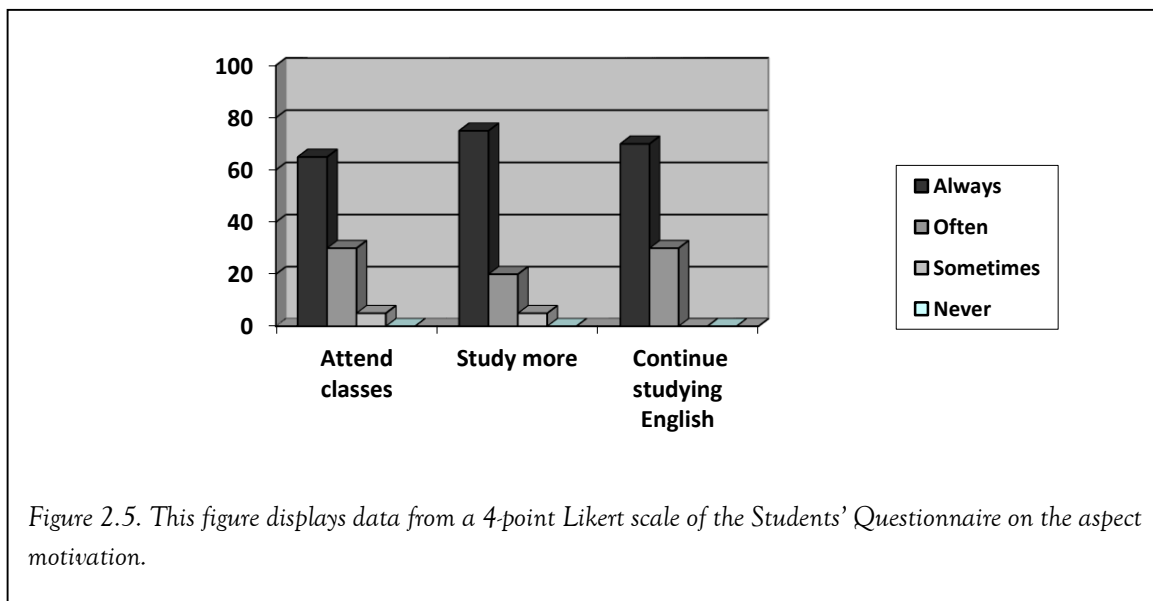
	M
Understanding of grammar	3.6
Improvement of writing	3.5
Listening comprehension	3.8
Speaking ability	3.1
Fluency in oral and written English	3.1
Improvement of vocabulary	3.0
Longer concentration	2.9
Less likely to use Spanish	3.0

Note. Rated on a 4-point Likert 4='always' -strongly agree-, 3= 'often' -agree-, 2= 'sometimes' -somehow disagree and 1='never'-strongly disagree.

The students reported that after being exposed to the native English speaker teaching, they were sure that their listening comprehension, their understanding of grammar and their writing improved greatly. In addition, students reported that their vocabulary range, their

fluency in oral and written English and their speaking ability itself improved as well. The means of these aspects recorded a slight difference regarding the first top three aspects mentioned before. The lowest means were recorded for the aspects about longer concentration spans kept in class and the use of just English and less Spanish in the classroom. These aspects did not show a great difference compared to the others listed before either. The range of these means analyzed went from 2.9 to 3.8.

Besides the students' impressions on language use and language attitude, they were asked to report about their overall motivation as language learners who had the opportunity to learn from a NEST in a five-month period (from January to May). The next Figure 2.5 displays the results of this analysis.



Based on the data shown, the categories “always” and “often” recorded more answers in the three aspects inquired. Actually, there was no selection of the category “never” and just few students chose “sometimes” for their answers to two of the aspects under scrutiny. Just one student chose the “attend classes” and “study more” categories. During this period of exposure to NEST, students reported that studying more and putting in more effort was the one aspect in which they showed more motivation while studying English in their majors. This aspect was chosen by 16 out of the 20 students. The second top aspect was the fact that after having experienced this contact with a native English speaker, they would like to continue studying this language in the future. Indeed, 14 out of the 20 students selected this aspect. “Attend classes” was the least selected aspect; however, the difference between this aspect and the others was slight; 13 students selected that last aspect.

4. Recommendations

After analyzing the data gathered, the researchers put forward some significant recommendations. Due to the lack of exposure to NESTs in an EFL context, there are some efforts and contributions NNESTs might make for the sake of the students' language development. First, an aspect that students pointed out as a salient feature of the NEST was her knowledge about the target culture, and how she incorporated that to the grammar and writing class. In this regard, NNEST should add the cultural component to the materials and activities they bring to the classroom.

Second, the type of tasks the NEST designed were very genuine, incorporated the use of authentic materials, and were meaningful to the students' learning process. This raised the students' engagement. Students were involved in the process of writing a letter individually and then producing a newspaper collectively as one class. These two tasks fueled the students' interest and participation since they knew how applicable that could be to their lives outside the classroom. To this end, it is recommendable for NNESTs to promote more authentic and life-like tasks in the grammar or writing class.

Third, the strategies the NEST used were student-centered, promoted participation, enhanced the students' confidence, and built upon their social skills in the classroom. Her classes were full of activities that kept students on task and engaged all the time. Most of the classroom activities were done in groups and some were assigned as projects. This helped set a sense of accomplishment among the students when working as a team. In addition, the NEST provided students with a lot of practice right before the tests, which helped them feel more confident when taking the exam or quiz. It is advisable that NNESTs implement an ample set of affective and social strategies to complement their everyday work in the classroom. This might boost students' participation, confidence and group work skills a lot more.

Fourth, the NEST set a pleasant classroom atmosphere by having the students work in pairs or groups, singing chants or songs and using games. Students reported that they did enjoy the way the NEST brought fun to the classroom. Although some NNESTs may think the fun element should not be part of a college class, the NEST proved that that aspect could have very positive results in a group of EFL students. Thus, it is suitable to include enjoyable activities such as games, songs, chants and group interaction in grammar and writing classes.

Fifth, the NEST provided constructive feedback and helped students develop their critical thinking by having them peer assess and review the other partners' compositions. Although those two techniques imply a great physical effort on the teachers' part, NNESTs should devote more time to providing more constructive feedback and facilitating opportunities for students to learn how to peer assess others' compositions.

The researchers also drew upon some recommendations for institution administrators. First, it would be remarkable to have native speakers who are qualified professionals teach beginning students in small classes. However, in most foreign (TEFL) classrooms, this is

simply not possible and an unreal condition. Access to trained TEFL professionals varies considerably in most countries, yet there are a variety of resources and programs to accomplish this as a program goal. Therefore, it is advisable to contact these types of programs in order to either make native speakers exposure possible in the foreign language classroom or trained NNETs more on new methodological tendencies. Furthermore, this study, though it examines only one NES teacher and one group of beginning students, shows promise in engaging students and keeping them moving forward. It is highly recommendable the continued tracking of this group of twenty through the next year of English courses is something that could even provide more data in this issue of the impact of NES teaching.

5. Conclusions

From this exploratory study, one can see that the results from students' affective variables (attitudes, behaviors, motivation) show clear improvement. It is not uncommonplace for students who enjoy learning to thus increase in motivation and desire to move forward in language classes. In addition to the desire to continue studying, the students had the concrete results of improvement in writing gain. Most of them, when presented with their pre-test at the end of the 10 weeks, remarked about the amount of progress in writing they had accomplished. In other words, their own language gains were clear reinforcement for them to continue in English. Moreover, these beginning students of writing began to exhibit more control over the syntactical structures in their compositions. As they gained more practice and skill, they produced lengthier compositions with more accuracy. This was made evident as the error count per paper decreased considerably.

It was also proven through this study that active, participatory, and stimulating classes raise students' attention and facilitate their grammar and writing performance. Additionally, guiding EFL students through the stages of the writing process in a more detailed and assisted way helps learners gain more confidence and accuracy in their written products. Using real world writing tasks and collaborative projects also showed this increase in students' desire to continue with the study of English, a goal that all educators wish to accomplish.

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Designing an English for Specific Purpose Syllabus

Saray Loáciga Brenes
Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica
sarayelena07@gmail.com

Didier Villarreal Obando
Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica
didier1250@yahoo.es

Resumen

La ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS PARA PROPOSITOS ESPECIFICOS (ESP) se ha convertido en una de las estrategias más prominentes de las metodologías de enseñanza del Inglés en Costa Rica. Hoy en día, las nuevas tendencias en los negocios han traído cambios en la demanda de cursos de Inglés que los empleados desean para mejorar su nivel de dominio del idioma Inglés en su lugar de trabajo. Esta investigación descriptiva tiene como objetivo principal implementar cursos de Inglés con propósitos específicos en vez de los cursos regulares de Inglés integrado I y II que la UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL (UNA) ofrece a los estudiantes de otras carreras tales como: administración, comercio internacional e ingeniería en sistemas de información. Esta investigación se llevó a cabo en la UNA, Campus Liberia y Nicoya, e incluye estudiantes de las carreras antes mencionadas y además al personal docente para determinar la viabilidad de ofrecer cursos de ESP. Los resultados del estudio arrojaron datos interesantes. Dentro de los que se destaca el hecho que un gran número de estudiantes y profesores consideraron inadecuado seguir enseñando cursos de Inglés Integrados; por el contrario, sugirieron la necesidad de la implementación del ESP en el programa de Inglés para otras carreras. Los resultados de esta fase del estudio constituyen la base para futuros estudios con el fin de desarrollar estrategias y fortalecer el aprendizaje del idioma Inglés en la Sede Regional Chorotega.

Palabras clave: inglés para propósitos específicos, análisis de necesidades, diseño de programas, situación actual de los estudiantes de la Sede Chorotega

Abstract

The TEACHING OF ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES (ESP) has become one of the most prominent areas of English teaching methodologies in Costa Rica. Nowadays, the new trends in business have brought with it a lot of changes in the demands for English courses from employees who wish to improve their English proficiency level at their workplace. This descriptive research was based on Integrated English courses offered at UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL (UNA) for students of other majors and aims at designing an ESP syllabus for this student population who need to take tailored English courses to their field of study. This research was conducted at UNA, Campus Liberia and Nicoya, and it included business administration, international commerce and computer science students and English faculty members to determine the viability of offering ESP courses. The results of the study showed interesting results. One of them is that a large number of students and professors considered inappropriate to continue teaching integrated English courses; on the contrary, they sought

the needs of implementing ESP in the English curriculum. The findings from this phase of the study constitute the bases for future studies to develop strategies to improve the English learning at UNA, satellite campuses in Guanacaste.

Key Words: English for Specific Purpose (ESP), need analysis, syllabus design, situation of students in UNA- Sede Chorotega

1. Introduction

In 2011, UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL (UNA) implemented a new English program under the name of “Inglés integrado I y II para otras carreras” with the objective of developing the necessary student’s linguistic competence in this language. At that time, the communicative approach found a fertile place to grow in this institution. The course syllabus were originally designed by experts on the field of Literature School and then recommended to be used in all the branches of the University. Thus, Literature School dictated the rules related to the type textbooks and evaluation criteria to follow during the development of the classes. Unfortunately, these decisions do not give room to educators and students to exercise other topics related to their fields of study. Here, there are some important questions that lead this investigation: Why do some students show a lack of motivation to learn the language? Why is there a low level of English competence at the end of their careers, and Is the communicative approach appropriate for this s population?

This research has the purpose of finding out the appropriateness of this English program and foresees the implementation of the ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSE (ESP) approach in the Satellite campuses in Nicoya and Liberia. The English language skills as a requirement for working have been increasing as time goes by in the province of Guanacaste where the number of foreign investment in the region has doubled in the last ten years; it is expected to grow over the time. Therefore, there is a need to hire professionals whose level of English proficiency is at high. Consequently, UNA should not fall behind the rest of higher educational institutions in the region of Guanacaste.

It is hoped that this work will lead to future investigations in this field and may shed light for the decision makers of UNA institution on how English should be taught to this type of learners.

This study seeks to:

- a. to gather information from students, staff and academic directors about the English program
- b. to know the student’s perception of the English courses taken at UNA
- c. to analyze the appropriateness of the English courses offered at UNA in the satellite campuses in Nicoya and Liberia

d. to propose the ESP approach for this student's population.

Designing the ESP syllabus is beyond the scope of this work.

2. Literature Review

2.1. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) Definition

ESP has not been an easy term to be defined since its first appearance in the 1960's. Many different linguists have made their contributions to the field of ESP with new insights and reflections to what ESP is all about. In fact, many of their studies do not seem to agree with a unique definition. Let's take a journey with some of the most popular scholars in order to define ESP. For example, the Encyclopedic Dictionary of Applied Linguistics online defines English for Specific (or Special) Purposes as "language programs designed for groups or individuals who are learning with an identifiable purpose and clearly specifiable needs." This definition implies the use of special teaching techniques; using business English settings where students can learn the necessary language structure to communicate successfully in the workplace.

Another relevant definition is provided by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) have defined ESP as an "approach" rather than a "product"- meaning that ESP does not necessarily involve any particular kind of language, teaching material or methodology. The fundamental function of ESP is: "Why does this learner need to learn a foreign language Milavic, 2006 cf. Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). The rationale of learning English becomes the key point for ESP. ESP is an approach to language learning, which is based on learner's needs. By looking at the question why does the learner need to learn a foreign language?, educators can achieve their purpose of teaching language skills required to fit their needs. In other words, it is from the learner that will arise the rest of the decisions as to content and method based on the learner's reasons for learning Hutchinson and Waters (1987).

2.2. Need Analysis Strategy

The need analysis strategy is vital for developing the curriculum of English for Specific Purpose approach. Therefore, it is important to know exactly how it works and what kind of information it involves in this teaching methodology.

According to Iwai et al. (1999), the term needs analysis generally refers to the activities that are involved in collecting information that will serve as the basis for developing a curriculum that will meet the needs of a particular group of students.

Another view of the need analysis strategy is coined by Hutchinson and Waters (1987), who advocate a learning-centered approach in which learners' learning needs play a vital role? If the analyst, by means of target situation analysis, tries to find out what learners do with language (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987) learning needs analysis will tell us "what the learner needs to do in order to learn" *ibid*: 54)

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) for analysis of learning needs use the following:

- a. Why are the learners taking the course?
 - compulsory or optional;
 - apparent need or not;
 - Are status, money, promotion involved?
 - What do learners think they will achieve?
 - What is their attitude towards the ESP course? Do they want to improve their English or do they resent the time they have to spend on it?
- b. How do the learners learn?
 - What is their learning background?
 - What is their concept of teaching and learning?
 - What methodology will appeal to them?
 - What sort of techniques bore/alienate them?
- c. What sources are available?
 - number and professional competence of teachers;
 - attitude of teachers to ESP;
 - teachers' knowledge of and attitude to subject content;
 - materials;
 - aids;
 - opportunities for out-of-class activities.
- d. Who are the learners?
 - age/sex/nationality;
 - What do they know already about English?
 - What subject knowledge do they have?
 - What are their interests?

- What is their socio-cultural background?
- What teaching styles are they used to?
- What is their attitude to English or to the cultures of the English-speaking world?

2.3. English for Specific Purpose Syllabus Design

Designing and ESP syllabus is primarily about asking questions in order to gather reasons or the basis for writing materials, classroom activities and evaluation.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p. 12) suggests that “the purpose of an ESP course is to enable learners to function adequately in a target situation”. Therefore, the process of designing an ESP syllabus requires a close contact between the learners and the language contexts where students need to show their performance with the real language.

Some other researchers who have discussed the characteristics of ESP do not seem to disagree on this particular issue and most of them (Strevens, 1988; Bojovic, 2006; Dudley-Evans, 1997; Gatehouse, 2001) have supported the main characteristics proposed by Carter (1983). He identified the following “three features common to ESP courses:

- a) Authentic material,
- b) Purpose-related orientation, and
- c) Self-direction (Gatehouse, 2001 cf. Carter, 1983, p. 2).

“Authentic material” means using material, not developed or written for teaching purpose, from the main area of study of the learners or their occupation. This material may include books, forms, charts; graphs etc. and these forms of authentic texts may be exploited in modified or unmodified forms according to the requirement of the teaching circumstances. Authentic material will be an appropriate choice if ESP courses are offered to advanced or intermediate level as proposed by Dudley-Evans, (1997). “Use of authentic content materials, modified or unmodified in form, are indeed a feature of ESP, particularly in self-directed study and research tasks”(Gatehouse, 2001, p. 4). He further mentioned that the learners who were taught language for employment in health services were mainly evaluated through a lot of independent study assignments given to them in their chosen area of interest. These students were encouraged to utilize various resources to complete their research assignments.

2.4. Situation of Students in UNA- Sede Chorotega

Teaching “Inglés Integrado I y II” courses at UNA Chorotega Branch seem far from satisfactory, not conducive to learning the language. In most cases, it shows a lack of connection to background knowledge and personal experience of the learners, most of

students have no English basis before university; there is a remarkable tendency to use a more traditional approach language teaching.

Nowadays, there is a requirement, emerging as a consequence of international and national role of English and the developments in English language teaching methodology, to make English learning more relevant and meaningful context provided by the area of Guanacaste. It is only in this way, English professors are able to understand the students' needs. The English programs at UNA in Guanacaste should be more directed towards satisfying the present and future needs of learners and in this manner they can be well equipped for the future challenges of life where role of English is involved in the work place and interactive intercultural area.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

Participants of the study were current students and English teachers of the three main majors (International Trade and Business, Computer Science and, Business Administration), 153 student participants, aging from 18-20, answered the survey. 6 teachers of both campuses were invited to participate in the study.

3.2. Material

The data collection instrument was a survey submitted to the students and an interview for English teachers.

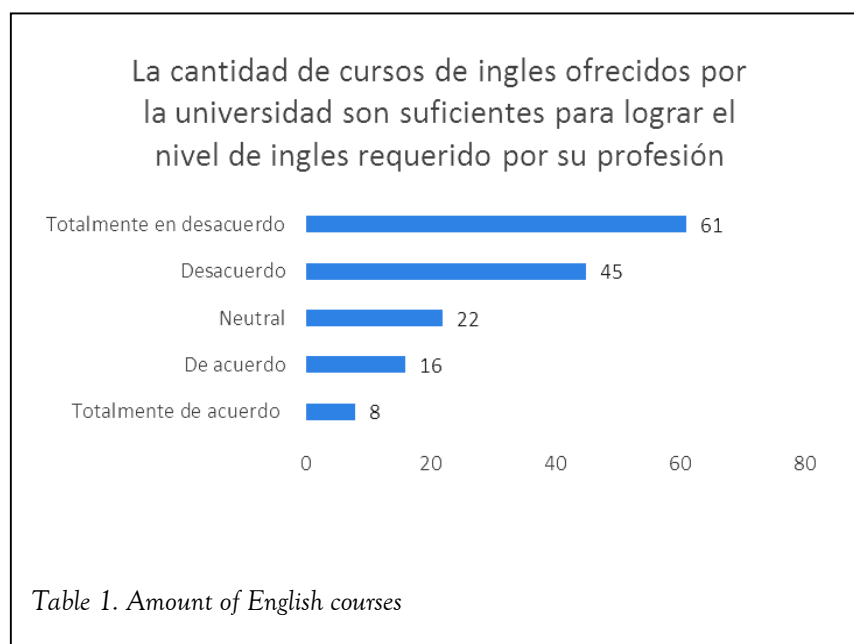
The students' survey was arranged in a scale of perceptions statements related to the English program; where the assessment of attitude and beliefs were required a limited number of scaled questions were included to achieve this end. The teachers' interview was a series of open question which had the purpose of knowing their points of view associated with ESL students' performance and achievements in the programs.

The students' survey aimed at gathering information related to the following areas:

- Amount of English courses
- Flexibility to incorporate topics related to their fields of study
- Needs for ESP courses
- Their English level proficiency
- Motivation to learn English
- The importance of leaning English in the region

4. Results and Discussions

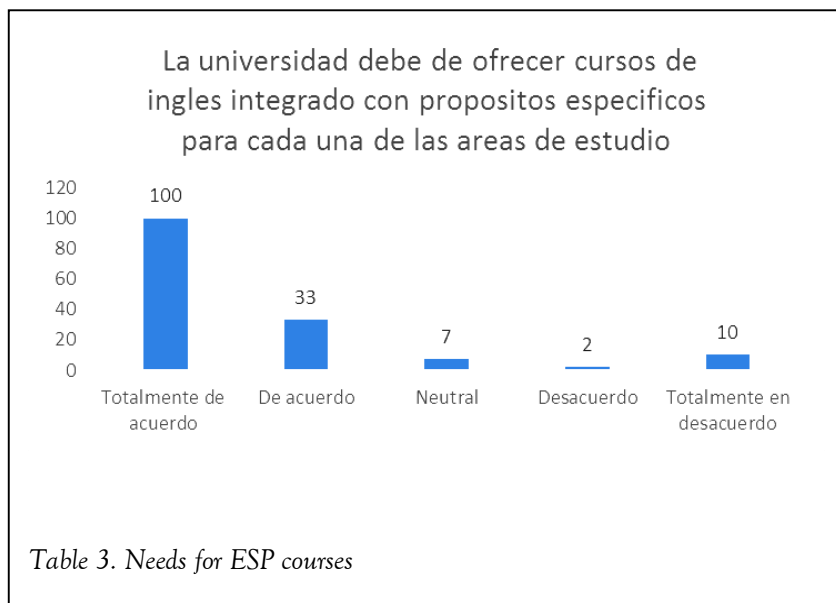
4.1. Students' Survey



Question #1: La cantidad de cursos de Inglés ofrecidos por la universidad son suficientes para lograr el nivel de Inglés requerido por su profesión. The aim of this question was to know if the students considered enough the amount of courses needed to learn English for their majors. 39% of the students thought the amount of courses are not enough.

Table 2. Flexibility to incorporate topics related to their fields of study	
Totalmente de acuerdo	3
De acuerdo	15
Neutral	35
Desacuerdo	58
Totalmente en desacuerdo	45

Question #2: El docente de Inglés relaciona las temáticas con su área de estudio. The aim of this question was to find out how flexible was the program to incorporate topics from other majors. 37% of the students thought that this program does not allow teachers to develop other topics besides their textbook.



Question #5: La universidad debe ofrecer cursos de inglés integrado con propósitos específicos para cada una de las áreas de estudio. The aim of this question was to know if students were in favor of implementing ESP courses at UNA. 65% of the students thought ESP is absolutely necessary.

Table 4. Their English level proficiency	
Muy bueno	6
Bueno	26
Regular	30
Malo	83
Muy malo	7

Question #4: Su nivel de Inglés es ... The aim of this statement was to know how students considered their English level proficiency to be. 54% of the students considered that their English level was not acceptable with the courses offered by UNA.

Table 5. Motivation to learn	
Siempre	17
Casi siempre	18
Algunas veces	4
Casi nunca	33
Nunca	80

Question # 10: “las temáticas contempladas en el libro le generan interés por aprender el idioma ingles “. The aim of this statement was to know if the themes of the textbook motivate the students to learn the language. 54% of the students thought that the contents did not motivate them to learn.

Indispensable	146
Poco indispensable	6
Nada	0

Question #11: El uso del idioma ingles en su carrera es. The aim of this statement was to know how important learning for these students was. 95 % of the students thought that English is so important in their careers.

4.2. Teacher’s Interview

The teacher’s perspective about the English program “Ingles Integrado para otras carreras” is relevant for the purpose of this study. Thus, six former and current teachers were interview about the program. The aim of this interview was to obtain as much information as possible to determine their beliefs and insights about the English courses they have worked.

Most of the teachers agreed that the textbooks covered a wide range of topics related to daily life situations and there was not extra time to choose topics related to the learner’s needs. This was obvious from them since they had to do as the Literature School demanded. The lack of interest in the classes can be the result of not having the ability to understand class resources related to what they were studying. Students would have appreciated it if the teachers had had the chance to incorporate activities and materials tiered to their needs.

Even though teachers are not experts on other fields, they have expressed their concerns about the lack of connection between the contents and the learner’s needs. The need analysis strategy is clear when it refers to the crucial questions about the learner’s needs. Why do the students need English for?. Therefore, most teachers show agreement when they thought that there is a need to include contents from the students’ majors and increase the amount of contact hours with the students.

5. Conclusions

- In conclusion, the study revealed that students and educators at UNA, Sede Regional Chorotega, both campus Nicoya and Liberia do not support the idea of teaching “Ingles Integrado para otras carreras”.

- The findings of this investigation support the favoritism towards the English for Specific Purpose (ESP).
- The study shows the student's desire for a different teaching approach rather than the communicative one and this can be provided with the elements found in ESP. The learning needs strategy must be exercised to increase the students' interest in learning English.
- It is noticeable that students are forced to learn English without any clear preparation for the classes.
- In this study is evident that students perceive they need more English courses to achieve higher language proficiency.
- This research may also be useful for the students so that they can identify their weakness and strengths in the English language

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Appendix A: Students' Survey

ENCUESTA

Objetivo: Este instrumento tiene como objetivo el conocer su opinión sobre los cursos de Inglés integrado que ofrece la Universidad Nacional, Sede Regional Chorotega. La información brindada será utilizada para la toma de decisiones pertinentes; por lo cual, le garantizamos su resguardo. Muchas gracias!

Instrucción general: Para cada una de las siguientes afirmaciones, le solicitamos marcar con una equis (X) la respuesta apropiada.

Carrera: | 1. ____Administración 2. ____Ingeniería en Sistemas de información
 3. ____ Comercio internacional

Campus: 1. ____Liberia 2. ____Nicoya

Sexo: () Masculino () femenino

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
+2	+1	0	-1	-2

	Totalmente de acuerdo	De acuerdo	Neutral	Desacuerdo	Totalmente en desacuerdo
1. La cantidad de cursos de Inglés ofrecidos por la Universidad Nacional son suficientes para lograr el nivel de Inglés requerido por su profesión					

2. El docente de Inglés relaciona las temáticas con su área de estudio.					
3. Existe flexibilidad para abordar temáticas adicional al libro utilizado.					
4. El docente de Inglés debe saber sobre temas, situaciones encontradas en su área de estudio.					
5. La Universidad debe ofrecer cursos de Inglés Integrados con propósitos específicos para cada una de las áreas de estudio					

6. La cantidad de estudiantes en los grupos es apropiada para el aprendizaje del idioma.

___Si ___No.

7. Existe flexibilidad para abordar temáticas adicional al libro utilizado.

___Si ___No

8. La evaluación utilizada contribuye significativamente con su aprendizaje.

___Si ___No

9. Su nivel de Inglés hasta el momento es _____

___Muy bueno ___Bueno ___Regular ___Malo ___Muy malo

10. Las temáticas contempladas en el libro le generan interés por aprender el idioma Inglés.

___ Siempre ___ casi siempre ___ algunas veces ___ casi nunca ___ Nunca

11. El uso del idioma Inglés en su carrera es _____

_____ Indispensable _____ poco indispensable _____ nada indispensable

Porqué? _____



Appendix B: Teacher's Interview Questionnaire

ENTREVISTA

Objetivo: Este instrumento tiene como objetivo el conocer su opinión sobre los cursos de Inglés integrado que ofrece la Universidad Nacional, Sede Regional Chorotega. La información brindada será utilizada para la toma de decisiones pertinentes; por lo cual, le garantizamos su resguardo. Muchas gracias!

1. Ha dado cursos de servicio de Inglés para otras carreras recientemente?
2. Considera que los cursos de Inglés ofrecidos por la Universidad son suficientes para lograr el nivel de Inglés mínimo que requieren los estudiantes para el mundo laboral?
3. Considera que el programa, los libros, el material de apoyo son adecuados para los cursos de Inglés para otras carreras?
4. Que sugerencias le daría a la Sede para orientar los Cursos de Inglés para otras carreras hacia lo que buscamos como profesores y lo que los estudiantes necesitan?

Empowerment Pedagogy: Personal Improvement Goal in Higher Education

Patricia López Estrada

Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica, Costa Rica
plopez@tec.ac.cr

Resumen

La pedagogía de empoderamiento promueve el pensamiento crítico, un sentido de pertenencia e identidad, la construcción de conocimientos mediante el diálogo y la autonomía del aprendizaje (Freire, 1970). La propuesta PIG, (Personal Improvement Goal), por sus siglas en inglés, traducido a Meta de Superación Personal como parte de la pedagogía crítica, tiene como objetivo empoderar a los estudiantes para que sean protagonistas en su proceso de aprendizaje. La puesta en práctica de esta propuesta en dos clases de inglés educación superior en el Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica, Sede San Carlos, presentó algunos resultados. Los cuales incluyeron un sentido de mejoramiento continuo, una motivación por la metodología innovadora, una noción de «tener una voz» y de que esa voz sea «tomada en cuenta», así como un sentido de responsabilidad y compromiso de los estudiantes. La PIG demuestra ser una metodología de aprovechamiento en la construcción de fortalezas y habilidades en estas poblaciones. Sin embargo, su implementación exitosa en otras poblaciones se supedita a un cambio radical del paradigma pedagógico vigente del docente-estudiante.

Palabras clave: pedagogía del empoderamiento, pedagogía crítica, educación superior

Abstract

Empowerment pedagogy promotes critical thinking, a sense of belonging and identity, knowledge construction through dialogue, and autonomy of learning (Freire, 1970). The proposal of PIG, (Personal Improvement Goal), as part of critical pedagogy, aims towards empowering students to play a protagonist role in their learning process. Some results from using this proposal in higher education in two English classes at Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica, San Carlos were highlighted by the students. They include a sense of ongoing improvement, motivation for the innovative methodology, a sense of “having a voice” and having that voice “taken into account”, as well as a sense of student responsibility and commitment. PIG proves to be a useful classroom technique when constructing the strengths and abilities of the target student population. Nevertheless, PIG’s successful implementation in other student populations will be limited by a radical change in the pedagogical paradigm of the professor-student dichotomy.

Keywords: empowerment pedagogy, critical pedagogy, higher education

1. Introduction

The challenges of higher education in the XXI century give space to challenge the traditional methodology paradigms such as knowledge transfer and banking education. Empowerment

pedagogy focuses on aspects that promote criticism, students' commitment to their learning process, a sense of belonging and identity, the creation of knowledge through dialogue, and the development of learning autonomy (Freire, 1970). Empowerment pedagogy calls for giving a voice and providing the possibility of choosing and deciding to the students as passive oppressed agents of the traditional educational system. At the same time, it suggests a disposition, from the teachers, to accept and celebrate change. This study describes the experiences gathered when using the empowerment pedagogy PIG (Personal Improvement Goal) proposal, which was implemented in two courses at Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica.

2. Literature Review

Different from the transmission model, empowerment pedagogy aims at letting students take initiative and control over their own learning. In this matter, students become active generators of their own knowledge, as they should be more involved in curriculum planning (Cummins, 1989). Empowerment pedagogy's objectives focus on strengthening the students' skills in terms of resourcefulness, self-awareness, and self-direction. Cummins (1987) wrote a framework in order to empower minority students based on three main aspects including Additive Approach, Collaborative Involvement, and Reciprocal, Interactive Pedagogy. In the Additive Approach, teachers seek to look for their authentic personalities. They become empowered as they teach from their own selves, strengths and weaknesses, abilities and talents instead of the authoritarian, ruler in the classroom, the expert who knows it all; imposes all. The Collaborative Involvement implies a collaborative engagement in the education of the students in order to satisfy the students' needs as a way to improve and empower the learning experience in positive ways. This collaboration can take the shape of other teachers, peers, teams whom through dialogue and sharing enhance the learning-teaching process. Finally. The Reciprocal, Interactive Pedagogy goes against the transmission model and the teaching practices related to it. In this framework, Interactive Practice refers to "pedagogical approaches that empower students encourage them to assume greater control over setting their own learning goals and to collaborate actively with each other in achieving these goals" (Cummins, p. 28).

It has become mandatory to develop increasingly reflexive and critical to educate students to face the social trends. Some critical educational theorists have argued about the oppression structures that aim at dominating students in educational contexts (Freire 1970, 1994; Giroux, 1983, 1998). Freire is well known for his perspectives in terms of critical pedagogy and empowerment pedagogy, and has encouraged teachers to seek connection with the students in order to increase their personal and social motivation required to learn and transform their lives. Freire (1970) has also argued about the complexity of the relationship between the oppressed and the oppressor. He claims that both, the oppressed and the oppressor must be empowered to change, to be transformed. Freire (1970) asserts, "Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with student-teachers. The teacher is no longer

merely the one-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught to also teach” (p.61).

Empowerment pedagogy derives from critical pedagogy in terms of how the oppressors must seek liberation and transformation. In the educational contexts, the classroom and the curriculum need to be filled with vital issues taken from the students’ lives. Thus, students are empowered and leaning becomes meaningful and contextualized; active learning takes place and students focus on commitment and initiative while becoming more responsible of their learning process. Freire (1970) claims that becoming empowered implies change. That change implies thinking differently, opening up to new perspectives, activating new possibilities, and reaching for that maximum potential of each student.

3. Personal Improvement Goal

The PIG proposal is an innovative methodological strategy, based on empowerment pedagogy principles. Its main objective is to empower students and to provide meaning to their knowledge environment. It also aims at empowering students so that they can be the protagonists of their own learning. The PIG proposal challenges the traditional learning formula and celebrates the individual in his or her own linguistic and academic abilities.

It is mandatory to note that the PIG is an inventive proposal that came to life based on academic and professional reflections. The proposal came to be as a way to crystalize the empowerment theory. This Personal Improvement Goal stems from the students, considering specific aspects that the students wish to improve on a personal and academic level. The students have the freedom to choose what they want to improve (topic), why they want to improve (objectives), and how they want to improve (action plan). The Personal Improvement Goal allows students to internalize the responsibility of their learning process.

3.1. Experiences about Implementing PIG in Two English Courses

The two student populations that were part of this study are from Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica, San Carlos. Student population I is a group of nine students, as part of an advanced English course (English VI) belonging to the major of Business Administration during the first university semester of 2014. Student population II is a group of 9 students, as part of advanced English course (Level 14) belonging to the CONARE Program, Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica, San Carlos during the first Bimester of the program in 2015.

The PIG proposal was first presented to the students at the beginning of both courses. Students were encouraged to reflect and be critical about their own deficiencies as well as improvement in linguistic aspects. Students were given an organization protocol for them to brainstorm on five main aspects. The idea was for students to be guided into a plan. (See Annex 1). The first week students had to think of a “game plan” so that they could write a planned strategy for their PIG. Students had to meet with the professor to discuss the proposal and get some feedback. The time of the PIG lasted 16 weeks for the student

population I (semester) and 8 weeks for the student population II (bimester). At the end of 16 (semester) weeks and 8 (bimester) weeks, respectively, students wrote a reflection entry where they had to reflect about the PIG process during the course.

Data were gathered through the students' reflection entries at the end of the courses. Due to the dynamics of the PIG, students were assessed through the use of a rubric (See Annex 2). The main objective of the rubric was not to assess learned skills or competencies; instead, it aimed at assessing the progress and process of the PIG as a whole. The professor presented the rubric at the beginning of the courses. As part of the empowerment theory, when students were presented with the rubric, the students were provided a space for a dialogue and were encouraged to reflect, question, and propose new assessment criteria for the rubric of the PIG.

3.2. Achievements of the proposal PIG in two English courses

The charts represent a sample (5 students of each group) of the two student populations. They summarize the linguistic skills, the objectives, and the game plans. As presented in the charts, the students' skills, objectives, and activities are different for each student. Empowerment pedagogy celebrates every individual's unique ways of learning.

Student population I	Linguistic skills	Objetives	Game plan
PIG 1	Grammar	Improve grammar (conditionals)	Online practices
PIG 2	Grammar	Improve grammar (articles and prepositions)	Online practices
PIG 3	Vocabulary	Learn business vocabulary	Reading business books, online practices
PIG 4	Grammar	Improve grammar (infinitives, gerunds, and participles)	Online practices, youtube.com
PIG 5	Grammar	Improve grammar (conditionals)	Online practices

Student population II	Linguistic skill	Objetives	Game plan
PIG 1	Fluency	Improve communication when I express my ideas; improve pronunciation of words; acquire more knowledge through new words	Submission of a weekly record where I show my personal improvement speaking with a friend about free topics around 10 to 20 minutes
PIG 2	Grammar	Work on my grammatical skills to improve writing; improve verb tenses; review business administration vocabulary	Create handmade posters of tenses; online practices
PIG 3	Writing	Reduce the amount of mistakes at writing related to typos and grammar; enhance my vocabulary by using more complex and advanced words.	Reading of newspapers, books; dictionary entries, articles; write in a notebook (my own personal dictionary) the new words that I learn each day; listen to as much English as possible (watching English-language films and television, listening to English music, making English-speaking friends).
PIG 4	Speaking	Become fluent in English; improve my speaking skills; maintain constant practice of the language	Record weekly conversation about different topics
PIG 5	Vocabulary	Show progress every week of the new words I'm getting familiar with by writing them and looking for their meanings; be able to keep in mind all the new words and try to use them every time is possible in short term	Make a list of new words with their meaning; make a sentence of each new word; play online games that are going to be useful in my learning process; make a list of phrasal verbs with their meanings and an example; look for synonyms about the new words and write them in order to get familiarized with them

Based on the students' reflection entries, a content analysis (domain analysis) was conducted. As part of the qualitative research, the study used an inductive approach adapted from Hatch (2002). Once both courses ended, the professor collected all PIG work done by the students and the reflection entries. All reflection entries were analyzed through critical

readings and content coding. The coding looked for the creation of semantic categories through the students' reflection entries.

Inductive analysis was used since it sought to effectively extract meaning from data. Domain analysis provided a systematic approach to processing data to report representative pieces of descriptive categories. Domain analysis studies semantic relationships that form categories that include other categories (Hatch, 2002; Spradley, 1979). Domain analysis moves from specific elements to general conclusions, with a systematic process of identifying, summarizing, and revising domains.

Specifically, "frames of analysis" (p. 163) were first identified. Then, the included terms (name of the specific elements) to capture the core of the meaningful units. These were categorized in order to create domains based on semantic relationships. Once the semantic relationships were established, salient domains that directly answered the purpose of the study were identified. After all salient domains were identified, a code system to keep better and more orderly track of the domains was created.

The final step of domain analysis involved looking for themes. Finally, a meaningful whole was created in order to represent the specific parts of the analysis in order to create "a whole that makes sense" (Hatch, 2002, p. 175). As the summary was put together, data excerpts to support the elements of domains were selected, which became part of the findings.

Following there are the conclusions deduced from the inductive analysis, taken from the 18 students of both courses. These conclusions summarize the accomplishments of the PIG proposal in relation to the students' learning process.

3.2.1. A sense of ongoing improvement

The students concurred that the PIG classroom technique promotes an ongoing improvement process since they are pushed to do more practice outside the class. It is important to note, that the practice results in genuine work since it is very specific, relevant, and unique to each student. Once the PIG is proposed, students undertake an ownership process as part of their own improvement. The students critically decided content areas and skills they wanted to improve on. A student from the CONARE Program stated, "It is important to admit in what things we have to improve like in what we are wrong".

3.2.2. Motivation for the innovative methodology

The students expressed motivation about the methodology. In the students' reflection entries, they encouraged the professor to continue using this type of methodology. The following example shows how one student from the CONARE Program chose to work on spontaneous conversation to improve his fluency. The student stated, "I really feel more comfortable speaking English now, I feel more confident and I think I could get my PIG of becoming more fluent. I lost my fear of speaking English in front of people."

3.2.3. The right to have a voice and having that voice taken into account

Having this right of voicing what the students want and having this voice validated was the most concurring aspect indicated by the students. As the following examples show (one from English VI and one from CONARE Program, respectively), the students celebrated the fact that their voice is taken into account:

“One aspect that I really appreciate of this activity (PIG) was that I could choose the topic or topics that I wanted to improve, so I felt motivated because I was improving weaknesses that I wanted to improve”.

“Another interesting and important thing about the PIG project is that the student has the chance to choose what he/she wants to improve, because each person knows well what they need to have a better English level, and also we can choose the activities that we will do to improve, so I think at the end practicing isn’t boring because we plan the activities and most of us plan them about things that we like to do or topics we are interested in.”

3.2.4. A sense of protagonism and commitment

The students were of the same opinion that the PIG proposal enhanced a sense of protagonism in which students had to commit since they are proposing the ways to address the students’ linguistic flaws with their own learning process. The students became their own leaders and protagonists since. Two students of English VI asserted the following, “As students we must take care of our own learning process”; “The PIG has made me put an extra effort in my learning process.”

As part of this protagonist empowerment, the students develop a sense of autonomy and criticism of their own knowledge. In the following example, a CONARE student proposed to work on his English writing skills. He states, “I would have not done it on my own and I wouldn’t have been able to understand the correct way”. In the same way, another student reflects on the following, “I did not want to propose something big, instead I wanted to do something I knew I can do, not just for doing it and get a good score. I wanted to do something I am into it, something I can take my time to analyze”. The students were inquiring and being critical about their own learning processes, as shown in the following example by a student of English VI who sought to improve her vocabulary, “Sometimes when I am doing a grammar test I tend to avoid complex words because I don’t feel sure of the spelling. This is what I want to improve, what I need to learn.”

4. Conclusions

The PIG proposal as a classroom technique in two English courses made it possible for students to express their satisfaction about empowerment pedagogy. Some students’ perceptions suggest empowerment pedagogy as the PIG proposal, takes students into account, which the students feel them as an innovative classroom technique. Other students

indicate how the PIG classroom technique makes them reflect about their own learning process since it adds more meaning to their learning because the proposal comes from the students themselves. The students' PIG suggestions engage them and makes them commit to their environment. It is important to note that most of the students suggested the use of TICs (online practices, YouTube videos, online games, etc.) in order to carry out their PIGs.

The PIG proposal has been a successful experience in the context of higher education. As an empowerment pedagogy, what stood out was the fact that students were real protagonist as part of their learning process. The PIG is also a work in progress. It is not, and it should not be a “magical recipe” to be implemented in all course for all levels. One of the limitations of the study is precisely the fact that the innovative classroom technique of PIG cannot be replicated to all student populations.

Empowerment pedagogy seeks to contextualize, individualize, and provide meaning to education. Empowerment pedagogy principles mandate to internalize that students are part of an oppressing process where educational aspects, including content and evaluation issues, are imposed upon them. The students deserve to be given the power and control over their own personal individual learning processes. To empower students promotes students' growth, autonomy, criticism, confidence, and self-reliance.

To empower students is also to comprehend and accept that students must make their own decisions, justify, and be consistent and systematic with those decisions.

The role played by the educators, in terms of empowerment pedagogy, must be that of a flexible, enthusiast educator. They also must be accepting of changes and different perceptions since every single student has individual skills that makes them unique in any educational context.

Traditionally, the conception of education has been that in which the educators transfer knowledge and the students delved into that knowledge. Freire (1970) suggests that studying is not simply to read information and memorize knowledge, instead studying in more a creating act, a constant recreating act that seeks to promote opportunities for criticism and personal growth.

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Annex 1. Personal improvement goal specifications.

1. Topic. Select something you want to improve.
 - Language skill (speaking, listening, reading, writing, culture)
 - Language subskill (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation)
2. Goals. One general and two specific.
3. Plan of action (weekly plan of action).
4. Changes (form or content).
5. Final reflection (end of course).

Annex 2. Personal improvement goal rubric.

Criteria	Outstanding (3)	Average (2)	Deficient (1)
Amount of evidence in relation to personal improvement goal (PIG)	Student presents vast amount of evidence related to working on PIG weekly.	Student presents some evidence related to working on PIG weekly.	Student presents little evidence related to working on PIG weekly.
Meaningful evidence of personal improvement goal (PIG)	All evidence provided by the student is meaningful and highly related to PIG.	All evidence provided by the student is somewhat meaningful and highly related to PIG.	All evidence provided by the student is not meaningful and highly related to PIG.
Pertinence of evidence of personal improvement goal (PIG)	All evidence provided by the student is relevant and highly related to PIG.	All evidence provided by the student is somewhat relevant and related to PIG.	All evidence provided by the student is neither relevant nor related to PIG.
Variety of evidence of personal improvement goal (PIG)	There is vast variety of evidence to working on PIG.	There is some variety of evidence to working on PIG.	There is little variety of evidence to working on PIG.
Final reflection of achieving personal improvement goal (PIG)	There is clear evidence of student effort and organization. There is vast reflection about PIG.	There is some evidence of student effort and organization. There is some reflection about PIG.	There is little evidence of student effort and organization. There is little reflection about PIG.

Implementation of Teaching Activities and Materials for Advanced Grammar in the English Teaching Major

Juan Manuel Méndez Valverde
Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica
juan.mendez.valverde@una.cr

Marianela Sandí Cruz
Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica
marianela.sandi.cruz@una.cr

Jorge Altamirano Alvarado
Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica
jorge.altamirano.alvarado@una.cr

Resumen

En la historia de la enseñanza de lenguas han existido diversos enfoques y métodos para instruir a los estudiantes en el estudio de la gramática. Entre los avances más recientes está la implementación del marco tridimensional, que abarca la forma, el significado, y el uso de la gramática en un contexto integral y comunicativo. Además, se debe seguir una secuencia lógica de enseñanza que le permita a los estudiantes interiorizar el conocimiento de las reglas gramaticales para utilizarlas efectivamente. En muchas ocasiones, no se toman en cuenta los aspectos anteriores, o si se consideran, los profesores llegan hasta las etapas de la explicación de forma y significado, pero no trabajan ampliamente el uso y la aplicación de las estructuras gramaticales estudiadas. También se ha cometido el error de utilizar actividades y materiales que no satisfacen los requerimientos de los estudiantes. Consecuentemente, surgió la idea de realizar este estudio. Éste considera el marco tridimensional y las necesidades del alumnado del curso llamado Gramática Avanzada del tercer nivel de la carrera del Bachillerato en la Enseñanza del Inglés de la Universidad Nacional, Sede Regional Brunca para la creación de actividades y materiales de enseñanza. Inicialmente se investigó las necesidades de 11 discentes en lo que concierne a actividades y materiales de enseñanza de la gramática. Con base en estos resultados, se diseñó actividades y recursos didácticos que respondieran a esos requerimientos. Luego, se utilizó la técnica de grupos focales para implementar lo diseñado y compilar la percepción de los estudiantes en cuanto a su efectividad.

Palabras clave: enseñanza de la gramática inglesa, marco tridimensional, forma, significado, uso, análisis de necesidades, diseño de materiales y actividades, grupos focales.

Abstract

In the history of the teaching of languages, numerous approaches and methods have been used to teach grammar. One of the most current advances is the implementation of the tridimensional framework, which entails the form, meaning, and use of grammar structures in an integral and communicative context. Furthermore, a logical teaching sequence must

be followed so that students can internalize the knowledge about grammatical rules to use it effectively. Many are the occasions when the aforementioned framework is not considered by teachers, or if it is, instructors just follow the stages of form and meaning, but they do not amply work on the use and application of the grammar structures studied. Another common mistake has been to utilize activities and materials that do not fulfill the students' requirements. Consequently, this study considers the tridimensional framework and the needs of the students from the course called Advanced Grammar from the III level of the English Teaching Major at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension to create teaching activities and materials. Initially, a questionnaire was administered to 11 students to research on their needs regarding activities and materials used to teach grammar. On the basis of this instrument's results, activities and didactic resources were designed to respond to those necessities. Afterwards, the researchers implemented the focus group technique to pilot the designed work and compile the perception of the students regarding its effectiveness.

Key words: English grammar teaching, tridimensional framework, form, meaning, use, needs analysis, activities and materials design, focus groups.

1. Introduction

In today's globalized society, learning English has become one of the most important goals for people to have better job opportunities and improve their economic status. This is especially true for countries like Costa Rica, where speaking English is one of the main requirements to obtain a job. In fact, the teaching of English has taken center stage nowadays. This language is taught from kindergarten to the university level. Millions are invested every year to English teaching in educational institutions all over the country. The purpose of all this effort is to provide the country with a work force able to speak English effectively. At the university level, institutions offer a specific major for those who only want to learn English and another major for those who want to become English teachers. In either case, lessons are aimed at helping learners develop the four language skills, say listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Moreover, students also have to learn culture and grammar. The latter is perhaps the one area that represents the most difficulty for students since they have to learn a variety of grammatical structures that in most of the cases are very different from those in their native language. Being that learning grammar effectively is vital to properly develop other skills such as writing and speaking, teaching grammar effectively has become of the main goals of language education at the university level. For this reason, several grammar courses that go from beginning to advanced level are offered to students. This means that there is an increasing need for students to learn grammar effectively in order to develop other language skills and be able to communicate effectively.

The truth is that English learners need materials and activities that respond to their needs and help them learn grammatical structures properly. However, in spite of all the courses offered and the materials and activities implemented, grammar teaching and learning is usually a difficult issue for both students and professors. The materials used and the activities implemented are not the most suitable for them to achieve their learning goals. Students usually have serious difficulties with certain structures. This leads to inappropriate

use of grammar either when writing or speaking, and this causes miscommunication. As a result, it is necessary to develop materials and implement activities that respond to learners' needs and help them successfully learn grammar. As a solution to this issue, a set of research questions and objectives was proposed in order to carry out this research.

1.1. Research Questions

- What are the Advanced grammar students' opinions concerning the teaching of grammar in their courses in the English Teaching major?
- What are learners' needs and wants regarding activities and materials used for grammar teaching in those courses?
- What activities and materials must be designed to satisfy the students' requirements and preferences regarding grammar teaching in their courses?
- How do learners rate the effectiveness of the materials and activities designed by the researchers to reinforce their use of the grammatical topic of their choice?

1.2. Objectives

- a. To identify learners' opinions concerning the teaching of grammar in their college major.
- b. To discover students' needs and wants regarding the activities and materials to be used in grammar courses.
- c. To define what materials and activities must be devised to respond to the learners' requirements and preferences regarding grammar teaching in their courses.
- d. To assess the effectiveness of the materials and activities devised by the researchers to reinforce the learners' use of grammar.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Overview of English Grammar Teaching and the Tridimensional Framework

Teaching grammar has revolved around inductive and deductive approaches. However, over the years this tendency has been put to the test due to the nature of language itself. Language is to be learned as naturally as possible, but the study of the linguistic structure must be a part of the learning process so that students develop a sense of self-correction and grammatical awareness. Any grammar approach must be accompanied with a three-dimensional framework, which connects form (the grammar structure itself), meaning (the idea expressed in the structure) and use (the pragmatic conditions where the structure is pertinent). According to Diane-Larsen Freeman (2000), "linguistic accuracy is as much a part

of communicative competence as being able to get one's meaning across or to communicate in a sociolinguistically appropriate manner" (p. 280).

When teaching grammar, it is highly effective to introduce the grammar structures by following the aforementioned framework. Thus, the teacher is the one who introduces the structure and is well trained to know the rule and explain it. Then, students must be prepared to practice the rule in different exercises provided by the language instructor. After that, the teacher has to provide the learners with enough communicative practice for them to apply the rule in real-life situations and make sure they will practice it enough as to being able to remember it and use it communicatively. It is usually common to focus on the presentation-practice stage of the lesson due to time constraints, but if that is the common routine, the teacher needs to devote later on extra time to the production stage; otherwise, students may just remember the rule but would not be able to use it in communicative contexts. The teaching of grammar requires adequate planning in order to balance activities that cover the three stages. However, the practice stage should be carefully developed to have students interact among themselves by using the grammar explained in the lesson. This communicative practice has to include pair and group interaction so that each individual is given the chance to take time to think, order ideas, and use them in the tasks assigned.

It is also advisable to make sure that the grammar tasks to be developed take into consideration accuracy of the structure taught as well as fluency at the time to deliver the message conveyed. As Scott Thornbury (1999) held, a grammar class that is good to improve accuracy, should follow this routine:

Attention to form: This stage is to motivate students to be accurate and focus on how they are using the language.

Familiarity: Students must be familiar with the structure that they are using.

Thinking time: There must be enough time to think and reflect after developing the task.

Feedback: Students need to know how accurate they are by having error correction sessions.

Regarding fluency, the class should also include these stages:

Attention to meaning: this is to encourage learners to focus on meaning and not on form.

Authenticity: The activity must reflect the use of language in daily life situations which are meaningful.

Communicative purpose: The activity needs to have a communicative purpose; a need to interact with others.

Chunking: The structure learned should be assimilated in short chunks to be easily memorized.

Repetition: There must be a time for repetition so that learners produce the structure used. (pp. 92-94)

Once students are exposed to this type of grammar-centered approach, they might develop a sense of awareness to know how important both accuracy and fluency are when learning a second language. Furthermore, they might get into the habit of balancing both aspects and trying out their own strategies to check the form and meaning of the language they are using whenever they have to use it. In the long run, that becomes a process that triggers itself automatically without the need to think hard or hesitate.

2.2. The Importance of the Teaching and Learning of Grammar

Grammar instruction is indeed paramount for language teaching. Teachers need to find effective strategies, activities, and materials to develop their grammar lessons. Similarly, students need to find suitable strategies for them to learn language structures appropriately. According to Sik (2015), “grammar teaching is an essential part of classroom activities and adopting the most appropriate way to teach grammar according to student profile is an important issue” (p. 2142). This means that even though there will be differences among teachers in terms of how grammar is taught, grammar instruction is essential for students to properly master a second language. However, since learning grammar is not an easy task for language learners, especially those learning English, difficulties usually arise in the process.

2.3. Problems Associated with Grammar Teaching

Due to the importance that grammar instruction entails, it is relevant to analyze certain problems associated with its teaching because these issues usually affect students’ learning, and for this reason, it is necessary to consider them. One of the main shortcomings is that grammar is taught in isolation. In other words, grammatical structures are taught as individual elements apart from the context in which they are usually used. In this way, structures are memorized as if they were a formula, but learners are not able to use them effectively to communicate. In 2013, Korkmaz and Celik expressed, “Language cannot be acquired or learned through de-contextualized practice...” (p. 895). This implies that decontextualizing grammar structures when teaching will hinder students’ effective learning. The professor must provide a real context for every structure taught. Kapur (2009), as quoted in Korkmaz and Celik (2013), “emphasize[d] the importance of seeing the language as a whole rather than in pieces through meaningful contexts which should foster rich input for language practice” (p. 895). On light of this, it is necessary to point out that language structures must not be taught in isolation if effective mastery is the objective of instruction. Effective grammar teaching depends on the level of contextualization implemented in class.

Another difficulty in the process of grammar teaching is related to the materials implemented in class. In fact, teaching materials have a strong influence on language students and their learning process. The materials are the instruments that the teacher uses

to present the language and its forms to students. For this reason, they must be suitable for learners to effectively master the grammatical structures studied and at the same time respond to students' needs. Dehaven (1998) expressed that "materials have to accomplish the purposes set up by the teacher in accordance with the syllabus. Moreover, the students' linguistic proficiency level and ability have to be taken into account in order to adjust such materials to their needs" (p. 492). Littlewood (1996) claimed, "students are given the chance to use language communicatively when they are exposed to materials that promote interaction and integration of language structures to express meaning" (p. 91). Based on these assumptions, it can be said that teaching materials have a very significant influence on students' learning. Depending on the didactic resources used so is the result obtained in the teaching and learning process. The most appropriate materials are those that are authentic. In this regards, Larsen-Freeman (2000) asserted that "one strategy to solve the students' inability to "transfer what they learn in the classroom to the outside world [is to use] language materials that are authentic to native speakers of the target language" (p. 132). This means that using authentic materials in the grammar lessons could prove very helpful for learners. Otherwise, their learning will not be as effective when attempting to communicate.

2.4. Problems Associated with Grammar Learning

Learning of grammatical structures is sometimes hindered by certain difficulties. One of the main issues is language interference. Students' mother tongue's grammatical structures usually interfere with their learning of those of the target language. In the case of English and Spanish, there are striking differences in terms of structure that usually hinder native Spanish speakers when learning English as a foreign language.

Another difficulty that has to be considered is students' attitudes and beliefs towards grammar teaching and learning. In many cases, students dislike or even fear grammar. Mohamed and Perur (2011) stated, "within the classroom, any mention of grammar causes the student moments of discomfort and sometimes even terror" (p. 69). This situation predisposes learners, and even before the grammar course starts, they feel demotivated and frustrated. In the end, this affects their capacity to effectively learn grammar structures. Furthermore, there are certain preconceived ideas or perceptions that students have about how grammar should be taught. These ideas can affect grammar learning, especially when students discover that the teacher's methodology is not what they expected. Some learners believe that grammar should be taught deductively while others lean more on the inductive side. Mohamed and Perur (2011) established that for some students "learning grammar often means learning the rules of grammar and having an intellectual knowledge of grammar. For them, prescribed rules give a kind of security" (p. 2). This shows that in many cases learners prefer a traditional approach to grammar teaching even when the instructor teaches grammar in a nontraditional way.

2.5. Grammar Teaching Methodology

The key point regarding methodology in terms of grammar teaching is deciding whether to use a traditional or a modern approach. In many cases, learners favor the traditional

methodology, whereas teachers tend to favor a modern methodology. However, the teacher is the one who has to decide whether to teach language structures inductively or deductively. There has been debate among experts on this ground. While some claim that grammar should be taught inductively, others propose that learning the rules is more helpful for students. For example, Krashen (1982), as quoted in Sick (2015), argued that “the deductive approach seems much more reasonable. Why make students guess the rule?” (p. 2142). On the contrary, Sik (2015) proposed, “when an inductive approach is considered, learners acquire language on the basis of unconscious exposure to the target language in the habit formation process” (p. 2142). However, choosing one or another does not depend on teachers’ preferences and beliefs but on students’ needs and preferences. As expressed by Koran (1972), “the effectiveness of either approach depends on learners’ profiles. The key point is to adopt grammar courses according to student profile, the purpose of the students to learn a language and learning styles of the students” (as quoted in Sick, 2105, p. 2142).

2.6. Needs Analysis and Materials Design in Grammar Teaching

As explained in the previous sections, there are many factors that influence the teaching and learning of grammar. Now, the point of discussion is that the teaching of this essential sub-skill, as some authors call grammar, must be organized on the basis of a learner-centered approach for it to be effective.

Since the 19th century, many teaching methodologies such as the Grammar-Translation method, the Direct method, the Audiolingual method, the Silent Way, Desuggestopedia, and others were developed to encourage students to learn a second or foreign language effectively. However, those methods were mostly focused on the teacher’s role in the classroom. The teacher was a director, the main authority, and the center of the lessons for the most (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). The students’ opinions, thoughts, and feelings were not considered in most cases to shape the teaching activities used in class or the materials prepared by the instructor. The reason for this focus on the teacher was that those methods were rooted in Behaviorism, where language learners took “passive and reproductive roles” and were asked to respond “to certain stimuli [provided by the teacher] in language learning environments” (Sadeghi, B., Hassani, M. T., & Hessari, A. D., 2014, p. 255). This situation proved to be ineffective in the act of teaching English since learners did not become capable of communicating in the target language as expected.

For the previous reasons, new methods started to take center stage such as the Communicative Language Teaching, Content-based, Task-based, Participatory approaches, Learning Strategy Training, Cooperative Learning, Multiple Intelligences, and others, which have as one of their main purposes to develop students’ capacity to communicate. Regarding this, Larsen-Freeman stated that at one point in the history of language teaching, “it became clear that communication required that students perform certain functions.... Being able to communicate required more than linguistic competence; it required communicative competence” (2000, p. 121). Thus, students’ needs became the target of teaching instead of the teacher’s desires or performance. Those changes took place because, as Sadeghi, Hassani, and Hessari (2014) stated, there was “dissatisfaction with results gained by traditional

methods in the 1960s;” as a result, “new approaches to language teaching were introduced” (p. 256).

After all the processes and changes that ESL and EFL teaching have experimented in the last 30 years, needs analysis has become a key element in the creation and implementation of language programs, courses, syllabuses, and even teaching materials and activities. Students have become the center of attention because they are the main subjects in the teaching-learning process. They are the ones who need to learn a target language. Therefore, the syllabus, materials, activities, and other essential teaching elements must be created on the basis of the learners’ lacks. At this point of the discussion, it is important to define what learners’ needs are. As Brindley (n. d.) pointed out, students’ needs include “demands, wants, desires, expectations, motivations, constraints, lacks, and requirements” (as cited in Sadeghi, Hassani, & Hessari, 2014). Thus, language instructors must pay special attention to what students require from them in order to have a more effective teaching and learning process.

3. Students’ Needs Regarding Grammar Teaching

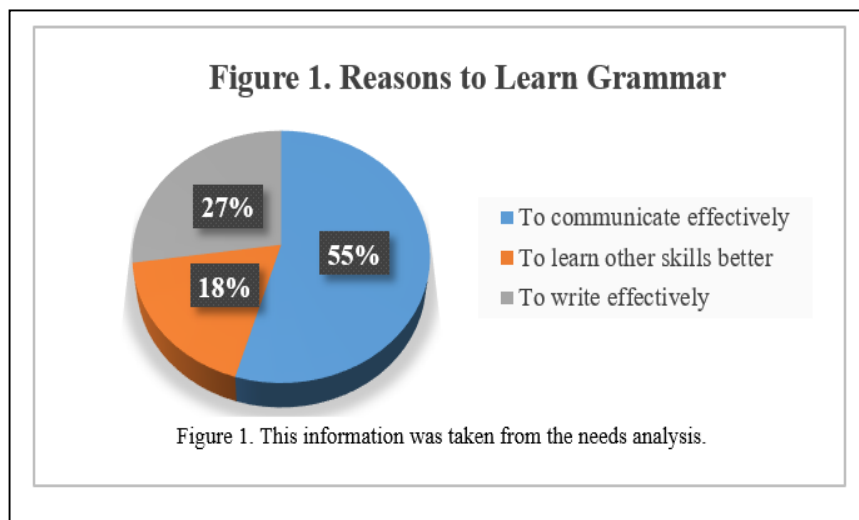
To clearly establish students’ needs in terms of the teaching of grammar and the materials that should be used, a needs analysis was carried out. A learner-centered approach was followed to gather the necessary data to perform this study. The data-gathering process was centered on obtaining students’ insights regarding their perceived needs in terms of grammar teaching and the materials that would suitably address their needs.

The participants in the needs analysis process were a group of 11 third-year English Teaching Major students from Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension. Their ages range from 20 to 22 years. These students were taking the Advanced Grammar course. In the data gathering process, two instruments were used. The first instrument, a needs analysis questionnaire, was administered to students in order to obtain information about their perceived needs regarding grammar teaching and materials. One important result from this stage of the study was that students chose a grammar topic as the basis for the materials and activities to be designed.

The other data collection method was a focus group. One focus group session was carried out in which only four of the 11 students participated. In this focus group session, the three professors in charge of this study implemented the activities and materials that they designed to reinforce students’ appropriate use of the grammatical topic they selected. The students themselves assessed these materials and activities through an evaluation scale that was given to them at the end of the focus group session. This scale was aimed at obtaining students’ insights about the activities implemented and the materials designed by the teachers. After analyzing the data collected, these are the most relevant findings obtained.

3.1. Students' Perceived Needs for Learning Grammar

The first question of the needs analysis instrument intended to gather information about students' perceived needs for learning grammar. The results obtained show that the most important reason to learn grammar is to communicate effectively. Figure #1 demonstrates that for 55% of the participants, communicating effectively is the main reason why learning grammar is necessary. Other 25% consider that learning grammar is important to write effectively while for 27% of them learning other skills better is the main reason to learn grammar effectively.



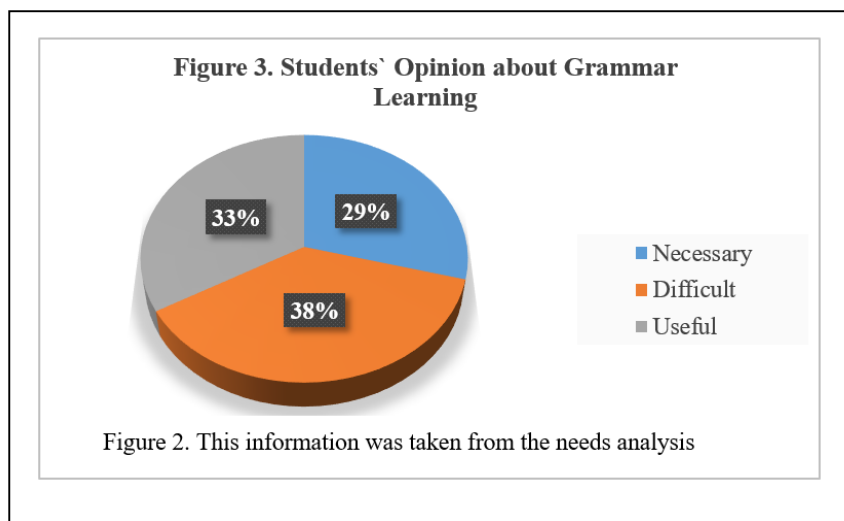
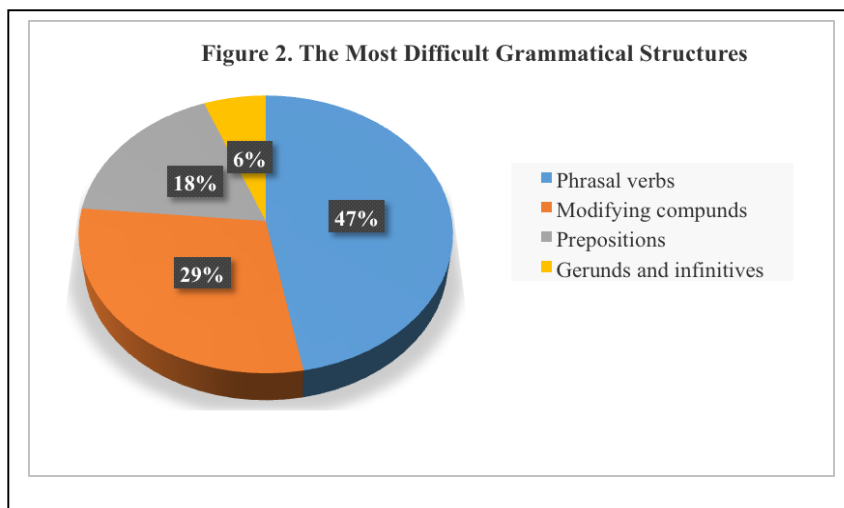
Another outstanding finding is related to students' perceptions in regard to the grammar structures that have been more difficult for them to master.

According to figure #2, 47% of the surveyed students consider that phrasal verbs is one of the topics in which they have had more difficulties. Then, 29% of the learners chose modifying compounds as the most difficult grammatical structure. In addition to this, 18% of the participants consider prepositions as the most difficult topic, and only 6% see gerunds and infinitives as the most difficult topic. The most enlightening result is that phrasal verbs is the topic that represents the most difficulty for students.

The data displayed in Figure #3 is based on the information gathered through question 5 from the needs analysis instrument. It reflects students' opinions about their experience learning grammar. Grammar learning has been necessary for 29% of the surveyed students. 38% of them consider that grammar learning is difficult, and 33% claim that it is useful. The most remarkable fact is that even though students consider grammar learning useful and necessary, they have difficulties learning it.

An additional important finding is related to the activities that have been useful for students in the grammar courses they have taken. This information was gathered through question #8 from the needs analysis instrument. Participants propose that oral and online practice, memory games, exercises on the board, homework, error analysis, and paragraph

writing have been the most useful teaching activities for them in the grammar courses. A very important opinion that many of the participants have is that it depends on the professor if the activities are innovative and effective or not. Besides this, in order to complement question #8, question #9 attempted to gather students' insights about those teaching activities that have not been useful for them in the grammar courses. Students answered that role-plays, some games, and memorizing tasks were the least useful activities for them.



3.2. Students' Perceptions Regarding Activities and Materials that Should be Used to Teach Grammar

Regarding this point, students' responses to the needs analysis questionnaire are included to illustrate learners' perceptions about the activities and materials that should be implemented in order for them to learn grammar more effectively.

3.2.1. Students' perceptions regarding activities that should be used to teach grammar

In question #10 of the needs analysis instrument students were given a list of activities, and they had to choose the ones that they considered should be implemented in the classroom to help them improve their mastery of grammar structures. They had to choose the ones they considered more useful.

Table 1
List of Activities Chosen by Students to Improve their Mastery of Grammatical Structures

Competition Activities	8	73%
Writing Sentences	7	64%
Fill-in-the-blank Exercises	6	54%
Games	6	54%
Role-plays	5	45%
Paragraph Writing	4	36%
Dialogues	4	36%

Note: This information was taken from the needs analysis.

Table 1 shows the activities that students chose. The activity that learners consider more useful for them is competition activities. Writing sentences and fill-in-the-blank exercises as well as games were also ranked as very useful by students. Participants also consider role-plays, paragraph writing, and dialogues as helpful activities to improve their mastery of grammar structures.

3.2.2. Students' perceptions regarding materials used to teach grammar

In the needs analysis questionnaire, participants were also asked to choose from a list the materials that had been used by professors in the grammar courses they had taken. Table 2 demonstrates that the most widely used material in the grammar courses is books. Other commonly used materials are songs and videos. Other materials that are used less frequently are poems, tales, tongue twisters, and recordings. It is also possible to conclude that magazines, movies, and newspapers were not used as teaching materials in the grammar courses.

It was also possible to inquire about students' perceptions in terms of the materials that they consider useful to improve their grammar learning. Table 3 illustrated the information gathered through question 12 of the needs analysis questionnaire. According to students' perceptions, the three most useful materials that teachers should use are videos, books, and songs. Almost as important are movies, tales, recordings, and magazines. At last, newspapers, tongue twisters, and poems were not considered as useful, but they were chosen as materials that could help students learn grammar structures more effectively.

Table 2

Materials Used by Professors to Teach the Grammar Courses

Books	11
Songs	8
Videos	6
Tales	3
Poems	2
Recordings	2
Tongue twisters	1
Movies	
Magazines	
Newspapers	

Note: This information was taken from the needs analysis.

Table 3

Materials that Should Be Used to Teach the Grammar Courses

Videos	10
Books	9
Songs	8
Movies	7
Tales	7
Recordings	6
Magazines	6
Newspapers	5
Tongue twisters	4
Poems	4

Note: This information was taken from the needs analysis.

The last was an open question intended to gather information about other activities that students would propose to improve grammar learning. Some of the answers provided by the participants were:

- Extra homework
- Using real life examples
- Oral activities
- The use of music to create a relaxing environment
- Extra practice

3.3. Evaluation of Activities and Materials Implemented in the Focus Group Session

In a focus group session, where a number of volunteer students participated, a set of materials designed by the professors in charge of this research was implemented and then tested by the same learners. The material was designed to help them master phrasal verbs more effectively. The materials and activities were evaluated in terms of how useful they were for students to learn phrasal verbs and how much they addressed students' needs. To obtain this information, learners had to answer a questionnaire at the end of the focus group session.

Table 4 illustrates students' insights about the materials and activities implemented in the focus group session. Participants' answers in the first premise show that both activities and materials implemented helped them increase their knowledge of their area of study since 1 of them agrees, and the other 3 strongly agree with it. According to the learners' responses, the materials and activities in the focus group session were very helpful for them to master phrasal verbs. In this case one of them agrees, while the other three strongly agree. Similarly, 3 students strongly agree with the idea that the materials and activities correspond to their preference and way of learning, whereas one of them partially agrees. In terms of the extent to which activities and materials implemented respond to students' needs, 2 students agree and two others strongly agree with the idea that the activities and materials helped them to learn phrasal verbs. At last, the four students consider that the materials and activities were innovative and useful. What can be concluded from this data is that the materials and activities designed do achieve the purpose for which they were designed.

The focus group evaluation instrument also included 4 open-ended questions through which it was possible to obtain other important insights from the participants. They all reported that the activities were very useful for them to learn phrasal verbs. They preferred those activities in which pictures were used and they had to match them to different phrasal verbs.

When asked about the aspects that they liked the most about the materials and activities implemented, they expressed that they liked the song and the video because they could practice the phrasal verbs in context. They also liked the materials because they were interactive, and the activities because they were dynamic. Another aspect that they pointed out was the interaction among them during the focus group. Participants were also asked about the aspects that they did not like, but they responded that they liked all the activities and materials.

The last question was aimed at obtaining ideas from students about how to improve the materials and activities implemented. They expressed that everything was well prepared. They proposed using more teamwork activities.

Table 4
Data Obtained from the Materials and Activities Evaluation Instrument

	SD	D	P	A	SA
	↓		A		↓
	1	2	3	4	5
1. The materials and activities implemented in this focus group session contribute to the knowledge of my area of study: English Teaching.				1	3
2. The materials and activities implemented in this focus group session helped me improve my mastery of certain phrasal verbs.				1	3
3. The materials and activities used in this focus group session correspond to my preference and way of learning.			1		3
4. The materials and activities used in this focus group session respond to my needs regarding the mastery of phrasal verbs.				2	2
5. The activities and materials presented during the session demonstrated to be innovative and useful for my learning of phrasal verbs.					4

Note: This information was taken from the focus group evaluation instrument.

4. Conclusions

This study demonstrated that the key reason for students to learn grammar is to communicate effectively. Learners also expressed that the most difficult grammatical topic for them is phrasal verbs, followed by modifying compounds. In addition, most learners believe that learning grammar is difficult but useful.

Moreover, students expressed that, according to the experience they have had in previous grammar courses, the activities that they have seen as the most useful ones were oral and online practice, memory games, exercises on the board, homework, error analysis, and paragraph writing have been the most useful teaching activities for them in the grammar courses. Role-plays, some games, and memorizing tasks have been the least useful activities for them.

Regarding what learners would like to have in future classes, the activity that learners consider more useful is competition-related tasks. Learners also rated writing sentences and fill-in-the-blank exercises as very useful for them. Participants also consider that role-plays,

paragraph writing, and dialogues might be helpful activities to improve their mastery of grammar structures.

It was also discovered that the most commonly used material in the grammar courses is books, followed by songs and videos. Poems, tales, tongue twisters, and recordings proved to be less frequently used by professors. Magazines, movies, and newspapers were among the materials that have not been used as teaching materials in the grammar courses.

Further, students suggested that teachers use the following to improve grammar teaching and learning: extra homework, using real life examples, oral activities, the use of music to create a relaxing environment, and extra practice.

Moreover, learners expressed positive views in regards to the implementation of the teaching activities and materials for the most, which provides a positive result to this study.

Regarding the teaching of grammar, the tridimensional framework to teach grammar in context is highly recommended by the researchers to enhance grammar structures with a purpose, not just the completion of mechanical drills that are usually isolated from context and forgotten after a test. For this reason, it is advisable that the grammar class be carefully planned to make sure that there is enough time for communicative practice. To achieve this goal, quality time has to be invested in searching for the right materials that can be adapted to the three-dimensional framework. All the stages (form-meaning-use) have to be given enough importance though the last phase (communicative use of the structures) requires more preparation and time to make sure that students are able to use the structures fluently and accurately.

Some useful materials such as videos, readings, songs, and artifacts may serve as points of departure to develop communicative tasks that are focused on a particular grammar point. As for phrasal verbs, what many teachers do is just to elaborate long lists of verbs without any context to let students know how they are used. What is worst, students just memorize them for a test but in many cases they do not even know in what context they should be used. This is just simple memorization with no pedagogical effect whatsoever. Based on the researchers' experience in the Advanced Grammar course; specifically, this situation is common. This means that knowledge of phrasal verbs has always been limited to the first two stages of the tridimensional framework.

In summary, it is imperative that professors implement the framework in the grammar courses to help students improve their knowledge of the different structures they need to master. Then, last but not least, learning and using grammar may become a meaningful experience so long as teachers are willing to try out new methodologies

Acknowledgements

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Appendix A. INSTRUMENT 1. NEEDS ANALYSIS FOR STUDENTS

Dear students: This instrument consists of a needs analysis that contains closed-ended and open-ended questions to identify the needs, lacks, and wants of the students from the Advanced Grammar course at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension. The topic aimed in this instrument is grammar teaching activities and materials. This study focuses on the didactic material and teaching activities used to improve the development of students' grammar use.

The information you provide will be used with research purposes exclusively, and we guarantee its anonymity.

1. Gender: Feminine_____ Masculine _____

2. Age: From 15 and 17 years old _____ From 18 to 20 years old _____

3. Why is it important to use grammar structures properly?

4. Which of the grammar structures that you have studied do you think are more difficult to learn and use when writing?

5. Based on your experience in the grammar courses you have taken in your major, what is your opinion about grammar teaching?

- a. Necessary
- b. Boring
- c. Difficult
- d. Important
- e. Useful
- f. Unnecessary
- g. Easy
- h. Others: _____

6. How can the teaching of grammar influence your use of English when writing?

7. What is your opinion about grammar teaching in the grammar courses that you have already taken in your major (Integrated English I and II, Basic Grammar, and Intermediate Grammar)?

8. According to the experience you have gained in the previous grammar courses, which teaching activities have helped you improve your use of grammar structures in writing?

9. Based on your experience in the four previous grammar courses you have studied, which teaching activities did not help you improve your use of grammar in writing?

10. What kind of activities do you consider more useful to improve your learning of grammar structures? Choose the activities that you prefer.

- a. Games _____
- b. Role-plays _____
- c. Competition activities _____
- d. Fill-in-the-blanks exercises _____
- e. Writing sentences _____
- f. Paragraph Writing _____
- g. Dialogues _____

11. In the list below, choose the materials that have been used by the professor to teach in the grammar courses you have studied.

Books _____

Magazines _____

Newspapers _____

Tales _____

Poems _____

Tongue twisters _____

Videos _____

Movies _____

Songs _____

Recordings _____

Others _____

Which ones? _____

12. What kind of materials do you consider more useful to improve your learning of grammar structures? Choose the materials that you prefer.

a. Books _____

b. Magazines _____

c. Newspapers _____

d. Tales _____

e. Poems _____

f. Tongue twisters _____

g. Videos _____

h. Movies _____

i. Songs _____

j. Recordings _____

k. Others _____

Which ones? _____

13. What other activities would you suggest to improve your learning of grammar?

Appendix B. INSTRUMENT 2. MATERIALS AND ACTIVITIES EVALUATION INSTRUMENT

PART I. INSTRUCTIONS: Please write and “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.

SD= Strongly disagree	D= disagree	PA=Partially agree	A= Agree	SA= Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

	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: English Teaching.					
2. The materials and activities implemented in this focus group helped me improve my mastery of certain phrasal verbs.					
3. The materials and activities used in this focus group correspond to my preference and way of learning.					
4. The materials and activities used in this focus group respond to my needs regarding the mastery of phrasal verbs.					
5. The activities and materials presented during the session demonstrated to be innovative and useful for my learning of phrasal verbs.					

PART II. Complete the following ideas based on your experience during the focus group session.

6. The most useful activity for me to master phrasal verbs was:

Why?



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:

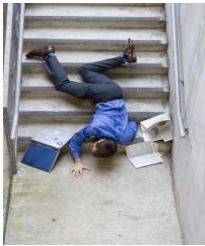
9. My recommendations to improve the materials and activities to teach phrasal verbs are:



Appendix C. MATERIALS AND ACTIVITIES DESIGNED

*Daily Life:
Breakaway*

Activity 1: Students look at the pictures below and discuss with a classmate what each picture is about and what situation it portrays.



Activity 2: In pairs, make a list of troublesome situations that people have to deal with regularly.

Material created by Méndez (2015)

Activity 3: Listen to the song and fill in the blanks with the missing words.

"Breakaway"

By: Kelly Clarkson

_____ in a small town
And when the rain would _____
I'd just stare out my window
Dreaming of what could be
And if I'd _____ happy
I would pray

Trying hard to _____
But when I tried to _____
Felt like no one could hear me
Wanted to belong here
But something felt so wrong here
So I'd pray
I could breakaway

[1]
I'll spread my wings and I'll learn how to fly
I'll do what it takes, till I touch the sky
Make a wish, take a chance
Make a change and _____

Out of the darkness and into the sun
But I won't forget all the ones that I love
I'll take a risk take a chance
Make a change and _____

Wanna feel the warm breeze
Sleep under a palm tree
Feel the rush of the ocean
Get onboard a fast train
Travel on a jet plane
Far away
And _____

[Repeat 1]

Out of the darkness and into the sun
But I won't forget all the ones that I love
I gotta take a risk, take a chance
Make a change and _____

Buildings with a hundred floors
 _____ revolving doors
 Maybe I don't know where they'll take me but
 Gotta keep _____,
 _____,

I'll spread my wings and I'll learn how to fly
 Though it's not easy to tell you goodbye
 I gotta take a risk, take a chance
 Make a change and _____

Out of the darkness and into the sun
 But I won't forget the place I come from
 I gotta take a risk, take a chance
 Make a change and _____

Break away, break away

Activity prepared by Méndez (2015)
 Retrieved from <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/kellyclarkson/breakaway.html>

Activity 4: Vocabulary Review. In the chart below, write the phrasal verbs from the song according to their meaning in the context.

	Phrasal Verb	Meaning
1	_____	To turn around.
2	_____	To try hard to overcome a difficult situation or to achieve a better situation.
3	_____	To become an adult. To reach mental and physical maturity.
4	_____	To fall to a lower place or position.
5	_____	To be in a particular place, state or situation without having planned it.
6	_____	To escape.
7	_____	To continue with life after successfully dealing with a bad experience.
8	_____	To express your opinions publicly.
9	_____	To attempt to communicate.

Part 4: In pairs, discuss the following ideas. Decide whether you agree or disagree with them.

1. As people grow up, life becomes more difficult.
2. It is very difficult for most youngsters to speak out.
3. In certain circumstances, it is difficult for people to move on.
4. Breaking away is more difficult for some people than for others.
5. Falling down does not mean failing if you stand up every time and keep going.
6. When you end up where you did not plan to, it is because you did not do what you had to.
7. Flying away is not necessarily the wisest choice.

Activities created by Méndez (2015)

PART I. Pair Work

Phrasal Verbs/ Contextual Topic: Daily Life

INSTRUCTIONS: Listen attentively to your teacher and follow her directions.

Activity 1.

- In pairs or trios write the answer to the following question according to what you do in real life.
- Use at least *four phrasal verbs* that you know in your answer (either separable or inseparable).
- You may take the phrasal verbs from the charts on pages 98 or 102 from the book *Interactions 2: Integrated Skills Edition*, or the handout that your instructor will give you.
- The instructor will check your written work. After that, share your answer with your classmates.

When you have to deal with a problem of any type, what do you usually do?
Specify the type of problem (family, economy, friends, studies, or any other)
and the solution (s) you give to it.

Answer



Retrieved from <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/phrasal-verb>
Activity created by Sandi (2015)

PART II. Pair Work

Phrasal Verbs/ Contextual Topic: Daily Life

INSTRUCTIONS: Listen attentively to your teacher and follow her directions.

Activity 2.

- Read the list of phrasal verbs from pages 98 and 102 of the same book.
- Quickly check out each phrasal verb. Once you read them, the instructor is going to give you another handout with the meaning of some phrasal verbs (Handout). Ask your instructor any questions you have about them.
- Then, in pairs or trios, match the pictures on the newsprint sheets that are stuck on the classroom walls to the phrasal verbs that the teacher is going to give you. You may look back at the copies that you were given. There are three pictures that serve as distractors.
- For each properly matched picture and phrasal verb, each pair or trio gets a prize.

Activity created by Sandi (2015)

PART III. Group Work

Phrasal Verbs/ Contextual Topic: Daily Life

INSTRUCTIONS: Listen attentively to your teacher and follow her directions.

Activity 3.

- Once more, review the phrasal verbs from pages 98 and 102 from the book *Interactions 2: Integrated Skills Edition* and Handout that the teacher gave you.
- Then, the teacher is going to make two groups.
- Look at the board. It has two columns. Each column has 5 sentences with a blank in them. Those sentences are taken from the book *Interactions 2: Integrated Skills Edition* plus other sentences created by the instructor. All those sentences have a phrasal verb in them.
- On the other classroom walls, there are prepositions and phrases that are synonymous with the phrasal verbs that are included in the sentences stuck on the board.
- In two groups, match the prepositions and synonymous phrases to their corresponding phrasal verbs as quickly as you can.
- There are three prepositions and synonymous phrases that serve as distractors in this exercise.
- The first group to finish the exercise and have more correct responses is the winner.

Activity created by Sandi (2015)





Handout

Inseparable Phrasal Verbs

1-Agree with:

Definition: To agree with something to think that something is the right thing to do.

Example: *I don't agree with corporal punishment in schools.*

2-Differ from: differ from something

Definition: [for something] to be different from something else.

Examples: *No, this one differs from the one you saw because it has a bigger handle. How does this one differ from that one?*

3-Listen to:

Definition: 1 to pay attention to what someone is saying or to a sound that you can hear: listen to.

Example: *We sat around listening to music.*

4-Talk to:

Definition: To have a conversation with other people.

Example: *I need to talk to you.*

5-Break away:

Definition: To leave or to escape from someone who is holding you.

Example: *He grabbed her, but she managed to break away.*

6-Speak out:

Definition: Talk openly and freely.

Example: *People are afraid to speak out in oppressive political regimes (/rei'zi:m/, a method or system of government, especially one that has not been elected in a fair way).*

7-End up:

Definition: To finally be in a particular place or situation.

Examples: *They're traveling across Europe by train and are planning to end up in Moscow.*

Much of this meat will probably end up as dog food.

8-Move on:

Definition 1: To leave one place and travel to another.

Example: *They stayed for only a few days before moving on.*

Definition 2: To start to continue with your life after you have dealt successfully with a bad experience.

Example: *It's been a nightmare, but now I just want to forget about it and move on.*



9-Reach out:

Definition: To attempt to communicate.

Example: *I try to reach out to my daughter but she doesn't want to have anything to do with me.*

Handout compiled and prepared by Sandi (2015)

Definitions and examples retrieved from the Internet.

References provided in the research study (pp. 14-15)


PART I. Production

Phrasal Verbs/ Contextual Topic: Daily Life

INSTRUCTIONS: Listen attentively to your teacher and follow the directions.

Activity 1.

- Based on the video *My Shoes* write one sentence with each of the following two-word verbs:

Sentences	
a. laugh at: _____	
b. grow up: _____	
c. end up: _____	
d. reach out: _____	
e. speak out: _____	
f. break away: _____	
g. swing around: _____	
h. think over: _____	
i. fly away: _____	

Material prepared by Altamirano (2015)
Video retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SolGBZ2f6L0>



PART II. Group Activity **Phrasal Verbs/ Contextual Topic: Daily Life**

INSTRUCTIONS: Listen attentively to your teacher and follow the directions.

Activity 2.

- As a group, role-play the situation presented in the video and use all of the two-word verbs above. You have 5 minutes to prepare the role-play, and 4 minutes to present it.

Activity created by Altamirano (2015)

The “Un-dead” and the Release of Sexual Discourse: A Freudian Approach to Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*

Joe Montenegro Bonilla
Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica
joemontenegrob@gmail.com

Resumen

Esta ponencia intenta delinear una de las muchas maneras en las que *Drácula*, de Bram Stoker, puede ser abordada. Se percibe el texto como una propuesta discursiva sobre la sexualidad, en especial desde un punto de vista freudiano/foucaultiano. Los “no muertos”, es decir, los personajes vampíricos, ayudan a elucidar cómo las perspectivas victorianas acerca de la sexualidad afectan la novela y sus temas centrales. Estas nociones se manifiestan a través de representaciones simbólicas y metafóricas, y con un poco de ayuda de Freud y su modelo psicosexual, aquí se describen y se les brinda interpretación a algunas imágenes. Así, los “no muertos” representan la *libido*, o el deseo sexual, y la liberación del *ello*, es decir, los impulsos más profundos y fuertes de la psique humana. Por otra parte, en la medida en que ellos amenazan la integridad social y moral de la sociedad victoriana, los personajes humanos a menudo sucumben a sus impulsos más oscuros e impuros, y como resultado, al menos uno se pierde irremediamente. Finalmente, se analiza el vampirismo como una proyección simbólica de la *perversión sexual*, bajo la lupa de la definición freudiana del concepto. Para los victorianos, en todo caso, los impulsos inmorales debían ser reprimidos; los vampiros tenían que ser derrotados y toda forma de perversión sexual, erradicada.

Palabras clave: sexualidad, *Drácula*, libido, ello, perversión, Freud

Abstract

This paper attempts to delineate one of many ways in which *Dracula*, by Bram Stoker, may be approached. This work is perceived as a discursive proposal about sexuality, especially from a Freudian/Foucauldian point of view. The “Un-dead,” that is, the vampiric characters, all help elucidate how Victorian perceptions of sexuality affect the novel and its central themes. These notions manifest themselves through symbolic and metaphorical representations, and with a little help from Freud and his psychosexual model, such portrayals are described and explained here. Thus, the “Un-dead” represent the *libido*, or sexual hunger, and the release of the *id*, that is, the deepest and strongest impulses of the human psyche. Furthermore, as they threaten the social and moral integrity of Victorian society, the human characters sometimes succumb to their darkest, most impure impulses, and as a result, at least one is utterly lost. Finally, vampirism is analyzed here as a symbolic projection of *sexual perversion* under the light of Freud’s definition of the concept. For the Victorians, however, all immoral impulses were to be repressed; the vampires had to be defeated and all forms of sexual perversion, eradicated.

Keywords: sexuality, *Dracula*, libido, id, perversion, Freud

In his *History of Sexuality, Vol. I*, Foucault describes the *fin de siècle* as witnessing major changes in the treatment of sexual discourse, and locates Freud and his innovative ideas, among other factors, as both responsible for and resulting from the ideological openness experienced during this historical period. Bram Stoker's masterpiece *Dracula*, written in 1897, is one of the many literary works of the time that may exemplify both what Foucault refers to in his book and what Freud would develop later in the 1900s. The language and symbolism used in its pages make constant allusion to a kind of sexuality still not openly experienced by its characters, thus combining elements of two clashing social trends that, according to Foucault, marked the end of the nineteenth century. Under this light, the sexual discourse of the Count and its effect on the human characters of the novel are better understood if explained in terms of the Freudian conception of sexual impulse that so much affected society at the turn of the century. Symbolically speaking, the "Un-dead" stand for the *libido* or sexual hunger and at the same time cause—or at last propitiate—the liberation of the *id* and the consequent *perversion* of human sexuality.

The "Un-dead"—that is, Count Dracula and his women, later also including Lucy—symbolize the *libido*, which was first defined by Freud as "the manifestation[s] of the power of Eros" (68). In this early Freudian conception, "'libido' referred to the sexual instinctual drive in much the same way the terms 'hunger' was ordinarily used to refer to the nutritional instinctual drive" (Macmillan 289). Accordingly, the Count is frenziedly compelled by his "lust for blood" to leave Transylvania and move to London (Stoker 67), where he can feed on new blood, and his "thirst" may be "appeased" (342). Likewise, when Lucy becomes one of the "Un-dead," she expects to attract Arthur toward herself by entreating him wantonly, "My arms are hungry for you" (253). Nine years after his first definition of the *libido*, Freud revised it and referred to it as formally as "the physical energy of the sexual instinctual drive" (Macmillan 289), thus adding an energetic component that is also present in Dracula's powerful actions. "The vampire," Professor Van Helsing explains, "...can flourish when that he can fatten on the blood of the living [sic]. ...his vital faculties grow strenuous, and seem as though they refresh themselves when his special pabulum is plenty" (286). Because of their vivid presence and actions, it is not at all difficult to perceive the "Un-dead" as the true representation of the libidinal urge. Moreover, some critics have seen "anthropomorphism" as inherent in this and other Freudian conceptions (Macmillan 498), which explains why the Count's "very red lips" and his wives' "deliberate voluptuousness" have such an effect on both Jonathan and the reader (Stoker 20, 52). The dreamy materialization of air and dust into any of these human-like creatures accounts for the increasing tangibility of the *libido* and its influence on the various characters (51, 309, 436). The vampires are a monstrous, morbid, insatiable *libido* that needs to be fought against and defeated, yet their very existence, as surreal as it may seem, is so powerful because it not only represents but also actually embodies and epitomizes the sexual instinctual drive.

In Stoker's novel, there is a release of dark sexual impulses in both male and female characters, and it is the "Un-dead" who set the conditions for this to occur. In other words, Count Dracula and his women, on account of their libidinal nature, have the power to liberate—or at least threaten to liberate—the human *id*, which until then has been closely

checked by the *ego* (consciousness) and the *super-ego* (society). Freud developed the concept of the *id*—along with the other two—at the beginning of the twentieth century as part of his structural theory of the mind. He used the word *id* to designate “an unconscious mental entity” (13) whose activity is “governed by the primary process, the tendency for instinctual drives to press for immediate discharge, and for their energies to be freely mobile, capable of condensation and displacement” (Macmillan 430). In *Dracula*, the pressure to set the sexuality of the *id* free is enormous, especially because the untamed forces that build it up are purely monstrous and purely libidinal at once. This may be more clearly understood by analyzing male and female characters separately.

Regarding male characters in particular, there is already some sexual charge being put into play without the necessity of any further supernatural incentive. When Dr. Van Helsing saw Arthur for the first time, Dr. Seward relates in his diary, “...he took in his stalwart proportions and recognized the young strong manhood which seemed to emanate from him...” (Stoker 148); a somewhat similar estimate is what he also expresses when he meets Quincey Morris (180). However, these men’s sexuality is more likely to explode fully in the presence of “those weird sisters” who have the insidious power to untangle their *id* (64). Jonathan Harker confesses in his diary, “I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips... I closed my eyes in a languorous ecstasy and waited — waited with beating heart” (51-52). “He falls prey to lust and indulges in the orgy with the three evil vampire women, thus demonstrating that even good Victorian gentlemen may succumb to temptation of the flesh” (Bussing 136). Arthur experiences something similar when Lucy, now the “bloofer lady” (Stoker 13), entices him with her brand-new voluptuousness and her “diabolically sweet tone” (253). “...He seemed under a spell,” says Dr. Seward, “moving his hands from his face, he opened wide his arms” (254), allegedly to receive his beloved. Finally, Dr. Van Helsing’s *id* is also affected by the alluring power of these female fiends, for he also feels a dangerous sexual attraction that almost impedes his victory over them at the Count’s castle. “...many a man,” he explains, “who set forth to do such a task as mine, found at the last his heart fail him, and then his nerve” (439). “She [the last of *Dracula*’s consorts] was so fair to look on,” he admits, “so radiantly beautiful, so exquisitely voluptuous, that the very instinct of man in me, which calls some of my sex to love and to protect one of hers, made my head whirl with new emotion” (440). Although the *ego* and the *super-ego* win a final victory over the male sexual *id* in this novel—it could have not been otherwise—the latter proved to be as powerful as the most hideous vampire woman. The attempt to release the sexual impulse of the *id* may have been unsuccessful, but definitely it was treacherous enough.

In the case of the two female characters, Lucy and Mina, the release of the *id* seems to be, if not entirely accomplished in both instances, at least more effective than in the men. An attempt to justify this difference might dig deep into a perfectly valid gender discussion on female weakness versus male power; however, it is the Count’s nature as mightily and supernaturally libidinal, being the strongest vampire that he is, what most clearly accounts for a superior performance of the *id*-releaser. Freud explained his revised conception of the *id* as “a new structure containing the totality of those impersonal and uncontrollable forces that gave people the impression they were creatures of obscure powers, lived by alien drives

and urges, and acted upon as passive objects” (Macmillan 448). This is, by the by, an astonishingly accurate description of Dracula’s influence on Mina and Lucy, through the so-called “Vampire’s baptism of blood” (Stocker 383). In the case of the former, her releasing process is only partially completed, for she does undergo a series of changes that greatly upset her companions and herself but that fortunately fail to wholly transform her. Nevertheless, she is “acted upon” by Dracula, the greatest fiend, and this has a palpable effect on both her appearance and behavior. She becomes *alienated* by the mark on her forehead (429), and her hypnotic skills turn her into a kind of pseudo-monster. As she and Dr. Van Helsing approach the Count’s castle, he declares, “At his time, she become all more fire and zeal; some new guiding power be in her manifested... [sic]” (431). Luckily for her, the Vampire is defeated before he can carry his horrible subjugation plan to completion. “...Mina is an emblem of a solid super-ego and a successful negotiation of the ego,” yet conversely, “Lucy can be seen as a victory of the id” (Bussing 130). Lucy is actually predisposed to a more thorough release of the sexual impulse contained in her id. She portrays a natural tendency towards promiscuity and polygamy since early in the novel. “Why can they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her, and save all this trouble?” she ardently proclaims (Stoker 76). However, it is not until her psychic encounters with the Count begin that she becomes free to roam about in her sleep, a clear manifestation of an unconscious release of the id. Her sexuality, as witnessed by Mina, is later completely unleashed by the Vampire. “I could see Lucy half-reclining with her head over the back of the seat,” her friend narrates, “[...]her lips were parted, and she was breathing, not softly, as usual with her, but in long heaving gasps, as though striving to get her lungs full at every breath” (113), like a true Fuseli. Lucy’s end as the “bloofer lady” proves the Vampire’s successful endeavor: she becomes pure libido, like himself.

One other concept, also elaborated by Freud, that contributes significantly to the understanding of sexual impulse is that of *perversion* or *perverse sexuality*. Aside from the libido and the id, Freud developed the concepts of “sexual object” and “sexual aim.” “By ‘sexual object’ [he] meant that from which sexual attraction proceeded, normally an adult person of the opposite sex. ‘Sexual aim’ referred to the act through which the instinctual drive tended and through which it was satisfied” —that is, copulation (Macmillan 289). *Perversions* —characteristic of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, according to Foucault (37) —he defined as “deviations of either sexual aim or object” (289). In Stoker’s novel, instances of these two kinds of perverse sexuality are ubiquitous. The effect of the “Un-dead” is not only the emancipation of the id but the perversion of both the sexual object —it being a vampire and not a human being— and the sexual aim —it being whatever but normal intercourse.

The inappropriateness of having a vampire as the object of any sort of sexual affection or desire accounts for what is perhaps the most wickedly twisted idea of perversion. However, Stoker’s human characters —virtually all of them— are “moved,” in one way or another, to embrace it (439). Jonathan’s sexual object, for example, is not his sweet, peaceful wife but the three female fiends that the Count keeps in his castle. So perverse are they that those same “voluptuous lips” that were about to “kiss” the young solicitor too suddenly become lustfully hungry for a little child brought to them by their husband and lord (51-52) —another instance in itself of deviation of the sexual object. Lucy’s transformation also implies her

birth into a new perverse existence, and this makes her all the more desirable for all of her former suitors. As sickly as it may seem, she becomes “more radiantly beautiful than ever,” and her lips get “redder than before” when she is lying in her coffin (240). Her effect on those who behold her is that of a perverse sexual object, just like the wicked attraction felt by Jonathan and by Dr. Van Helsing toward the “Nosferatu” women at Dracula’s castle (439). Aside from Lucy, Mina has also a “potential for perversion” (Bussing 137), and it is enhanced by the “very sweet and very bitter” presence of the Vampire (Stoker 121). She finds him “sensual” and his lips “so red” and enticing that she succumbs to his will (207). “I know,” she weeps, “that when the Count wills me I must go” (389). All the “size and splendor” of the “Un-dead,” which Mina interprets as moonlight (333), reveals much of the magnitude of the sexual deviation of which she is a victim. Like in the case of her companions, the sexual object that allures her is not an adult human being of the opposite sex but a perverse aberration.

The instances of perversion of the sexual aim in *Dracula* are likewise various. Not intercourse but three other mechanisms account for the sexual act. The first one of them is blood transfusion. Semen being replaced by blood, the idea of copulation acquires a whole new meaning in which perversion is the rule. “No man knows till he experiences it,” Dr. Seward writes, “what it is to feel his own life-blood drawn away into the veins of the woman he loves” (156). Arthur also feels strongly the warped connection that he has made with his beloved as he declares that “he felt since then as if they two had been really married” (209). However, what he ignores is that sweet Lucy’s foreseen tendency toward promiscuity has actually become real, and she has attained the sexual energy of four different men; she is now a “polyandrist,” a perverted creature (212). The symbolic link between intercourse and blood transfusion is evident in the novel, and so is the second mechanism through which the sexual aim is perverted, that is, the stabbing of the wooden stake. Having established the sexual relationship that exists between Lucy and Arthur, he is the one to liberate her from perversion by piercing her breast with this phallic symbol (258). At first he hesitates lest he will mutilate and “dishonour” the girl’s body (247), but the act of symbolic penetration is finally fulfilled, and a vicious version of the honeymoon takes place. Aside from the perforation of Lucy’s bosom with a wooden stake and the transfusion of male blood into her veins, the sucking of her blood is perhaps the most relevant instance of perverted sexuality in the novel. “[S]exual intercourse’ occurs between a woman and a ‘beast,’ thus immediately qualifying as a perversion” (Bussing 131). This sexual act, of course, is completely diverted from nature; therefore, it cannot be thought of as having to do with normal copulation. “Vampiric intercourse is artificial, anti-natura, because it ignores genitalia and conventional reproduction” (Bussing 133). Like Lucy, Mina becomes sexually perverse the moment she gets involved in a bloody “affair” with Count Dracula, an awry sexual act right on her bed, next to her sleeping husband, and this makes it all the more perverse. According to Dr. Seward’s account, the Vampire forced Mrs. Harker to drink his blood. “Her white nightdress,” he relates, “was smeared with blood, and a thin stream trickled down the man’s bare breast, which was shown by his torn-open dress” (336). The scene is extremely sexual – “fluid exchange tak[ing] place but in the form of blood, not semen” (Bussing 133)– and extremely pornographic, and like transfusion and stake-hammering, an image of a perverse sexual aim.

The Vampire finally finds his end, and so does the sexual anarchy that he had come to install. He is destroyed so that moral and psychological stability are restored. As a matter of fact, as Foucault would put it, this implies a return to the repression of sexual discourse that tainted Victorian society. On the other hand, the fall of the Count also entails a Freudian victory of the ego and super-ego over the id. However, Dracula sets a paradigm for the liberation of sexuality in an obscure and insidious way. Both male Victorian chivalry and female purity are poisoned by the “Un-dead,” by the libidinal forces of darkness, which have unleashed the most sadistic instincts of the id, and as a consequence, perversion is universal. Still, as high as it may seem, this is the price for sexual emancipation. Like Freud, Stoker helped unlock the gateways for sexual discourse. His “Un-dead” may be fiendish, evil, and degenerate, but as much as they transgress the Victorian mask of sexuality, they work as a radical emblem of freedom and truthfulness against a kind of repression that Foucault criticizes as no more than hypothetical. In the end, an honest discourse has been released.

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Writing Center: An Aid to Students of Writing

Ana Sofía Mora Abarca
Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica
sofrix@hotmail.com

Diego Leonardo Garro Bustamante
Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica

Resumen

Cuando se estudia un idioma extranjero, la motivación no es el único factor para el desarrollo adecuado de todas las habilidades lingüísticas que se necesitan para comunicarse efectivamente. Aunado a esto, la universidad, o cualquier centro de aprendizaje, debe proveer a sus estudiantes con sistemas de apoyo para las habilidades donde estos presentan más dificultades o en los cursos donde existe mayor deserción. No obstante, el área de escritura es una en la cual los estudiantes presentan mayor problemática y esto fue demostrado en un estudio diagnóstico realizado en el año 2010 donde estudiantes de Turismo, quienes también toman cursos de inglés para su propósito específico, tenían mucha dificultad para escribir y hacerlo apropiadamente en contextos académicos. Además, el estudio reveló que la universidad debía promover algún proyecto que ayudara a la población llevando cursos de inglés en esta habilidad lingüística en particular. Es así como se propuso la creación del centro de escritura en la Universidad Nacional campus Pérez Zeledón. ¿Qué se entiende como centro de escritura? Para tener una idea clara de lo que es, Harris lo describió como “un lugar amigable con los estudiantes, no un salón de clase controlado estrictamente. El Centro de Escritura ideal no amenaza o intimida a los estudiantes por ser este un lugar silencioso, más bien los educandos hablan abiertamente sobre cómo se sienten en relación con la escritura” (1994, pp. 6-7). En esta presentación los investigadores explican como el diagnóstico y análisis de necesidad se llevó a cabo cuando el estudio se realizó. Finalmente y sin duda alguna, este proyecto no solo fortalece la habilidad de los estudiantes para escribir si no que empodera las redes de apoyo que la universidad ofrece a los estudiantes.

Palabras clave: centro de escritura, ayuda, dificultades, superar, progreso.

Abstract

When learning a foreign language, motivation is not the only aspect that may help the learner develop the linguistic skills appropriately and effectively. The university, or any academic institution, should also promote the creation of support systems to aid students in the linguistic areas in which they show more difficulty or in the courses where there are many dropouts. Writing is considered as one of the linguistic skills in which foreign language students strive to improve, and this was demonstrated in a diagnostic study conducted in the year 2010 where students of tourism taking English courses had lots of difficulties writing and doing it appropriately in the academic setting. Furthermore, the same study revealed the need for the university to provide extra help to aid this population. Then, the investigators suggested that a writing center would be the ideal project to satisfy the need not only of students of tourism but also of foreign language students of other majors at Universidad

Nacional, Pérez Zeledón campus. However, what is a writing center? To have a clear idea of what a writing center is Harris described it as “a friendly support place for students and not a tightly controlled classroom. The ideal writing labs do not threaten or intimidate students by being too quiet, instead students openly talk about how they feel about writing” (1994, pp. 6-7). In this presentation the investigators explain the needs analysis that was carried out when the study was conducted. Finally, there is no doubt that this project not only strengthens the ability of the students to express themselves through writing but also empowers the support system network that the university offers to its learners.

Key words: writing center, aid, difficulties, overcome, progress

1. Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative research is to investigate the writing classroom dynamics and point out what aspects are not working properly, for students majoring Tourism do poorly in developing writing tasks evidenced at higher levels. This research project is considered a good source for teaching reflection and a contribution to the field of Applied Linguistics. The following section will explain how this project was organized.

1.1. Macro View of the Research Project

The research project here developed was carried out by two researchers who played the role of insiders in all the process. They were the ones who posed the problem and proceeded to give a solution to it, taking into account the points of view from within the events. This research project provided an account of proceedings in the fundamentals of writing classrooms at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Campus located in the southern part of Costa Rica. The researchers observed four groups of integrated English courses for the Tourism major, part of the efforts to provide these students with English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses, which means that the English they learn is oriented to their future fields of work. The students' proficiency levels were varied. There were two groups that belonged to the first level. These pupils had a basic management of the language, while the ones in level II had a better command of the target language. Though students at higher levels had some knowledge about the language, they also showed serious difficulties when writing in English.

In order to carry out the collection of data, the researcher used three main tools. A questionnaire given to both students and professors involved in the process and classroom observations. In addition, the collection of artifacts, such as students' revised compositions and the syllabus of English courses of the major, were also important when analyzing data. Furthermore, two unstructured interviews also permitted the researcher to count on more evidence for these accounts.

2. Literature Review

Students at the university level are required to develop a great variety of types of writing tasks, not only in their mother but also in the foreign or target language, which in most cases, is English. As the world becomes smaller due to globalization, the mastery of the English language and even a third language, whether Cantonese, French or any other, is a prominent requirement. Writing is a language activity, an “act of the mind” (Berthoff 1981, p. 29) that is carried out not only to convey meaning or to be developed for academic purposes; it also comprises cultural aspects such as communication and the transmitting of history from generation to generation. For the foreign language learner, writing in another language opens doors to a set of fields such as the academic area, the job market, and other opportunities for professional development around the world.

This study is an effort to investigate the origin of writing problems students from the major of Tourism at Universidad Nacional Brunca Campus (UNABC) are currently presenting, and also this research is an attempt to propose a solution to the current problems they are facing in the development of the skill. Some experts in linguistics such as Stephen Krashen (1984) stated that the area of foreign language writing has not been as deeply explored as the other areas of EFL. Even though the area is still in an emergent stage, more recent studies as Hedgcock’s (2005) show that second language writing has come into its own field of inquiry (p. 597). For the purpose of this study, there are various aspects of foreign language writing that are going to be explored.

2.1. The Second Language Writer

The L2 learner has come to be one of the central aspects in researching the area of L2 writing. The learner or the writer, in this case, is a complex subject because every person has unique ways to develop the ability to write; actually, some learners are not born to write, thus, they need plenty of training. Foreign language writers embody a very opposing representation from the monolingual writers (Hedgcock, 2005, p. 598). Raimes (1992) stated that the L1 writer does not have the same need that the L2 writer. The latter group “needs ‘more of everything’ in terms of heuristics, content, writing practice, and feedback than the mother tongue counterparts” (as cited in Hedgcock, 2005, p. 598). It is also important to reflect that 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. Writing is considered a productive skill and, therefore, a difficult task for many second language learners to master.

Some experts such as Barbara Kroll (1990) identified that “in the 1960’s, ESL composition teaching in North America was dominated by a controlled model. . .” She also asserted that the L2 “student’s writing was [not] genuine and the writing was meant to reinforce language rules and not for purposes like addressing a topic or communicating with an audience” (as cited in Celce-Murcia, 2001, p. 219). In this model, to reduce the possibility of errors, the writing was so controlled that the student could not properly deliver the message. Likewise, current L2 writing teaching has not escaped from that old-fashioned model. In some L2 writing classrooms, teachers still use that control model. In some other

cases, grammar has come to be the focus of writing instead of the communication of clear ideas. O' Malley and Valdez (1996) emphasized that writing requires the use and control of different types of knowledge (p. 136). David Ausubel also referred to the previous knowledge to make learning significant for learners. He criticized teaching methods that presented isolated items for students to repeat over and over until they could memorize them, preventing meaningful learning to occur. He called this systematic or "rote learning" (as cited in Brown, 2000, p. 79). Consequently, teachers and writers should really highlight on the use of new trends that are now governing pedagogical practices in the area of foreign language writing to make it noteworthy to pupils.

In order to reach competence in the writing skill, the students need training. Kroll (1990) also suggested that "to establish a writing curriculum . . . that can target specific principles, . . . it is essential that students be given a placement test that includes asking them to produce one or more writing samples" (as cited in Celce-Murcia, 2001, p. 221). The problem with this recommendation Kroll gave is that many writing courses are integrated, and there are no placement tests. In fact, a lot of Universities never place students according to their ability in the different areas. The learners have to be in a determined level according to his or her general performance in the foreign tongue. Kroll (1990) established that "without placement instruments that can sort out the levels of writing proficiency, it is not possible to establish curricular goals" (as cited in Celce-Murcia, 2001, p. 221). The principles Kroll evaluated distill some of the best practices in designing a curriculum that works for the learner, but these recommendations are still on the paper.

2.2. Error Correction and Writing

First of all, it is prominent to describe what an error is and to establish the difference from what a mistake is. According to Douglas Brown (2000), "an error . . . reflects the competence of the learner. While mistakes can be self-corrected, errors cannot" (p. 205). As it is widely known, language is composed of four skills that are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. All four are equally important, but the so-called productive ones, say speaking and writing, have been and still are subject of interest to numerous investigations.

Errors have long been a matter of obsession among many researchers and professors. In the past, errors were seen as problematic phenomena, but recently, teachers have started to see them as a source of evidence for having students learn from them. Instructors who work using errors as important tools may gain knowledge on why they occur, what their source is, and how frequent they tend to happen. Once sources of errors are identified, professors can establish remedial plans to try to eradicate them. Sources of errors are those caused by interference of the mother tongue into the learning of a foreign language process, influence of pedagogical procedures, L2 learner strategies and communication, faulty generalizations, and markedness among other factors that prevent EFL writers from becoming proficient in the target language.

In the area of writing, there are protocols that have been used for years to provide feedback as a way to treat errors. Some of these ways are comments on the margins of

compositions, focusing attention on forms and not on content. The latter really affects students' future performance. For example, Douglas Brown (2000) established that "error analysis can keep [teachers] too closely focused on specific forms of language rather than viewing universal aspects of language" (p. 207). It is noticeable how harmful this practice can turn into if teachers do not use different forms of giving feedback to reach the goal of second language learning, which is "the attainment of communicative fluency in the language" (Brown, 2000, p. 206).

As it was aforementioned, the writing skill was usually taught under much control to try to prevent students from committing mistakes. Nevertheless, this form to teach writing was against human nature, for individuals learn by trial and error. Douglas Brown pointed out that "human learning is fundamentally a process that involves the making of mistakes" (2000, p. 204). He also recommended that the process of foreign and second language learning be just as the process of first language acquisition in which children make countless mistakes from the adult perspectives. Careful feedback from other people shapes and surely provides humans with the pathways to learn what is "acceptable." This is the same process that adult EFL learners should face when learning a language.

In regard to second language writing, feedback that the learner receives from others leads them to become successful. In addition, depending on how they learn, they will have preferences related to the way they want to be corrected. Research has not demonstrated yet the positive side of direct correction of errors. Rather than this, it has "suggested that a variety of indirect, self-discovery techniques can help students to monitor and self-correct themselves" (Hedge, 2001, p. 127). The use of strategies such as margin commentary, rule discussion, and rote practices does not help learners gain any more knowledge in the use of the language, especially for writing purposes. The following section explains in detail how different forms of feedback benefit students in developing good written products and in overcoming errors and mistakes easily.

2.3. Forms of Feedback, Assessment, and Evaluation in L2 Writing

L2 writing assessment plays a prominent role in the process of the learning writing in a foreign language. In prior instruction, corrections in the students' compositions showed that feedback was really straightforward and that teachers directly wrote their comments, commonly in red pen, on the margins of the students written assignments.

Currently, feedback and assessment have evolved in theory and practice. They comprise numerous forms of feedback but first, these two aspects will be distinguished one from the other in the following lines. Those aspects are summative writing assessment and formative feedback. The former complies with the requirements for administrative processes, placement, and exit screening (Hedgcock, 2005, p. 606). The latter is, in essence, a very positive way to motivate students and engage them in revision of their own drafts (McGarrel & Verbeem, 2007, p. 228). Moreover, formative feedback seeks to have the students refining the intended message of their pieces of writing instead of focusing on form. Formative feedback calls for the objective of "motivating for immediate and substantive revision"

(Knoblauch & Brannon, 1984, p. 260). These authors suggested that the revision is beneficial, and learners start respecting others' comments as well as taking this process more seriously (Knoblauch & Brannon, 1984, p. 260).

There is another more common type of feedback, which is called written commentary. This type of feedback has been used for years. One subcategory of written feedback is the so-called corrective feedback. The use of corrective feedback has been strongly criticized by Truscott (1996) who asserted that this practice, at the local level, is very harmful. She proposed that "grammar correction should be abandoned in the light of the putative absence of 'valid reasons' for continuing the practice" (p. 360). Truscott (1996) also considered the idea that "well-constructed teacher commentary" should be improved and matured [and may have a positive impact and results on students' writings] (as cited in Hedgcock, 2005, p. 606). Not only should teacher commentary be the way of giving students feedback, but self-assessment also plays important roles in L2 writing. In this regard, O'Malley and Valdez (1996) stated that "EFL students at the beginning levels of proficiency in English need time not only to acquire the language but also to be able to communicate their ideas and plans (p.38). This is not to say that students in beginning levels cannot evaluate their own progress. Clemmons et al. 1993; Sperling 1993 also asserted that "even little kids at the kindergarten level can learn how to identify essential aspects of good work" (as cited in O' Malley and Valdez, 1996, p. 38). In the same way, "self-assessment in writing encourages the type of reflection needed to gain increased control as a writer" (O'Malley & Valdez, 1996, p. 151). These same authors suggested that the use of four ways in which learners can encourage self-assessment are the use of dialogue journals, learning logs, assessment of interests, and checklists of writing skills. These new trends in assessment and feedback in the English classrooms are working properly; that is what Truscott (1996) proposed teachers to practice instead of using strict methods for checking students' work that do not allow them to be self-critical. He found that correction had little or no effect on students' writing ability... "It made no difference who the students were, how many mistakes were corrected, which mistakes were corrected, how detailed the comments were, or in what form they were presented. The grammar corrections had no effect, that type of correction is not helpful." (p. 330).

Literature on L2 writing suggests that teachers are no longer the only responsible characters for the improvement of students' written work. As an alternative, there are new procedures in which students and teachers talk about each student's progress. This procedure is called conferencing feedback. This technique is very useful because the students are the ones that criticize their own work and still reformulate ideas. Hedge (2001) suggested that the use of a checklist would be helpful for the learner to start engaging in such process (p. 313). In this way, learners start discovering their own ways of writing and revising.

2.4. Remedial Plans in the Writing Area: Writing Centers

English language learners need supporting elements in the different writing language programs. In writing centers, pupils learn the principle of collaborative pedagogy. With this, students are required to start with problems and solve them with applications or strategies to deal exactly with the problem. The use of "collaborative tasks build connections between

learners and ideas and between students and teachers. Listening to and acknowledging diverse perspectives, working in a cooperative spirit...” (as cited in Goodsell, Maher, Tinto, Leigh & Smith, 1996, p. 12). This is the vision of writing centers, having learners discuss along with the tutor about their concerns about writing and these learners, who may also have different proficiency levels, may create an atmosphere of learning and teaching cooperation.

One of the purposes of a writing center is to create a relaxing atmosphere for the learner to feel willing to compose any piece of writing. “A writing center is a friendly support place for students and not a tightly controlled classroom. The ideal writing labs do not threaten or intimidate students by being too quiet . . . instead [students] openly talk about how they feel about writing” (Harris, 1994, pp. 6-7). With this, the author proposed that writing centers are a very smart option, and numerous universities have provided students with great opportunities to learn how to write.

2.5. Pedagogy in Writing Centers

In the writing centers, collaborative pedagogy and learning follow educational principles like involvement of the students in the construction of their own learning. Also, teamwork is one of the endeavors that collaborative pedagogy focuses on to prepare students to work in groups and give them feedback to build leaning. In collaborative pedagogy, the exchange of ideas among the tutors and their students increases. In the area of writing, students “formulate ideas, clarify their positions, test an argument or focus a thesis statement before committing it to the paper” (Goodsell, Maher, Tinto, Leigh & Smith, 1992, p. 21). This way, students are the ones learning how to develop higher order thinking skills with the help of the tutor and other classmates. Additionally, collaborative pedagogy creates a collaborative classroom, which is considered an opportunity to solve problems and dilemmas related to learning processes. Actually, students in a single writing center do not come up with the same exact writing problems and needs. The flaw of one student is the strength of the other, and with the use of peer cooperation and the help of the tutor, writing problems can be treated and amended in the writing center.

On the other hand, tutoring at writing center is a task that demands a lot of content knowledge and patience on the part of the instructor to deal with the students’ individualized needs. Writing centers as well as remedial plans focus on satisfying the needs of every learner because “each [pupil] arrives with a different motivation for learning English and with different plans of using it in the future” (Thonus, 1993, p. 15). However, Kroll (1990) asserted that “not even EFL instructors can come . . . and understand how to respond to students’ writing in order to guide them in producing ‘the ideal written product’” (p. 141). The tutors make a big effort to help students discover how they can please and satisfy their own needs by helping themselves build up their knowledge and abilities to produce good pieces of writing. Tutors at writing centers should be clear that they do not have to proofread students’ compositions. On the contrary, students are the ones in charge of revising their writings and judging themselves. Tutors, in this case, help students notice their mistakes and

help pupils find the ways to solve the issue and edit what does not seem proper in a determined composition.

Finally, the problem with the conceptualization of the writing centers is that teachers perceive that these places are made up to help students study content that could not be covered in the classroom for a semester or the school year. According to Thonus (1993) some universities in the United States have experienced that misunderstanding in regard to the writing center because teachers send their students with the lists of topics that they are having problems with, and the tutors are expected to perform a miracle in a few weeks (p. 14). Due to the numerous students that are registered in a single integrated course, professors do not have the time to work with the new strategies to teach writing to foreign language learners as they should. In some cases, teachers still use the old methods of marking the student work and correcting everything at the sentence level directly in their compositions instead of practicing the different feedback techniques.

3. Statement of the Problem and its Importance

The issue analyzed here lies precisely in that students of the Tourism major, specifically at the second level, present low proficiency in the writing skill. According to the program of the course (Integrated English IV- level II), these students should be able to write resumes, letters, e-mails, educational reports, summaries, response papers and even short compositions like essays. (Ajustes en la Instrucción del Idioma Inglés Carrera de Gestión Empresarial del Turismo Sostenible, 2007, p.31). They cannot do this although they have been in contact with the language for 180 hours per course. According to that program and to the American Council on the Teaching of foreign languages (ACTFL) proficiency guidelines for writing, these students should be in the *Intermediate-high Level*. In this level, the student should be able to write . . . uncomplicated letters, simple summaries, and compositions related to work, school experiences, and topics of current and general interest. They should also be able to . . . connect 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* (ACTFL, 2012, p 7).

However, the compositions of these pupils show that they are not capable of meeting with the abilities and the exigencies of the intermediate- high level explained above. In addition to the ACTFL Proficiency guidelines, the European framework of Reference for Languages (2004) established that students at this level (A2 in Writing) “can write short, simple notes and messages about everyday matters and everyday needs. They can write very simple personal letters; for example thanking someone for something” (p. 236).

Even though the researcher is judging based on students compositions and not on students possible results in any standardized test like the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) or The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), it is evident that learners can be placed at a basic stage based on their written products. At this point of the major, learners should be positioned at a higher level at least at the B1 echelon.



3.1. Research Approach and Design

3.1.1. Main Research Questions

- What is the frequency in which writing tasks take place in and out the sessions as part of the Integrated English classes in the Tourism major?
- What are the teachers' methods to give corrective feedback in the different compositions?
- What are the emerging reasons why students are not meeting the expectations on the writing objectives?

3.1.2. Related Research Question

Do the types of feedback that teachers employ bring about significant improvements in students' writing?

3.2. Research Methodology and Findings

3.2.1. Participants

The Students Placed in Level II and IV of Tourism. The students of Tourism taking integrated courses of English at Universidad Nacional Brunca Campus (UNABC) are the main sources of investigation. The investigator chose four groups of Tourism to identify the writing problems that students show in their compositions. The number of students who participated in this study was a total of 67, and their ages ranged from 17 to 28 years old. In addition, the four professors teaching the different groups were also under study. Their ages ranged from 24 to 30 years old. The professors had a minimum of two years teaching compositions courses at the university level.

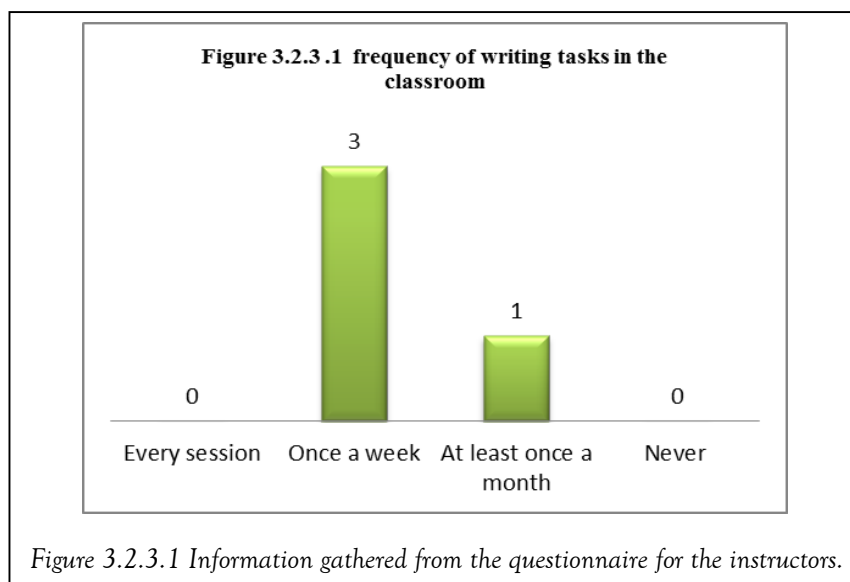
3.2.2. Instruments

The instruments that were used to collect data were questionnaires that were used for the purpose of collecting data from the professors and students to gain knowledge on how the writing courses were both perceived by the students and on the opposite side, how the courses were developed by instructors. One of the most useful instruments used was the Structured Classroom Non-Participant Observations. These observations took place in every single writing class in order to see the methodology that instructors employed as well as the treatment of the students' errors and mistakes in their compositions. Moreover, the researchers conducted some unstructured interviews to have open opinions from learners and also professors about the process they were all involved in. Finally, the researchers also collected some artifacts like the students' revised compositions to see how corrective feedback was being treated.



3.2.3. Analysis and Results

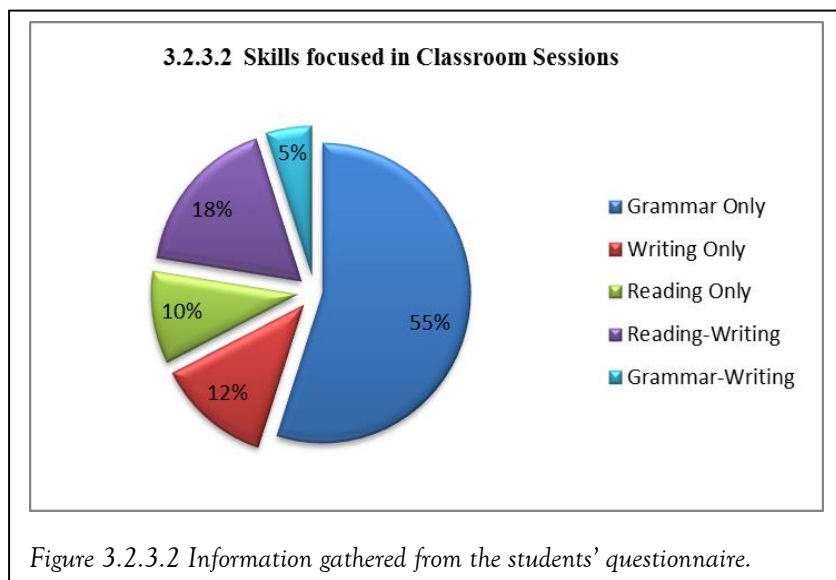
One of the issues that the researchers wanted to discover was how much writing was actually taking place in the classroom. For this, the investigators asked the professors and the students, and they also observed every single class session to see if writing was really being implemented into their integrated English courses. The following graph shows that at least three out of the four instructors had students write in the target language at least once a week.



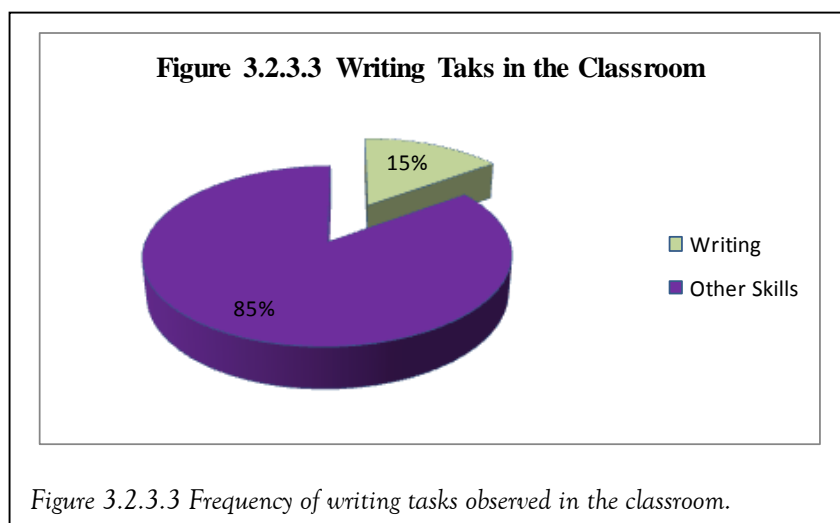
Despite the answers that the instructors gave on the frequency of writing in the classroom, which is ambitious (once a week), the students exposed to “that writing” answered a similar question. Their responses showed that the skill that is emphasized the most in class is grammar. The following figure demonstrates that 12% of the time had been devoted to writing ONLY. The rest of the lessons is dedicated to grammar, which takes vast part of their English class.

Apparently and based on the results that were obtained from the questionnaires given to both students and professors, their answers showed a very opposing result. The assumption that the researchers drew here was that professors knew the investigation was intended to know how much writing was taking place in the development of the lessons. Thus, they could not risk themselves onto say that they rarely carried out writing if the classes and objectives in the programs demanded professors to have students develop some writing tasks in the classroom or at least guide them to develop writing as homework.

In regard to the students’ answers in the questionnaire, the researcher could notice that students admitted that writing was overlooked at times. The investigators also relied on their 40 observations that they conducted because they portrayed the true processes that were taking place in the classroom. In fact, the classroom accounts totally unveil this issue, and writing alone took place in just 6 sessions out of 40 sessions observed.



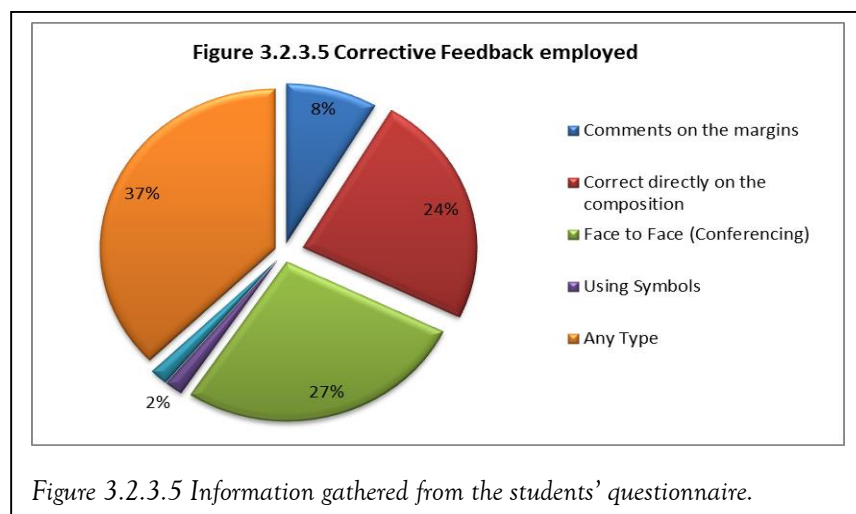
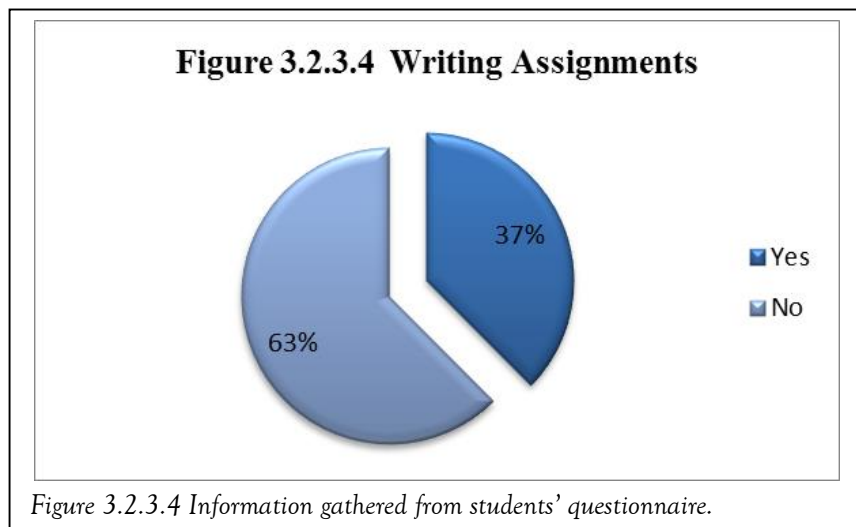
The following figure shows how much writing the investigators could really see taking place out of the 40 class sessions witnessed.



In addition, it was difficult for the investigator to collect some artifacts like students' compositions revised by their mentors because they had just a few, especially those in the beginning levels. Again, the researcher could demonstrate that writing was not being implemented along with other skills inasmuch as the collection of artifacts was not significant. The following figure shows that writing was occupying little of their time, even outside the classroom (extra class assignment).

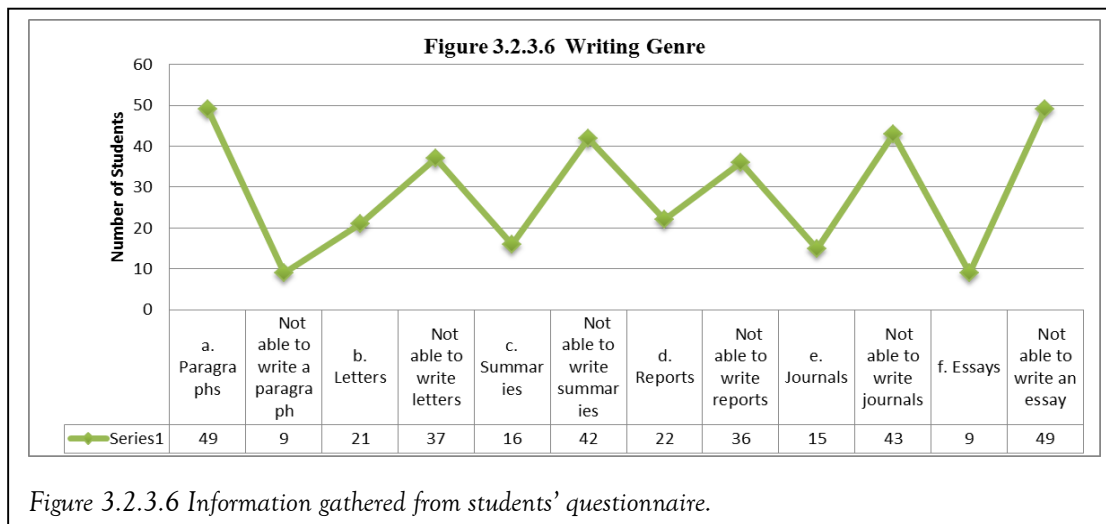
Another important aspect that researchers wanted to learn about by conducting this investigation was the kind of corrective feedback students were having in their compositions, whether done in class or as assignment. Based on the students' answers in the questionnaire, they expressed that professors used any type of feedback that was basically comments on the

margins of the students' pieces of writing. Corrections also were highlighted directly on the mistakes that were spotted. In addition, it was good to see that face-to-face conferencing also took place. Apparently, professors did not have a fixed way to treat errors in the students' compositions. What observers could notice was that the more common kind of feedback was that the professors took compositions to revise at home and returned them with the paragraph full of red marks all over the margins. (See appendix 4)



Additionally, an important concern that the investigators wanted to discover in this study was the type of writing genres students could develop. It was evident that many students know how to write paragraphs. Nonetheless, the other genres, such as letters, summaries, reports, journals and even essays, were not part of their “can do” abilities in the area of writing in the academic setting. This is alarming; students at this level, and according to their programs, have to be prepared to write all sorts of letters, summaries, journals and even short compositions as part of the demands of their future fields of work. The graph below shows

a very worrying result. The only writing type they could do and knew how to do was a paragraph.



Based on the results shown in this paper, it is necessary for students to have a more balanced coverage of the language skills in each session they have in the Integrated English courses. It was evidenced that the points of view from the teachers and learners about the amount of writing they did in class were not congruent. There is not enough time devoted to the accomplishment of the objectives (in writing) of the program for each course observed. This is the reason why students are not meeting the expectations for the level and are not writing more types of genres. These results show that there should be more commitment from the protagonists of this study (professors and students) to end up the courses with at least a minimum knowledge and acceptable writing abilities to be competent and to cope with the demands of their future fields of work.

4. Conclusions

One very important aspect that authorities may do if they consider the prominence of this diagnostic part is to implement a project for academic success, such as a learning or writing center. As it was mentioned in the theoretical framework, students need atmospheres or support places where they can go and discuss their assignments and even concerns with experts in the area. Writing centers provide learners with a relaxing environment to obtain feedback on their texts. It is known that professors can provide students with individual assistance in their writing matters. Writing centers are, consequently, very useful resources in many universities of developed countries, and they have served to help learners cope with their written assignments and surmount their writing problems little by little.

Higher education institutions should adopt the good practices that have been successfully implemented in other institutions around the world, even more now that Universidad Nacional offers English courses for specific purposes. It means that the

population that is in the process of learning a foreign language has grown considerably. Because not all students have equal abilities for learning languages, places like writing centers should be implemented in every public university of this country in order to aid students that have difficulties dealing with writing aspects. Such aspects include guiding learners on the use of manuals like the APA (American psychological Association) and MLA (Modern Language Association), which in many cases cannot be covered in class and that the student has to study him or herself. The type of feedback would also be according to the student preferences. The writing centers work with timed appointments those students make beforehand through e mail to the writing center's address or personally with the tutor of the place. This remedial plan is now being implemented at Universidad Nacional Pérez Zeledón Campus. This administration has concentrated efforts to provide students with support places like the one proposed more than six years ago, because it has been demonstrated that time in the English classroom has not been sufficient for them and for professors to provide appropriate feedback to learners. Now that the project is running, there is a more exhaustive road to go: to create a culture in the learning community to really consider the writing center a place to improve in an area that, for some, is hard to develop.

In addition, professors who formally assign students writing tasks would appreciate someone else to guide students into the right process of revision and self-revision as well. Universidad Nacional should not run more risks graduating students with low proficiency in writing skills.

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Appendix 1. OBSERVATION PROTOCOL SAMPLE SHEET

The main objective of this data collection instrument is to observe how the writing classes are being developed in every single reading/writing class for the levels II AND IV of the Tourism Major at Universidad Nacional Brunca Campus.

In addition, the observer needs to identify the different teaching practices in the writing area. These are methodology, materials, order in which the processes are presented to students, feedback as well as work assigned in every class.

Observation Class

Reading and Writing Class

Observation # _____

Date: _____

Integrated English II and IV

Objectives of the observations

- To observe if the writing task is being incorporated as a fundamental part of the classroom activities.
- To identify and analyze the procedures employed by the professor in order to teach writing.
- To determine the type of feedback provided by the teacher for the writing activity.
- To observe how the writing skill is being evaluated.

Class Started at _____

Skill being developed

a. READING

b. WRITING

c. GRAMMAR

Was there a warm up activity or transition from last class topic?

What was the pre-task activity about?

Description _____

Materials used

What was the main activity about?

Description _____

Materials used

What was the post- task activity about?

Description _____

Materials used

What other skills were used during this class? How were they implemented?

What kind of feedback did the teacher give to students to improve their ability to carry out the determined skill?

How did the teacher assess and evaluate the activities during the class?

Was any writing exercise assigned as homework? If affirmative, what did the homework consist of?

COMMENTS



Appendix 2. STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE SAMPLE

1. Do you like to write in English?
2. How important is it to write in English in your major?
3. Do you think you have the ability to write in English?
4. How often do you write in the writing class?

- a. Always
- b. Often
- c. Sometimes
- d. Rarely

Why? _____

5. Where do you prefer to write (in English)?
 - a. Home
 - b. Classroom
 - c. Library
 - d. Other

Why?

6. What of the following writing genres can you develop?
 - A. Paragraphs
 - B. Letters (Business, friendly, apology, complaint etc)
 - C. Summaries
 - D. Reports
 - E. Journals
 - F. Essays



7. Who do you usually ask to help you with your writing work?
 - a. Teacher
 - b. Classmates
 - c. Friends
 - d. Other

8. How would you like the teacher to correct your written works?
 - a. Comments on the margins
 - b. Correcting directly on the composition
 - c. Face to face (type of conferencing)
 - d. Using symbols

9. What type of methodology does the professor use to teach writing?
 - a. Theory-practice
 - b. Example-practice
 - c. Instruction-practice
 - d. Practice (alone)

10. Which of the following manuals do know or do you use?
 - a. APA (American psychological Association)
 - b. MLA (Modern Language Association)?
 - c. Other
 - d. I do not use any manual



11. Which ones of the following techniques do you use?
 - a. Paraphrasing
 - b. Summarizing
 - c. Quoting other's work in your work
 - d. Other

12. What do you think is your level of proficiency in writing?
 - a. Outstanding
 - b. Very good
 - c. Average
 - d. Poor

13. If your level is b, c, or d. How can you solve the problem?

Appendix 3. QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PROFESSORS OF READING AND WRITING COURSES

Universidad Nacional

Maestría en Segunda Lenguas y Culturas

Investigación en Segundas Lenguas y Culturas

Researchers: Sofia Mora Abarca and Diego Garro Bustamante

SAMPLE

Dear Professor: Your cooperation in responding to the different questions is prominent. Please try to answer the different questions as fully and honest as possible.

I. Background Information

Name of the course: _____

- 1) How many times have you taught this course previously, including the present course?
- 2) In regard to teaching of the English language, what do you think is your area of specialization?

II PART. Based on the course, please answer the following questions.

1. What skill do you focus the most in the current course you are teaching?
 - a. Grammar
 - b. Reading
 - c. Writing

Why? _____

2. How often do you ask your students to develop writing exercises?
 - a. Every Session
 - b. Once a Week
 - c. At least once a month
 - d. Never



3. How often do you assign writing as homework to your students?
 - a. After every Session
 - b. Once a Week
 - c. At least once a month
 - d. Never
4. What teaching methodology do you use to teach writing?
5. What of the following genres do you think your students master at this level? (Choose more than one option if necessary)
 - a. Paragraphs
 - b. Letters (Business, friendly, apology, complaint etc)
 - c. Summaries
 - d. Reports
 - e. Journals
 - f. Essays
6. How do you usually correct students' compositions?

7. What of the following methods do you use assess your students' writing?
 - a. Conferencing
 - b. Peer assessment
 - c. Formative feedback
 - d. Teacher's corrections directly on students' mistakes using or red-pen and comments on the margins
 - e. Collaborative Writing projects



- f. I do not know any of the above but I use....

8. Why do you use that or those assessment techniques?
9. What have been the students' reactions towards the kind of feedback that you provide?
10. What kind of materials do you use to teach writing?
- a. Copies
 - b. A textbook
 - c. The internet
 - d. Magazines
 - e. Songs
 - f. Lectures
 - g. Other. Specify
-
11. What material do you consider as the most appropriate to teach writing to English language learners? Why?
12. What aspect(s) aspect of the current program of this course specifically the area you are teaching would you change? Justify your answer.

Thank you for your cooperation!



Appendix 4. Sample composition from one of the students and corrected by her instructor.

Safety in Costa Rica

Nowadays, Costa Rica is a frightening country. ^{Why?}
The ^{unclear} main ~~to~~ street, since many people like tourists
are vulnerable to any crime that ~~came from the~~
costarricans.

IF I ^{were} ~~will be~~ the president in the National
Tourism Chamber, I ^{would} ~~will~~ do some things to
clean to country of all crime. ^{these} things like ~~all~~
to ask ^{the} ~~at~~ authorities highest of the country that to
^{give more} ~~increase~~ the budget to Department of Security, so
that ^{they} ~~now~~ ^{have} more currency ~~for~~ vigilance. Also, put
vigilance ^{???} better ^{???} in most visited st places like tourist
attractions, hotels, restaurants, airports. ^{and} Besides
^{the} best police ^{man or officers} on the street. I will ^{carry out} ~~create~~
law ^{more strict laws} ~~more stiff~~ so that ^{??} to make ^{??} justice.
All this, so that ^{to} ~~to~~ ^{be} ~~be~~ safe in Costa Rica.

The Impact of Foreign Language Enhancement on Students' Oral Performance: A Case Study at Centro de Idiomas, Universidad Nacional, SRB

Cinthya Olivares Garita
Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica

Austin M. Vander Wel
Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica

Resumen

La enseñanza y el aprendizaje de un idioma extranjero se apoyan en la guía del instructor así como también en el compromiso y la actitud positiva del estudiante. Obtener el éxito en la producción oral de este idioma expone al aprendiente a varios obstáculos cuyo efecto puede ser minimizado a través de estrategias o mecanismos además de la instrucción regular. El objetivo de este trabajo es investigar si existen mecanismos (fuera del salón de clase) ofrecidos por el programa Centro de Idiomas, Universidad Nacional (CI-UNA) en el Campus Pérez Zeledón y en qué medida han influenciado la producción oral de los estudiantes. Esta investigación contempla el análisis de un estudio de caso de los estudiantes de CI-UNA que han estado expuestos a algún tipo de apoyo lingüístico. Para la recolección de la información, se suministraron tres cuestionarios. Un cuestionario está diseñado con el propósito de determinar la existencia de mecanismos o apoyos para fortalecer el aprendizaje de los estudiantes fuera de la clase. El segundo cuestionario intenta recolectar las impresiones de los estudiantes que recibieron algún tipo de apoyo de uno de los mecanismos ofrecidos por este programa de idiomas. El tercer cuestionario reúne las impresiones y perspectivas de los profesores y coordinadoras de CI-UNA acerca del apoyo lingüístico. Es valioso recordar que los investigadores tendrán acceso a la base de datos de este programa para rastrear el progreso de los estudiantes en los cursos regulares mientras fueron expuestos a algún tipo de apoyo lingüístico fuera de las clases. Con base a las conclusiones alcanzadas se propondrá algunas sugerencias esclarecedoras a los estudiantes, profesores y coordinadoras del programa de idiomas.

Palabras claves: apoyo, exposición a nativos hablantes, producción oral, evaluación formativa

Abstract

Teaching and learning English as a foreign language relies on instructors' guidance and support as well as students' commitment and positive attitudes. Achieving success in the oral production of this language naturally presents the learner with several stumbling blocks, whose effects can be reduced by supportive strategies or mechanisms implemented in addition to regular instruction. This paper aims to investigate whether and to what extent enhancement mechanisms (outside the classroom) offered by the language program Centro de Idiomas, Universidad Nacional (CI-UNA) at Campus Pérez Zeledón have influenced the oral performance of students. This research analyzes a case study of CI-UNA students who

have been exposed to any particular sort of language enhancement. For the garnering of the data, three questionnaires were designed. One questionnaire was designed with the goal of determining the knowledge of previously existing mechanisms or opportunities to enhance students' learning outside the language classroom. The second questionnaire gathered the impressions of actual students who are supported by one of the current mechanisms offered by this language program. The third questionnaire inquired about the current impressions and opinions of CI-UNA teachers and coordinators regarding foreign language enhancement. It is worth noting that the researchers will have access to the CI-UNA data base to track down students' progress in the regular courses while they were exposed to any type of language enhancement outside the class. From the conclusions drawn some enlightening suggestions will be proposed to the students, teachers and coordinators of the language program.

Key words: enhancement, native speaker exposure, oral performance, formative assessment

1. Introduction

Teaching and learning English as a foreign language (EFL) is dependent both on the guidance of instructors and the commitment of individual learners. To foster an environment that provides both, it is essential to branch outside the classroom and provide learners with new ways to expand their knowledge. Out of the plethora of strategies currently aimed at teaching EFL, several enhancement methods are carried out at the Centro de Idiomas: Universidad Nacional (CI-UNA), the Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica, Sede Regional Brunca's language program. To properly understand these methods, it is crucial to give a brief introduction to the language program.

CI-UNA is a language program that works in cooperation with the Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica to provide foreign language classes to the local community during after-work hours and Saturdays. They offer 12 levels of English along with certifications. Additionally, CI-UNA provides optional thematic English classes based on speaking and listening, which are taught three days a week by a native English speaker. These classes, called "speaking clubs", are neither required nor assigned any percentage of the students' overall grades.

The goal of having a native speaker teach speaking clubs is that students maximize their oral performance in a natural setting, which they then incorporate with the knowledge they acquire in class. The speaking clubs' formative assessment approach is designed to give students constant and real-time feedback, while remaining within the safety of the classroom. Furthermore, since these classes are not mandatory, all students that attend choose to be there and willingly participate. Additionally, the incorporation of a native speaker at CI-UNA theoretically provides the students with a more natural linguistic context in which they are free to break away from the textbook and use English as a means of authentic communication.

This research measures to what extent these enhancement strategies have been successful and how CI-UNA can further accommodate the linguistic needs of their students in order to maximize oral performance. This will both evaluate the current methods of enhancement in CI-UNA and contribute to the larger EFL discussion of how to improve students' oral performance.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Affective Factors in the Learning of a Foreign Language

Affective factors are a determinant of the successful achievement in learning English as a foreign language. If these factors are overlooked, learning is hindered and progress is slowed. In fact, the current tendencies highlight the change English teaching has undergone to incorporate these factors for the sake of students' linguistic achievement. Based on Andres (2003), "The interest in affective variables in language learning is reflected in some modern teaching stances aimed at reducing anxiety and inhibitions and enhancing the learner's motivation and self-esteem. These approaches could be identified within the so-called humanistic education" (para. 18). Among the affective factors that may debilitate the effective learning of a foreign language, Minghe and Yuan (2013) stated that "affective factors in foreign language teaching and learning refer to two related aspects; one is the individual factors of learners, including motivation, anxiety, inhibition, self-esteem, etc.; the other is the relational factors among learners and between the learner and the teacher, including empathy, reaction, etc" (p. 58). Ignoring the effect of these factors in the learner's language outcomes may delay the process of learning a foreign language as expected by the teacher, and cause linguistic failure. To carry out the following study, researchers will shed light upon motivation, self-confidence and risk-taking as striking affective variables to consider by teachers in the context this study will take place.

2.1.1. Motivation

Motivation has proved to be an affective factor that has meaningful implications in the learning of a foreign language. According to Brown (2001) motivation can be regarded as "the extent to which you can make choices about goals to pursue and the effort you will devote to that pursuit" (p. 34). Brown's insights reveal the effect of motivation in the achievement of goals. He determined that motivation relates to choices and effort. Both elements are essential to linguistic success as well. In earlier studies, Brown (1980) also defined motivation as "an inner drive, impulse, emotion or desire that moves one to a particular action" (p.112). From this perspective, foreign language learning success seems to be influenced by how high the learner's motivation is.

Because motivation takes paramount on language learning attitudes, it is relevant to determine the type of motivation students bring to the classroom. Motivation can be categorized as instrumental as well as integrative. The former accounts for "acquiring language as a means for attaining instrumental goals" (Brown, 2000, p. 162) whereas the

latter “stems from a desire to understand the language and culture of another group for the purpose of interaction” (Gardner et al., 1992, p. 198). Both categories contribute to shaping language learning attitudes inside the classroom and composing the students’ interests and desires. Integrative motivation can be increased by sufficient exposure to native speakers of the target language.

2.1.2. Self-confidence

Confidence takes a predominant role in the learning of a second or foreign language. This self-reliance students develop for what they do to learn the language is relevant to the achievement of their goals. In foreign language learning, self-confidence is a delicate and determining factor. Brown (2001) regarded this factor as the “I can do it or self-esteem factor” (p.23). This author remarked that no successful cognitive or affective activity could be carried out without some degree of self-esteem, self-confidence, knowledge of yourself, and belief in your own capabilities for that activity (Brown, 2002, p.45). Students with high self-confidence have proven to be more participative, outspoken and sociable, which are key traits of a successful language learner.

2.1.3. Language Anxiety

Anxiety is regarded as a factor that exerts a great influence on foreign language learners’ outcomes. It is an influential affective factor considered “one of the most prominent and pervasive emotions” (Ni, 2012, p. 1509). Anxiety can be categorized as a personal trait, a state (a temporary situation) and as a situation-specific factor according to Henter (2014, p. 375). Foreign language learning seems to fall into this last category. Anxiety may hinder the learning process producing in the learner “uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, apprehension or worry” (Minghe & Yuan, 2013, p.59).

Minghe and Yuan (2013) referred to language anxiety as “fear or apprehension occurring when a learner is expected to perform in the second or foreign language” (p.59). Anxiety may tend to either benefit or thwart the process of foreign language learning. Moderate anxiety helps students keep focused on tasks while high anxiety disrupts students’ willingness to participate and be active, or even beyond than, be proactive. High anxiety also declines motivation, and imposes heavier affective and academic burdens on students’ learning process.

Horwitz (as cited in Henter, 2013) asserted that “foreign language anxiety has the same clinical picture as any other type of anxiety: difficult concentration, sweating, palpitations, worry, fear and even horror of foreign language class, anxious students having an avoidance behavior (they miss classes, do not do their homework)” (p.375). These effects of anxiety on the performance of a foreign or second language are more evident while students carry out a speaking activity (Minghe & Yuan, 2013, p.59). They feel pressured when performing any type of speaking activity such as role-plays, oral presentations, discussions, and debates, among others.

Teachers can lessen or reverse the effects of anxiety on the students' oral performance. There are several activities teachers can design and implement in order to minimize these effects in the language classroom; such activities can range from keeping a lively personality in the classroom to setting game-like activities and facilitating learning by building a stress-free learning environment.

2.1.4. Risk-taking

One of the most essential skills in a successful language learner is risk taking. Learners are capable of building knowledge the moment they dare take chances to participate in class, and are ready to come public and make mistakes in front of others. In this sense, language activities are a complete risk. Students may think they can jeopardize their credibility or reputation as “good learners” when they stand in front, and let words and thoughts come out of their mouths. Beebe (as cited in Burgucu, Han, Engin & Kaya, 2010) claimed that risk-taking is “a situation where an individual has to make a decision involving choice between alternatives of different desirability; the outcome of the choice is uncertain, there is a possibility of failure” (p. 2). Burgucu, Han, Engin and Kaya (2010) also stated that

Risk-taking is not only one of the dimensions of individual differences, but also, it is one of the important parts in a second language learning process; moreover, it is a language learning strategy for good language learners who are willing to take risks. (p. 2)

The role of second or foreign language teachers is to turn off any trigger that may discourage the students' willingness to participate and be open to anything that is happening in the classroom. Woolfolk (2001) shed light upon some strategies to boost the risk-taking ability:

- a. Break instruction into small steps and provide short activities, chosen and sequenced by the teacher.
- b. Cover material thoroughly and at a moderate pace; give plenty of practice, immediate feedback and specific praise.
- c. Have students work as a whole class so that the teacher can supervise. Avoid individualized, self-paced, or independent work.
- d. Maintain a level of difficulty that guarantees high rates of success.
- e. Ask convergent questions-one correct answer.
- f. Make sure to call on everyone, and stay with a student until a question has been answered.
- g. Avoid interpretations, open-ended questions, and non-academic conversations.

- h. Emphasize short, frequent paper-and-pencil exercises, not games, arts, craft, discovery or inquiry learning activities. (p.3)

As a matter of fact, the role of language teachers is to make students believe that taking the risk of making mistakes has its own benefits, and that, after all, mistakes are real proof that they are moving forward to reach competence in a second or foreign language.

2.2. Native Speaker Exposure in an EFL Setting

Learning English in an EFL environment is not an easy endeavor. The opportunities for using the language in real contexts are either unlikely, to some extent, or scarce. Actually, an EFL learner strives to improve his or her communicative competence by the use of other means or resources rather than by the one provided by native speaker exposure. A native speaker as a linguistic resource offers numerous opportunities for non-native speakers to expand their knowledge of the use of words in context (pragmatics), pronunciation (segmental and suprasegmental aspects) as well as target-culture awareness and empathy. According to Medgyes (1999), a native speaker is defined as someone

- a. who is born in an English-speaking country
- b. has learned English during childhood in an English-speaking environment
- c. speaks English as a first language
- d. has a native-like command of English
- e. is capable of producing fluent, spontaneous speech in English that is characterized by creativity, and
- f. has the intuition to distinguish correct or wrong forms in English (p. 430)

In fact, Braine (2010) and Kirkpatrick (2010) agreed in some of their studies in EFL settings upon the perception that native English-speaking teachers (NEST) are the ideal model for language production. Furthermore, Wang (2012) declared that the speech of native English speakers is “held up as the gold standard of grammatical correctness and perfect pronunciation, and that they are valued as repositories of cultural information” (p.47). Definitely, language learners need exposure to real language use, and native speakers would be the most suitable resource by which effective language learning can be improved. Gutiérrez (2005) shed light upon the essential conditions for effective language learning. He claimed that exposure, use, and motivation are key elements to maximize target language learning (p. 35).

Native English speakers, as linguistic resources, can also be a trigger of language learners’ motivation towards the learning of the target language. Indeed, native speaker exposure facilitates language attitudes. Karahan (2007) stated that students’ attitudes towards

foreign language learning vary depending on their feelings towards the target language, culture, exposure and difficulty of it. He acknowledged that

Language attitudes' are the expressions of positive or negative feelings towards a language may reflect impressions of linguistic difficulty or simplicity, ease or difficulty of learning, degree of importance, elegance, social status, etc. Attitudes towards a language may also show what people feel about the speakers of that language. (p. 2)

Although native exposure in an EFL environment seems implausible oftentimes, non-native English speaking teachers (NNEST) must create the conditions to compensate for such an invaluable resource. Based on Davies' perspectives (2004), the key tenets of "nativeness" can be regarded as "(a) childhood acquisition of the language, (b) comprehension and production of idiomatic forms of the language, (c) understanding regional and social variations within the language, and (d) competent production and comprehension of fluent, spontaneous discourse (p. 45). From this standpoint, one could assume that what differentiates NEST from NNEST is the first aspect highlighted by Davis, which stands for childhood acquisition. In other words, what NNEST can do in the EFL classroom is to create the conditions and realistic opportunities for learners to use the target language as much as possible as if in a natural occurring setting.

2.3. Formative Education vs. Summative Assessment

As scholars and instructors of EFL, it is necessary to consider the students' learning styles and as well as the evaluation style for their learning. For approximately the past fifteen years, since the widespread inclusion of formative assessment in EFL studies, teachers have sought to find the most appropriate balance between two distinct forms of evaluation: formative and summative assessment (Ketabi & Saeed Ketabi, 2014, p. 437). Formative assessment is characterized by the corrections of problems in the moment, with adjustments being almost instantaneous (Yi, 2012, p. 27). These corrections are often quick, pointed and meant to distract as little as possible. Formative assessment also has the advantage of being much more focused on the individual, which allows one to gauge which mistakes he or she is personally inclined to make (El Ebyary, 2013, p. 2170).

One disadvantage of formative assessment is that teachers are either inclined to correct *all* errors, which can distract from the main focus of the lesson and cause imprecisions in the teaching of new material, or only correct the errors that have to do with material being studied at that moment, which could lead students to believe that they are producing much better communication than they are producing (Yi, 2012, p. 32). However, if teachers choose to correct mistakes outside the scope of the lesson, this will also force students to continually concentrate on the lesson (Yi, 2012, p. 31). It should be noted that even though formative assessment is oftentimes considered a more relaxed approach of correction, based on classroom conditions and void of formal testing rules or time limits, formative assessment must be both planned and systemic for it to be effective (Ketabi and Saeed Ketabi, 2014, p. 439). The consistency of feedback is necessary to the success or failure of formative feedback.

Summative assessment, on the other hand, focuses on an overall evaluation given at the end of activities (Yi, 2012, p. 32). This is commonly used for certification and accountability, but may lack details since summative assessment only shows the accomplishment or failure of objective goals (Ketabi & Saeed Ketabi, 2014, p. 436). This often takes the form of post-evaluations, formal testing, or a written report of errors committed during presentations. Although it should be obvious that a mix of these two methods would create the best outcome, some scholars claim that summative assessment separates teaching and learning in the eyes of the student, since post-evaluation style assessment may be too impersonal or may seem to justify a grade more than enhance learning (Ketabi & Saeed Ketabi, 2014, p. 440).

In conclusion, because of the student interaction and constant feedback, formative assessment can be seen as evaluation *for* learning, while summative assessment can be seen as assessment *of* learning because of its broader focus. Ultimately it is the job of EFL instructors to find the balance between these two camps, and to find which to use and to what extent.

2.4. Oral Performance in EFL

When teaching English, some corrective feedback (CF) is necessary to foster learning. However, not all students respond to corrective feedback in the same way, and some suffer from anxiety when corrected in an inappropriate way. Oral communication is often the most anxiety-provoking activity in second language acquisition (Zhang, L., & Rahimi, M., 2014, p. 430). This anxiety, in turn, may further impede continued foreign language acquisition because intense levels of anxiety hinder the ability to process input, and thus cut off one of the necessary tools of communication (Zhang, L., & Rahimi, M., 2014, p. 430). This is especially true with lower-intermediate level language students, as they are still not fully proficient in their new language and the anxiety of oral performance may be greater (Zhang, L., & Rahimi, M., 2014, p. 430). In general in EFL/ESL classrooms, there are six common sources of anxiety: 1) personal and interpersonal issues, 2) instructor-learning interactions, 3) classroom procedures, 4) language testing, 5) instructor belief about language learning, and 6) learner beliefs about language learning (Zhang, L., & Rahimi, M., 2014, p. 430).

Although inappropriate CF can be detrimental to second language learners, if both the teachers and their students understand the learning goals of CF, students are much more likely to have a positive reaction to this correction (Zhang, L., & Rahimi, M., 2014, p. 435). Furthermore, since the relation between anxiety and second language learning often has to do with values, self-efficacy and attributions, teachers can take approaches that are based on elicitation and clarification requests, which urge students to correct themselves. This method, proven to be the most effective for students, both provides the student with the knowledge of having learned from their mistake and the confidence of having corrected an error on their own (Milla & García Mayo, 2014, p. 3). In regard to oral performance, these methods of corrective feedback may be the key to defeating the fear in foreign language learners and harvesting a more wholesome oral performance in the classroom.

When further considering the point of oral performance in EFL classrooms, it is essential to confront the native speaker ideal and the goals in teaching English as a foreign language the teacher has set to achieve. In EFL, for example, English should be taught in accordance with sociolinguistic norms that will be important in everyday survival in English speaking countries. However, this line blurs when English is studied as a foreign language, and the majority of the students will not use English in such intense, intercultural settings (Saito, A., & Hatoss, A., 2011, p. 109). In order to answer this question, Akihiro Saito and Anikó Hatoss conducted research on the preferences of Japanese students of English. After evaluating some international variants of English, along with several native variants, it could be seen that Japanese students most negatively evaluated the Japanese variety of English, while they opted to learn English in an “intro-Anglosphere” context. Although current materials and pedagogical techniques may have influenced this, it can be seen that concerning oral performance these students clearly preferred native English over international varieties of the language (Saito, A., & Hatoss, A., 2011, p. 118). Similarly, another study of Bangladeshi students showed that although students believed that their nonnative teachers were competent in English, they still preferred a native teacher upon reaching a certain level of comfortableness with their English because of authentic pronunciation and cultural insight (Ahmed, 2004, p. 42-43).

While some studies focus on the preferences of native-nonnative speakers, others focus on the needs of the students. One study in China asked the question, “In an average week of study, how much time did you spend using English to communicate with a native speaker?” Out of those that had been selected as “successful students” in this study, 60.61% had more than one hour of exposure with a native speaker per week. In comparison, only 12.12% of “unsuccessful learners” had been exposed to native speakers for more than one hour per week (Noonan, 2005) Another study claims that naturalistic environments are important in foreign language acquisition, because they create urgent pressure to receive input, and produce output, while always making the necessary adjustments to output. Failure to do this could result in real-life problems. This keeps students’ minds fully occupied and even someone engaged in indirect interaction, must continually keep up with the fluctuations of natural speech (Congmin, Z., 2013, p. 25). Therefore, naturalistic development of a language is essential for more efficient language acquisition. On a point of clarification, “naturalistic” does not necessarily mean “native.” However, it is likely that native speakers will promote naturalistic use of the language, since it is where their exposure of the language has come from.

2.5. Foreign Language Learning Enhancements

The success in mastering English as a foreign language depends on the way the teacher helps learners approach the language, and how the students find strategies or mechanisms to maximize their own learning. From this perspective, both teachers and students need to find the most suitable ways to facilitate the instructional process. Enhancing the learning of a foreign language is not an overnight process. It takes time, careful analysis and procedural actions.

Teachers can enhance students' oral performance either inside (when learning is actually happening) or outside the classroom. For the purposes of this investigation, foreign language learning enhancements will be described as the mechanisms teachers use inside the classroom, or those they recommend in order to optimize students' oral performance after class instruction has taken place. In-class enhancements used in this study range from delicate aspects like promoting affective factors, implementing a lively methodology, designing and using suitable materials, and establishing a flexible and formative evaluation system. Furthermore, some after-class mechanisms that teachers can implement to maximize students' learning gains can take the form of strategies such as seeking opportunities to converse with native English speakers, participating in speaking clubs and writing to pen pals or chatting with e-pals.

3. The Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to determine some possible enhancement mechanisms the Centro de Idiomas, Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension offers its students in order to optimize their learning after regular instruction and determine how effective they have been. Based on this search the researchers aim to suggest other ways in which learners' oral performance can be enhanced through the analysis of the questionnaires administered to teachers, students and authorities of the language program.

3.1. The Research Questions

Next are the main questions the researchers attempt to answer:

- a. How is foreign language learning enhanced at CI-UNA, SRB?
- b. To what extent has additional language learning enhancement been conducive to successful oral performance?
- c. What can be suggested to maximize oral performance at CI-UNA, SRB?

3.2. Research Methodology

3.2.1. Setting

This research study was conducted at the Centro de Idiomas, Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension, Pérez Zeledón Campus. CI-UNA is a language program whose aim is to prepare local residents to face the challenges of the 21st century and this globalized era through the teaching of effective language skills, basically oral and aural skills in English. CI-UNA methodology is based on the Task-based Instruction (TBI) that promotes oral skills through the development of real-life tasks. This language program encloses more than 300 students. This diverse population is composed of students with different professions or occupations (high school students, lawyers, accountants, doctors, secretaries, receptionists, self-employed

people etc.), social statuses, locations, and ages. They are not grouped according to their actual ages but their linguistic proficiency.

To enter this program, students can either take an English placement test or just enroll and begin a two-year course right from CI-UNA Starter. For a student to get a certification at level 10th, they must have completed two years of intensive classes. The whole program lasts two years and two months, and comprises 12 levels, ranging from CI-UNA Starter to CI-UNA Intensive. Every level takes two months. Classes take five hours per week during two months.

3.2.2. Population

The informants of this study are students as well as all the teachers and three coordinators of the language program. Students from four different CI-UNA courses, CI-UNA Starter, CI-UNA I, CI-UNA VI and CI-UNA XI were selected at random to fill in the student questionnaire #1. They total fifty out of the whole CI-UNA student population. These students' ages range from 14 to 30 years old. Also, students attending or those that have attended CI-UNA Speaking clubs filled in the questionnaire #2. They amount a total of fifteen students. Their ages range from 15 to 67 years old. A random sampling method was used to select them. Furthermore, fifteen CI-UNA teachers were key informants in this study. These teachers completed the questionnaire #3. The majority of these teachers' teaching experience ranges from 3 to 10 years. Some are just starting to teach, around five out of fifteen. They hold bachelor's (twelve of them), licentiate's (two of them) and master's degrees (one of them) in teaching.

3.2.3. The Instruments

Three instruments were used in this investigation to aid in measuring to what extent the inclusion of a native speaker has improved oral enhancement at CI-UNA. These three questionnaires focused on three different groups, with the aim of evaluating CI-UNA more completely. The first was a questionnaire given to 50 students from four different levels of English, and focused on the students' awareness of language enhancement at CI-UNA. Additionally, this questionnaire served to measure, through qualitative data, to what extent students of differing levels valued informal oral enhancement in their foreign language acquisition

The second questionnaire was given to 15 students, who had taken advantage of speaking clubs, and are assumed to already value enhanced learning, since they repeatedly return to speaking club. These students answered questions about their participation, their confidence due to their attendance, and their opinion on how this has affected their performance in class. Furthermore, these fifteen students gave written responses on the nature of the speaking clubs, as well as the nature of having a native speaker as the instructor of speaking clubs, and part of language learning enhancement. These qualitative data are backed by quantitative data, showing that in a survey of 27 (excluding three cases that suspended their attendance) cases with 15 students, 23 cases received a better grade than that

of the class average, while 4 received a lower grade than that of class average. These data show that in 85% of the cases of students attended speaking clubs, they received a better grade than that of the class average. Additionally, these data reveal that in only one case out of 27 the students did not pass their course and advance to the next level.

The third instrument developed for this study was given to 15 teachers at CI-UNA. Their experience working with CI-UNA ranged from 3 months to 3 years. This questionnaire asked teachers to give their opinions about the mechanisms available to CI-UNA students, and their opinions on the effectiveness of speaking clubs through yes/no questions and written responses. In addition to expressing their beliefs about speaking clubs, teachers were asked to give their opinion on the importance of a native speaker in CI-UNA as the instructor of speaking clubs. This was followed by written responses addressing how the native speaker could improve speaking clubs, and the benefits and challenges of the inclusion of a native speaker in CI-UNA regarding oral enhancement.

Similar to the third instrument, the fourth instrument developed for this study was given to three coordinators of CI-UNA. They were asked about the current mechanisms available to students and how these mechanisms meet or fail to meet the needs of these students. The instrument also poses the question as to whether CI-UNA is responsible for providing these mechanisms. Finally, the instrument inquires about the importance and effectiveness of the speaking clubs according to the coordinators' observations, and whether the importance of effectiveness changes when taught by a native English speaker.

3.2.4. Data Analysis

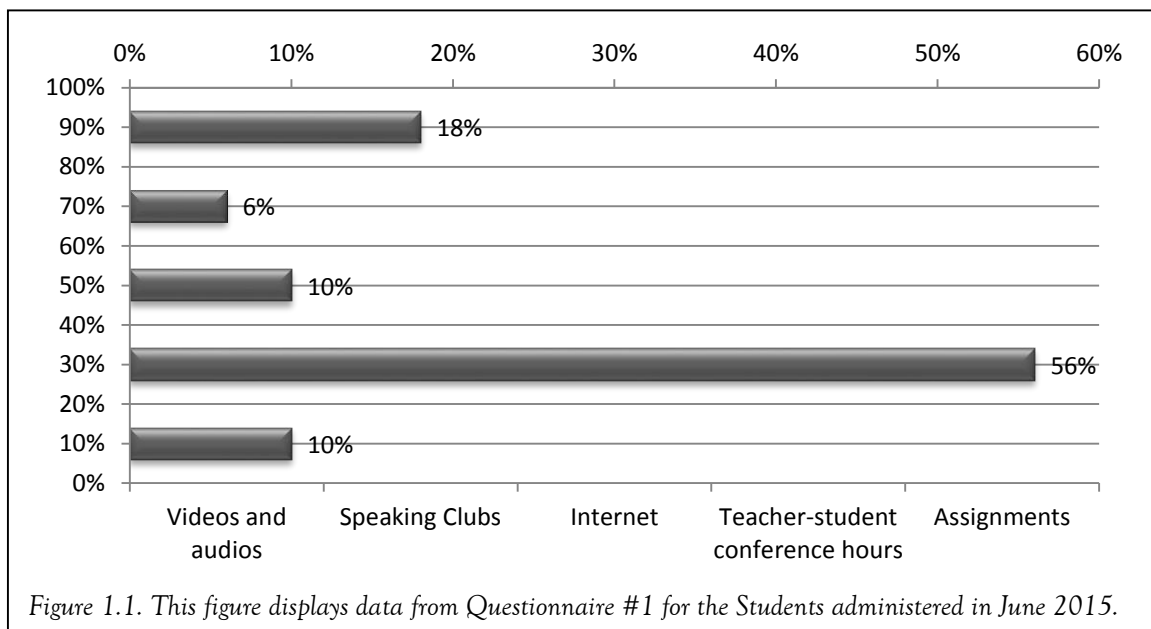
An exhaustive examination of students' responses and data gathered drew the next analysis. Each of the research questions is answered in this section.

Results and discussion of question 1- How is foreign language learning enhanced at CI-UNA, SRB?

Students were asked to report about the different enhancement mechanisms or opportunities that CI-UNA program offers to them. The following Figure 1.1 displays the information found in questionnaire #1 for students.

According to the information collected by questionnaire #1 question #1, students listed the following enhancement mechanisms or opportunities: videos and audios tracks, speaking clubs, Internet connectivity, teacher-student conference hours and assignments. A number of 28 students, which amounts 56%, determined that the speaking clubs are one of the most known enhancement mechanisms provided by CI-UNA. As a second option, 9 students wrote that the assignments that teachers give are another alternative for them to practice and reinforce the language outside the classroom. This represented 18% of the total number of students. An equal number of students, 5 students in each case respectively, selected videos and audios as well as Internet connectivity as enhancement language opportunities. They represented 10% of all the students. The least known option that

students reported was teacher-student conference hours. This one represented 6%, which represents just 3 out of the 50 students that completed the questionnaire.

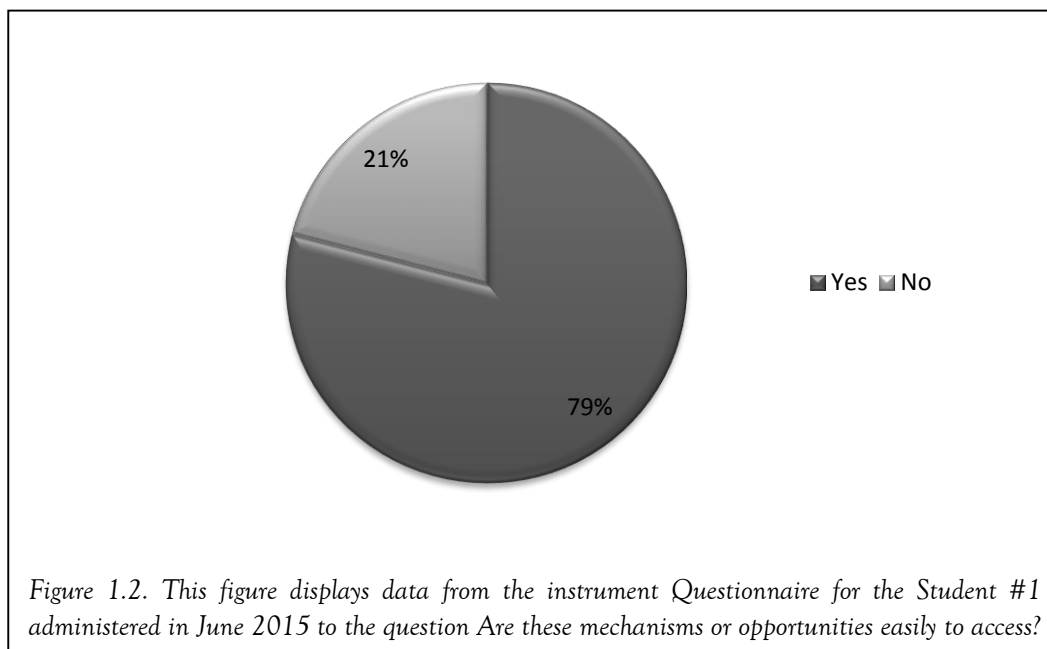


CI-UNA teachers also reported the mechanisms they are certain that this language program offers to students. Among the options selected, teachers determined that speaking clubs, teacher-student conference hours, webpages and extra practice from the workbook were the most known enhancement mechanisms. In fact, students and teachers agreed on the fact that the speaking clubs are the most known enhancement mechanism.

All of the students' and teachers' answers evince that the CI-UNA program does offer enhancement mechanisms to its students, and that the speaking clubs is the most impactful of all.

The CI-UNA developers were also asked to refer to the mechanisms provided to enhance the students' oral performance. The three of them that filled out this questionnaire replied positively although two of them reported that the language program is not responsible for providing these types of mechanisms.

Students were also questioned about how accessible the enhancement mechanisms they pointed out in the previous answer were. Figure 1.2 shows that 38 students answered positively, amounting 79%. The rest of the students, 10 students out of the total, represented by 21% answered negatively. They remarked that the schedule for the speaking clubs is flexible, the sessions are held before the regular classes, and that there are three sessions during the week. They also pointed out that the speaking clubs are free. Furthermore, they stated that the speaking clubs are open to students of any age. They commented that the speaking clubs are held while they are still at work, money was also a constraint, and that there is little information about the enhancement mechanisms.

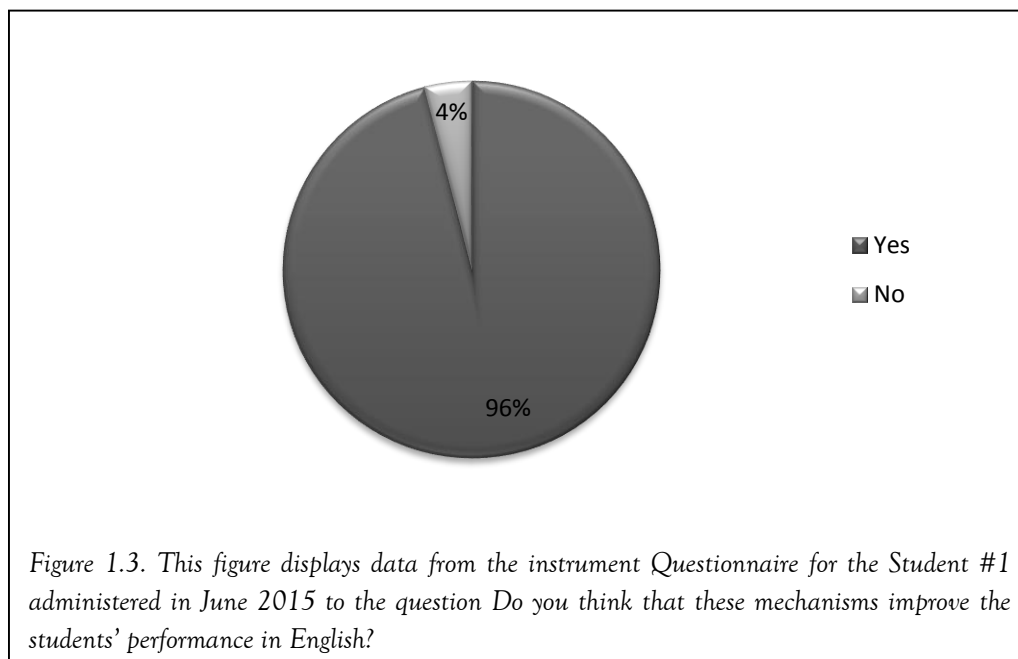


Teachers were also asked whether or not the opportunities or mechanisms were in accordance with the students' needs. Twelve of the teachers replied positively whereas three of them answered negatively. The majority reported that these mechanisms are suitable for CI-UNA students since they do not have to pay, can come three days in addition to the days they attend regular classes, they can contact native English speakers, the sessions are short and simple, and students can choose the most appropriate schedule for them. Teachers also pointed out that students oftentimes cannot go to the speaking clubs due to their work schedules.

Two CI-UNA developers replied to the same inquiry that the schedules are not accessible since most of the students enrolled in the regular courses are either people who finish work at 5:00 or 5:30 pm, or high school students whose afternoon schedule extends to 4:00 or 5:00 pm. They also mentioned that the time duration was suitable and the lack of a fee makes the speaking clubs a real asset for students of this program.

Students were also asked whether they thought the enhancement mechanisms improved their performance in English. The next Figure 1.3 illustrates the results to this question.

In fact, 96% of the students answered positively representing 45 out of the 47 students that replied to this inquiry. Furthermore, two students that represented 4% of the total answered negatively. Some positive aspects as to why they believe these mechanisms would improve the students' performance were that a native speaker teaches the speaking clubs, these mechanisms provide the students with more practice and more support, and there is very valuable feedback.



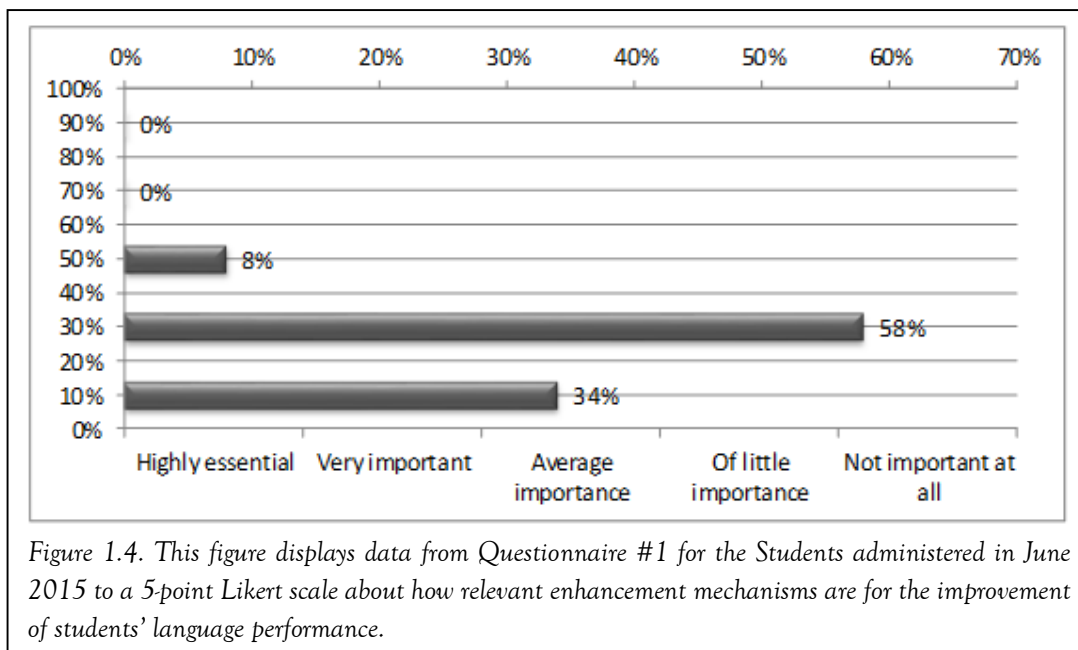
Teachers were also asked the same question. Fourteen teachers replied positively. Just one teacher answered negatively. Some relevant aspects why teachers believed these mechanisms enhance the students' English learning are: students speak without being evaluated, they have contact with the oral language, they feel more confident in this type of environment, they lose fear of speaking the language, they put vocabulary into practice and their practice makes perfect. Some aspects that teachers pointed out why they believe these mechanisms do not help at all are that they imply a varying degree of proficiency and most of the tasks are written, not oral.

Two CI-UNA developers answered that these mechanisms seem to be a great opportunity for students to improve their oral performance. However, one CI-UNA developer pointed out that she would like to see the results of a research study comparing the students' oral performance before and after their exposure to the enhancement mechanisms.

Students were requested to determine the degree of relevance of the implementation of CI-UNA enhancement mechanisms. Figure 1.4 reveals the results related to the relevance of enhancement mechanisms at CI-UNA according to students.

The majority of the students reported that enhancement mechanisms are either highly essential or very important. Actually, 17 students answered that these mechanisms were highly essential. This number of students represented 34% of the total number. Furthermore, 29 students that represented 58% of the total number selected the answer very important. Four students represented 8% of all the students who selected the answer "average important." These data demonstrate that a great number of students believe that extra help or reinforcement are necessary and useful for students' language development. In the case of the program developers, two of them answered positively to this same question

while one of them was not sure about these mechanisms improving the students' oral English performance.



Students were required to point out the enhancement mechanisms that they believe CI-UNA as a meaningful language program should offer to local citizens. Table 1.1 exhibits the data found corresponding to the mechanisms identified by students.

Table 1.1. Enhancement mechanisms that CI-UNA should offer

	M
Speaking clubs	2.98
Wi-Fi conectivity	2.78
Web page	2.94
Native Speaker Contact	3.97
Free Access to language labs	2.68
Extracurricular activities	2.30
E-pals	1.94
Forums	2.36

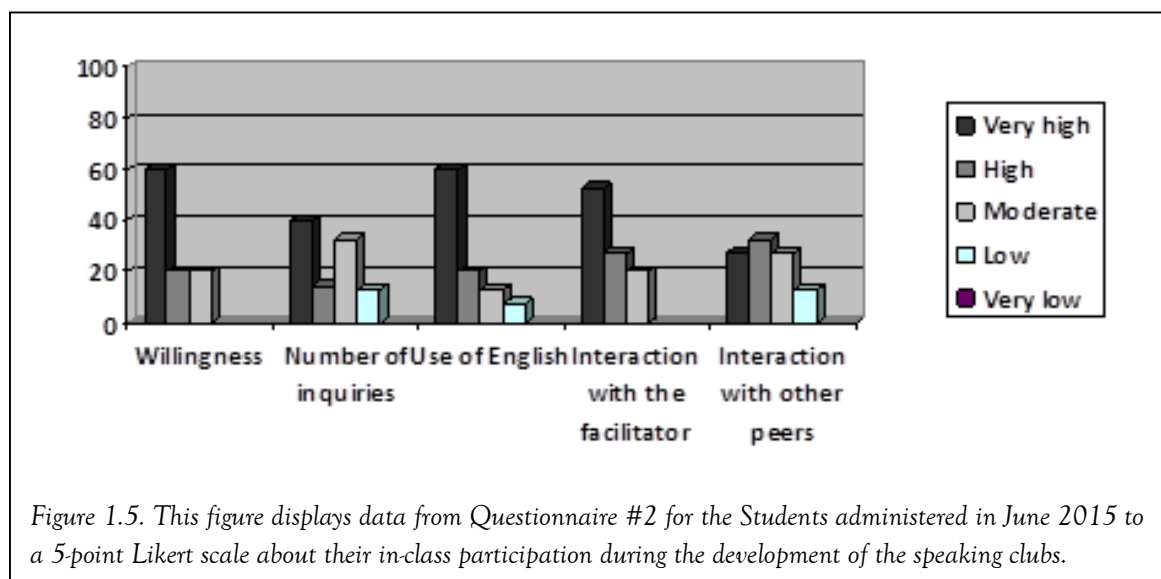
Note. Rated on a 5-point Likert scale 4='highly essential,' 3='very important', 2='average importance', 1='of little importance' and 0='not important at all' M= mean

Among the different enhancement mechanisms mentioned by students, they pointed out that speaking clubs, Wi-Fi connectivity, a web page, native speaker contact, free access to language labs, extracurricular activities, e-pals and forums were some of the enhancement mechanisms CI-UNA should offer. These data were analyzed by recording students' answers from a 5-point Likert scale. The mean was calculated to determine what mechanism was the most or least selected and the degree of relevance given. The top four enhancement

mechanisms were native speaker contact, represented by a mean of 3.97; speaking clubs, represented by a mean of 2.98; web page, represented by a mean of 2.94; and Wi-Fi connectivity, represented by a mean of 2.78. Furthermore, the least selected enhancement mechanisms were free access to language labs, represented by a mean of 2.68; forums, represented by a mean of 2.36; extracurricular activities, represented by a mean of 2.30; and e-pals, represented by a mean of 1.94. Native speaker exposure stands out as the most recommended mechanism according to students. This evinces that students are aware that contact with natural language is highly necessary for successful language performance and that the speaking clubs are appropriate mechanisms to optimize foreign language learning. In addition to this information, it is worth noting that the three CI-UNA developers who filled out the questionnaire #4 determined that the strongest mechanism that is being offered by the language program is the speaking clubs.

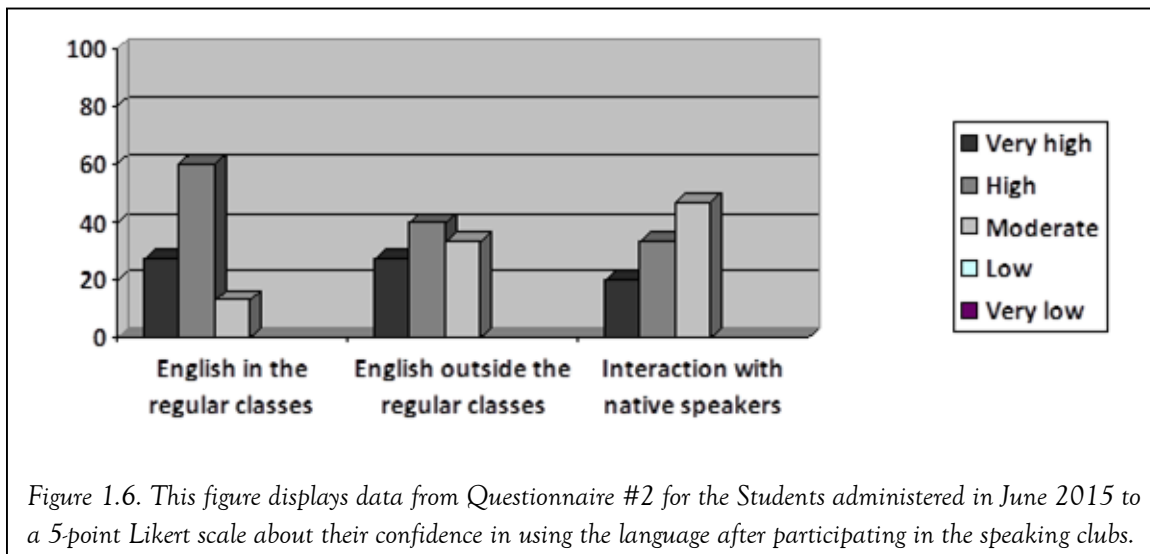
Results and discussion of question 2- To what extent has additional language learning enhancement been conducive to successful oral performance?

Students who attended the speaking clubs for two bimesters in a row completed Questionnaire #2. They were required to establish the degree in which their in-class participation improved by marking one of the options given in a 5-point Likert scale. The next Figure 1.5 shows the results gathered for the improvement of in-class participation during the development of the speaking clubs.



The figure above shows the different aspects that students were asked. As can be seen, 60% of students reported a very high degree of willingness to participate. It can be concluded, then, that the students who attended speaking clubs two bimesters in a row were willing to interact when at speaking club. Students reported a lower number of inquiries to the teacher of speaking clubs, but more than 50% still reported in the "very high" or "high" category. Furthermore, most students reported a very high or high level of use of English in the class. The students seemed to be more willing to interact with the facilitator than with others.

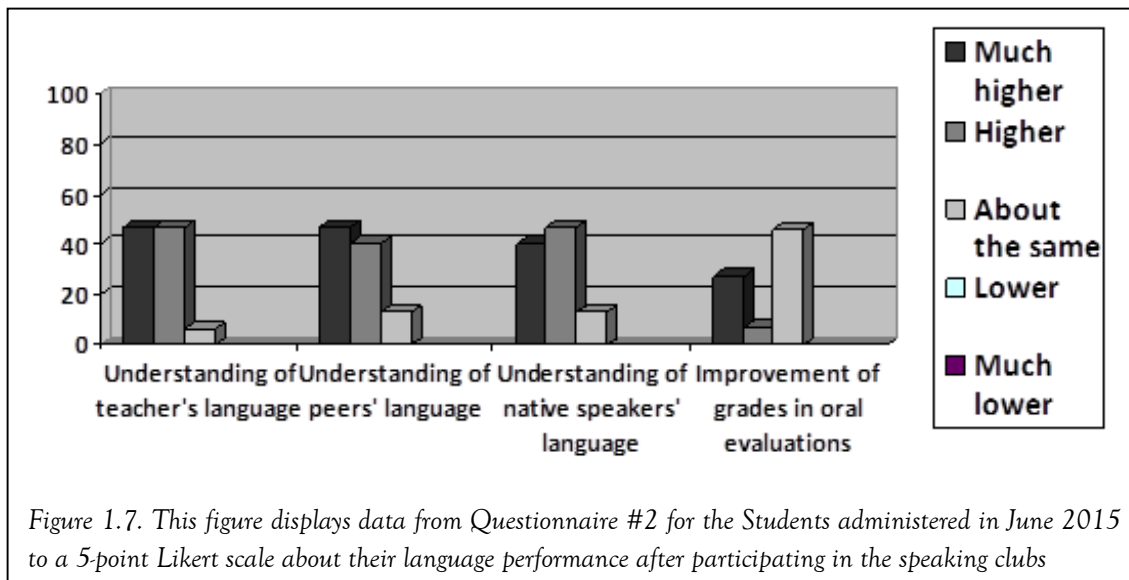
Continuing with the results from Questionnaire #2, students were required to measure their level of confidence with the English language on a 5-point Likert scale. Figure 1.6 shows the students' reported level of confidence in oral English after attending speaking clubs.



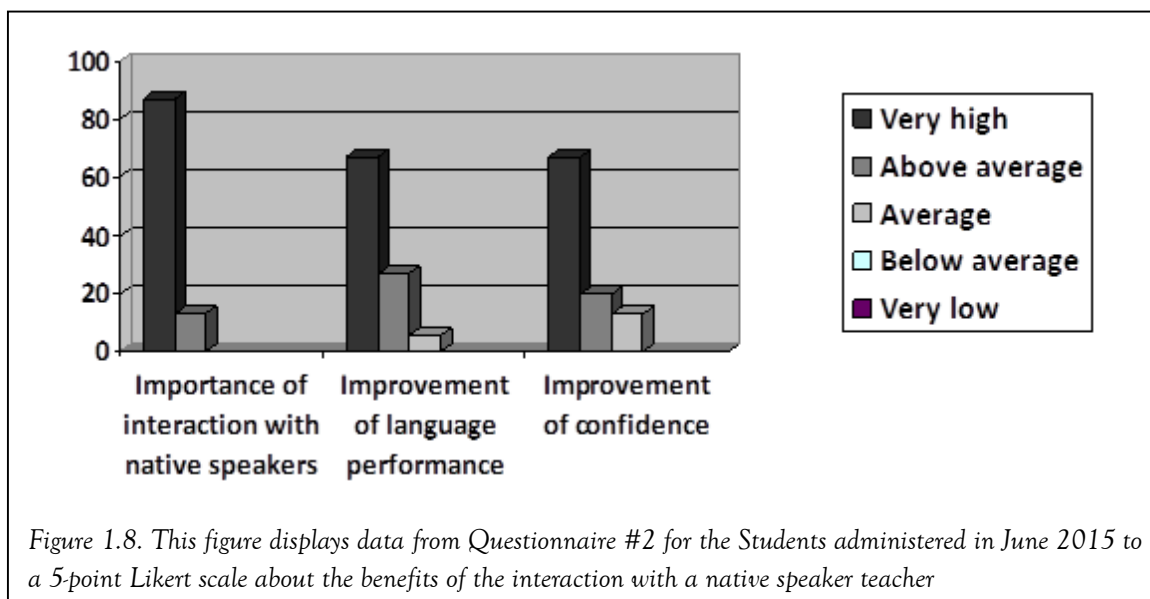
As can be seen in Figure 1.6, students reported an overall "high" degree of confidence in their oral English in the regular English classes. However, students reported less confidence in their oral English outside the regular class. The majority of students reported "moderate" confidence with native speakers after having attended the speaking clubs for two consecutive bimesters. However, it should be noted that in none of the three categories did students report a low or very low level of confidence. This figure suggests that speaking clubs have had an overall positive impact on the confidence of those students who have chosen to attend it.

In Questionnaire #2, students were also asked to evaluate their opinion on their improvement in oral English after having attended speaking clubs for two consecutive bimesters on a 5-point Likert scale. Figure 1.7 shows the results of this inquiry based on the students' level of knowledge about their improvement.

It is clear, according to figure 1.7, that the majority of students either reported "much higher" or "high" improvement in their understanding of teachers', peers', and native speakers' oral English, although this is slightly less so with understanding native speakers' oral English. Although the majority of students did not report any improvement in their grades in oral evaluations, at least 30% of students reported some notable improvement in their oral evaluation grades after having attended speaking clubs. This would suggest that students feel their oral English is improving, and at least 30% reported some growth due to having attended speaking clubs over two bimesters.



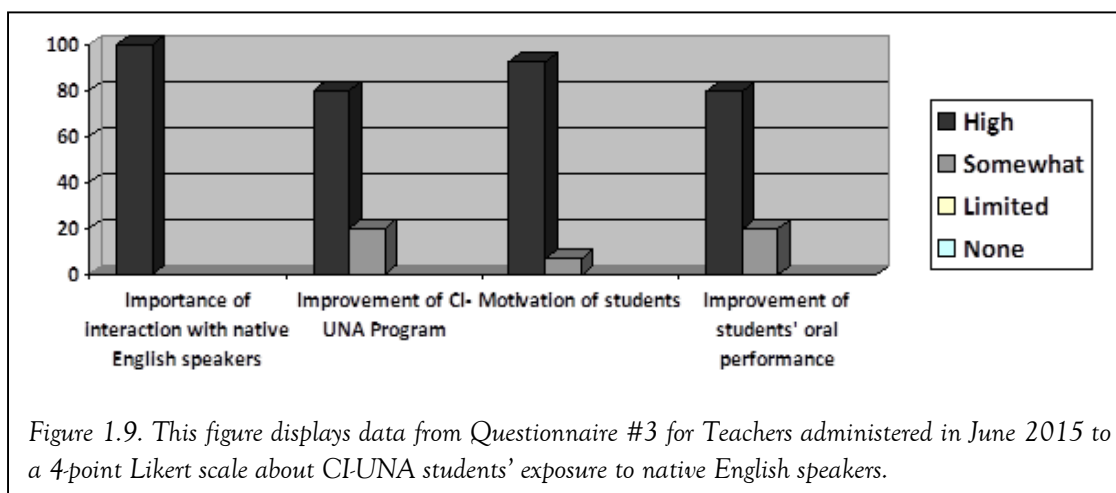
Students answering Questionnaire #2 were then asked to give their opinion on the benefits of interaction with a native English speaker as the facilitator of the speaking clubs. They were required to represent their responses on a 5-point Likert scale.



According to figure 1.8, more than 80% of the students that attended the speaking clubs two bimesters in a row reported that interaction with native English speakers had a very high level of importance when learning English. Additionally, over 60% of these students reported a very high level of improvement, and over 20% a high level of improvement, of language performance due to the implementation of a native English speaker as facilitator of speaking clubs. Equally, over 60% of students reported improved confidence in oral performance due to the implementation of a native speaker as facilitator

of the speaking clubs, with 20% reporting they had had above average improvement, and 15% reporting an average level of improvement.

In a similar vein, the CI-UNA teachers were requested to determine to what extent exposure to native speakers could improve the students' English oral performance. Figure 1.9 shows the teachers' choices according to four different aspects the importance of interacting with native speakers, the improvement of CI-UNA program, students' motivation and the improvement of students' oral performance.



As can be seen, all the aspects were reported to show a “high” level. For the first aspect about providing native speaker interaction, all the teachers agreed on the fact that it has a high relevance. Next, the second aspect that teachers think could improve with native speaker exposure is students' motivation. Actually, just 1 of the 15 teachers reported “somewhat” for the improvement of the students' motivation. The third and fourth aspect showed the same number of choices. Twelve of the fifteen teachers reported each of these aspects as having a “high” improvement. Just three teachers in each case selected “somewhat” for the improvement of CI-UNA program and the students' oral performance.

The CI-UNA coordinators were also asked to report about the importance of interacting with native English speakers, the improvement of the language program, the students' oral performance and the students' motivation. The following Table 1.2 shows the information gathered from the CI-UNA coordinators' questionnaire.

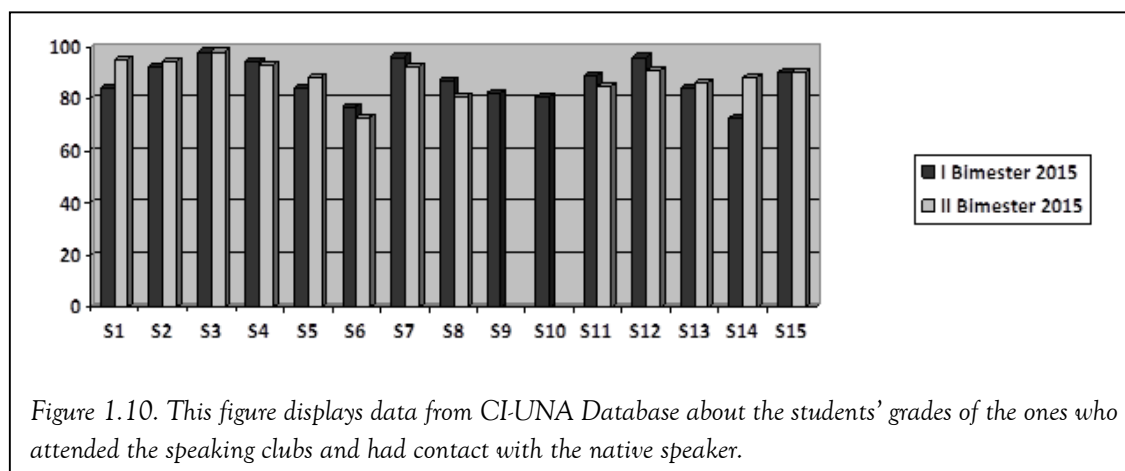
The three coordinators reported that the interaction with native English speakers is highly relevant and that the students' oral performance might greatly improve due to this type of contact. These choices were represented by a mean of 4 in each case. The coordinators also believe that this type of exposure raises students' motivation. This aspect represents a mean of 3.66. In addition to this, the coordinators reported that the CI-UNA program may improve thanks to the incorporation of native English speakers to the activities offered. This was the lowest mean recorded, 3.33.

Table 1.2.
Information about CI-UNA Students' Exposure to Native English Speakers

	M
Interaction with native English speakers	4.00
Improvement of the CI-UNA program	3.33
Students' motivation	3.66
Students' oral performance	4.00

Note. Rated on a 4-point Likert scale 4='highly' 3= 'somewhat', 2='limited' and 1='none' M= mean.

The researchers were allowed to access the CI-UNA Database to be able to measure the improvements of these students quantitatively in their final course grade. Figure 1.10 shows 15 students' grades comparatively between the first and second bimesters while they were simultaneously attending speaking clubs.



According to the CI-UNA database, five students improved their overall performance while they were attending speaking clubs and six had received lower grades while attending speaking clubs. Two students showed no or negligible change in their overall grades between the two bimesters. Finally, two students were not able to attend the second bimester, so no conclusion can be reached about their improvement over the two bimesters. Keeping this in mind, it is necessary to only count the students whose grades can be compared in both periods they attended the speaking clubs; in other words 13 and not 15. In fact, 5 of 13 students who improved their oral performance, representing 38,46%, and the other 2 of 13 who did not show any improvement at all, representing 15,38% are part of the total count of 7 students whose performance was positive while they were attending the speaking clubs. These students amounted 53, 84%. The other 46, 16% exhibited a decline in the second bimester they were attending the speaking clubs. This decrease in their performance could be due to several reasons. A further study could relate to the reasons behind students' dropout rate and their decline in grades.

The researchers further measured the students on how their overall score showed comparatively to that of the class. Table 1.3 shows the comparison of students' final grades with the class averages in both bimesters.

Table 1.3.
Comparison of Students' Grades to the Average Class Grades

Student	I Bimester	Average grade Bimester I	class II Bimester	Average grade Bimester II
S1	84	81.02	95	81.62
S2	92	81.02	94	81.62
S3	98	89.75	98	85.41
S4	94	86.70	93	82.83
S5	84	81.02	88	81.62
S6	77	86.70	73	~~~~~
S7	96	86.70	92	82.83
S8	87	86.70	81	82.83
S9	82	73.86	Desertó	~~~~~
S10	81	80.76	Desertó	~~~~~
S11	89	80.76	85	78.88
S12	96	82.23	91	83.43
S13	84	82.23	86	83.43
S14	73	80.76	88	89.95
S15	90	86.90	90	87.61

Note. S6 failed the course, S9 and S10 dropped out of the course.

In a survey of 27 (not counting the three that did not finish) cases with 15 students, 23 cases received a better grade than that of the class average, while 4 received a lower grade than that of the class average. These data show that in 85% of the cases of students attended speaking clubs, they received a better grade than that of the class average. This, however, does not determine whether the students received a better grade than the class average because of the speaking clubs, or because, being more applied students, they decided to attend the speaking clubs. However, it can be assumed the fact that more practice and effort on the students' part imply better grades and a higher level of performance.

4. Recommendations

After the analysis of the data gathered, a set of recommendations for students, teachers and authorities was put forward. These recommendations entail the answer to the third research question. First, it is recommendable for students to participate in all the activities offered by the language program. Only those students who put forth some extra effort can accelerate the learning of a foreign language. The speaking clubs, as one of the mechanisms to enhance the oral performance at CI-UNA, are a suitable alternative to improve their language level, gain confidence, and interact with other peers as well as native speakers. Thus, it is suggested to attend the speaking clubs sessions at least once a week to heighten the oral performance and improve social skills.

It is worth noting that students need to be encouraged to attend the speaking clubs by assigning a small percentage of the total grade of the regular courses if they willingly participate in at least one session per week during the whole bimester. This action might guarantee students' participation and attendance to the speaking clubs, and at the same time, assure the improvement of students' oral performance. Therefore, it is advisable for teachers to use this strategy as one possible alternative to motivate students to work extra time by attending the speaking clubs.

One recommendation for the CI-UNA authorities is that if this study shows that oral enhancement is valued by the students of CI-UNA, and that having a native speaker or contact with a native speaker is important, then another study must be done to help further explain the relatively low attendance to the speaking clubs, given that students seem to value it when asked their opinions. In addition, a study should be done to measure the cost-effectiveness of running speaking clubs when student attendance is not required. Similarly, the speaking clubs are a stimulating language enhancement strategy that should be supported by establishing an attendance policy included in all the courses syllabi. Teachers should be allowed to promote this policy and assign an extra percentage of the course grade to those who will willingly attend the speaking clubs. It would be very important to consider the implementation of control sheets signed by the speaking clubs facilitator to assure that the students actually attended the sessions once a week. From the alternatives provided by students as possible enhancement mechanisms the CI-UNA program should offer, the coordinators should plan on implementing these mechanisms more in conjunction with other teachers from foreign universities such as e-pals, forums, chats and blogs among others. Students are aware that contact with natural language is highly necessary for successful language performance. Hence, it is highly recommendable to devise a strategy in order to involve native English speakers in the activities the CI-UNA program holds.

5. Conclusions

This study aimed at measuring to what extent enhancement strategies have been effective and how CI-UNA can further accommodate the linguistic needs of students in order to

optimize their oral performance. Overall, the results indicated the CI-UNA language program offers several enhancement mechanisms or opportunities for students such as videos and audios, speaking clubs, Internet connectivity, teacher-student conference hours and assignments, with the speaking clubs being the most recognized of all. The speaking clubs are flexible in accordance with students' needs. In other words, the speaking clubs are held three days a week, in a schedule accessible to most of the students; students are not limited to attending one specific class session, but rather are free to attend all three days of the week, and most importantly, they can have access to native English speakers.

There is a deep-seated belief among students and teachers that the enhancement mechanisms can improve the students' oral performance when a native speaker teaches the speaking clubs. The reason seems to be that the level of learner motivation raises and this stimulates their willingness to participate, interact and share with the native speaker. Furthermore, students determine that the CI-UNA language program should offer a variety of enhancement activities besides the speaking clubs, which they believe have been an effective tool. Enhancement activities such as a web page, native speaker contact, free access to language labs, extracurricular activities, e-pals and forums are proper options to improve students' language performance. Students, teachers and coordinators are convinced that native speaker exposure is the most suitable enhancement mechanism that can be used. Consequently, it is imperative to establish a program to attract more native English speakers to the university campus and guarantee their participation in the different activities the CI-UNA program will offer in the future.

The speaking clubs have had an overall positive impact on the confidence of those students who have chosen to attend these sessions. A further study could relate to the reasons behind students' dropout rate and their decline in grades.

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Enhancing Cultural Aspects in the EFL Classroom

Safiro Rivera Mena
Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica
sapphiresaf26@gmail.com

Cristina Melissa Vargas Barboza
Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica
mel0590@hotmail.com

Resumen

La enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera es un proceso en el cual varios componentes toman lugar por esto se han utilizado diferentes métodos de enseñanza para facilitar un óptimo aprendizaje. La implementación de esos métodos varía dependiendo del enfoque que la clase tenga. En la mayoría de las aulas donde se enseña inglés como lengua extranjera, los aspectos lingüísticos son más enfatizados, dejando de lado los aspectos culturales que ayudan a los estudiantes a tener un mejor entendimiento de la forma en que el nativo-hablante se comunica e interactúa. Por esta razón, los profesores son responsables de incorporar la cultura meta en la clase y así brindar apoyo a los estudiantes para reconocer por qué las personas en esa cultura hablan y se comportan de cierta manera. Una de las formas para integrar cultura en la clase, es diseñando actividades y materiales utilizando como base los conocimientos culturales expuestos por Moran (2001) que incluyen las prácticas, los productos, las personas, y comunidades que se encuentran en la cultura meta (págs. 48-98). Tomando en cuenta lo anterior, el propósito de este estudio cualitativo fue identificar la manera en que los instructores enseñan cultura en la clase de inglés para diseñar una unidad didáctica fundamentada en los principios establecidos por Moran que sirviera como un medio para unir los aspectos lingüísticos y culturales del idioma inglés. La investigación se llevó a cabo en el nivel IV del centro de idiomas CI-UNA, donde información concerniente a la manera en la cual se abarcan elementos culturales en la clase fue recolectada. Luego de llevar a cabo el análisis de datos se concluyó que ciertos aspectos culturales son estudiados de una manera implícita y el texto utilizado contiene algunos elementos pero no los suficientes para que el estudiante comprenda la cultura meta a mayor escala.

Palabras clave: enseñanza, idioma meta, cultura, conocimientos culturales, unidad didáctica

Abstract

Teaching English as a foreign language is a process that comprises a variety of components. Through history, different teaching methods have been approached so as to enable students with optimal learning. The implementation of such methods vary depending on the main focus of the program that controls the course or class. In most EFL classrooms, great emphasis is given to linguistic aspects of the target language, leaving aside cultural elements. For learners to truly internalize the way native speakers of English communicate and interact, teachers have the responsibility to bring culture into the classroom. Incorporating culture in the lesson helps learners understand why people speak and behave the way they do. For this

reason, educators need to be conscious of the importance of integrating culture and language. One of the ways teacher can approach cultural matters is by basing the design of teaching activities on the cultural knowings stated by Moran (2001), including practices, products, persons, and communities involved in the target culture (pp. 48-98). The purpose of this study was to identify how instructors address cultural aspects in the class so that a didactic unit based on Moran's cultural knowings, where cultural and linguistic elements can be integrated, was designed. The investigation was carried out by following a qualitative approach in which a specific phenomenon was addressed. The research setting was CI-UNA language program, level IV. Additionally, valuable information on cultural aspects was collected through the administration of questionnaires. After the data analysis, it was drawn that some cultural aspects are covered implicitly and the book used does contain some cultural elements, but not the necessary for the learners to grasp what the target culture comprises. Finally, it was concluded that the activities and materials suggested allow learners to reinforce both cultural and linguistic features.

Keywords: teaching, target language, culture, knowings, didactic unit

1. Introduction

In ancient times, people used to learn foreign languages so as to have the opportunity to read different pieces of writing in specific languages. By doing so, people kept in contact with target cultures. Nowadays, people learn new languages to communicate ideas and insights in different circumstances and places, which also serves as a means to avoid cross cultural misunderstandings (Thanasoulas, 2001, p.3). In the case of foreign language classrooms, educators are to consider some possibilities to help learners engage themselves in the cultural experience.

Such cultural experience “consists of any encounter between learners and another way of life, be it first hand through direct involvement with people of the other culture or indirectly through learning materials in the language classroom” (Moran, 2001, p. 8). There is a vast number of resources which instructors can take advantage of in order to make students become aware of the cultural practices, products, persons, and communities involved in the target culture. Therefore, the researchers of this study decided to find out what it is that instructors teaching level IV at the CI-UNA language program do when integrating both linguistic and cultural aspects of the language itself.

1.1. Target Population

The target population that researchers selected as a data source for the design of a unit in which cultural instruction is comprised is composed of learners from level four at CI-UNA, Universidad Nacional, Brunca extension. At that time, there were two different groups taken the course CIUNA 4. Nonetheless, investigators decided to collect the information necessary to carry out the needs analysis just from one of the groups. The sample population is the students from group 1. The specific members of this group enrolled the course because of a variety of reasons, which go from the necessity of English for job applications and current jobs to personal satisfaction. The course is controlled by the syllabus created by the founders

of the project, which is based on the Common European Framework for Languages. It is important to stress that the age of the participants range from about 17 to 25 years old. In regard to the linguistic level of students, it is noticeable that they are capable of communicating and interacting in English; nevertheless, some improvement in areas like grammar, pronunciation, and speaking is required. Finally, all learners take part in the development of a comfortable and pleasant environment to learn the linguistic and cultural features of the target language.

1.2. Research Questions

- a. What theoretical principles can serve as a means to aid instructors when teaching cultural aspects to learners from level IV at the CI-UNA language program in Pérez Zeledón?
- b. How do EFL teachers in charge of level IV at the CI-UNA language program in Pérez Zeledón teach culture?
- c. How do learners from level IV at the CI-UNA language program in Pérez Zeledón perceive the way cultural matters are addressed in the classroom?
- d. What didactic resources are suggested to assist teachers at the moment of teaching cultural aspects to students from level IV at the CI-UNA language program in Pérez Zeledón?

2. Literature Review

In order to provide readers with a better understanding of what culture is and how it can be taught in the foreign English classroom, researchers of this study provided pertinent aspects related to the latter.

2.1. Defining Culture

Scholars have not been able to agree on a definition for the word *culture*. Cullen & Kazuyoshi (2000) suggested that this concept entails different perspectives:

It consists of all the institutions, all the behavior, in fact all the man-made aspects of a very large group of non-homogeneous people. All that we can do is provide some pathways to enter into learning more about the culture. (p. 23)

In its broad sense, culture is everything people do and think, but people usually bound this word to the customs and traditions of a particular group. Regarding the teaching of foreign languages and cultures, this conception has evolved during the last years. Simon (2014) stressed the inclusion of culture in the curriculum. This author elaborated on the fact that “popular culture was progressively included in cultural education and pupils/students were encouraged to reflect on their own culture. Later on, cultural education would grow into

intercultural foreign language education” (p. 978). This trend evokes a response from teachers who need to create the conditions for intercultural communication to take place. Culture should thereby be an inclusive concept when dealing with issues concerning the teaching of foreign languages and cultures to facilitate students’ communicative performance in intercultural contexts.

2.2. Cultural Knowings

In the teaching-learning process, there has been a growing concern on the importance of integrating both language and culture in the teaching of a foreign language. Regarding this, Patrick Moran stated that for students to understand linguistic aspects of the language is quite necessary to allow learners go through the cultural experience. However, some educators are not well-informed on how to incorporate the target culture to the linguistic objective of the class in a more direct way. To do so, Moran proposed the Cultural Knowings Framework which serves as a basis for the proper integration of language and culture in the classroom. Such framework is composed of four learning interactions that are part of the cultural experience; those learning interactions are: knowing about, knowing how, knowing why, and knowing oneself.

According to Moran, knowing about refers to “all activities that consist of gathering and demonstrating acquisition of cultural information –facts, data, or knowledge about products, practices, and perspectives of the culture” (2001, p. 15). Furthermore, knowing how is related to the cultural practices and behaviors performed by people from the target culture. Knowing why takes into account the perspectives and understanding of the beliefs, values, etc. from the culture under study. When it comes to knowing oneself, Moran established that it “concerns the individual learners –their values, opinions, feelings, questions, reactions” (2001, p. 17), etc. that are part of the cultural experience. These four learning interactions can be of great help to teach culture directly because it facilitates the analysis of differences and similarities between students’ target and mother culture; and it benefits students’ engagement in the language classroom.

3. Main Body

The most relevant aspects pertinent to the instruments used to gather information from the participants of the study and the data analysis are presented as follows.

3.1. Procedures and Data Analysis

Every time teachers want to incorporate, change, or eliminate something from the existent curriculum, they need to carry out a needs analysis. This analysis will be beneficial for the learning process because it takes into account not only what the teacher thinks students have to learn but also what learners want to learn. In order to gather the information necessary to carry out this research, investigators made use of two questionnaires, one directed to students in level IV at CIUNA and one directed to the instructors who have taught that course, so as

to make decisions on what contents, activities, and didactic resources could be added to the class to incorporate culture instruction.

After analyzing the data collected, it was noticeable that most of the students know little about some of the features found in the American culture. Their responses show that they do not have much information about aspects like holidays and celebrations, education, business, currency, social issues, customs and traditions, history of the United States, etc. (See Table 1) Furthermore, most of them agree on the fact that they have not received enough instruction regarding those aspects in class.

Table 1
Students' Opinion on the Knowledge They Have About the American Culture

	A lot	Partly	Nothing
American Food	57%	43%	0%
Business	14%	57%	29%
Clothing	29%	71%	0%
Customs and Traditions	28%	43%	29%
Crafts	0%	29%	71%
Currency	29%	43%	29%
Education	28%	29%	43%
History of the United States	0%	57%	43%
Holidays and Celebrations	14%	86%	0%
Housing	14%	86%	0%
Literature	14%	14%	72%
Media and Entertainment	57%	43%	0%
Non-verbal Cues	14%	86%	0%
Occupations	43%	57%	0%
Seasons	43%	57%	0%
Social Issues	0%	71%	29%
Transportation	57%	43%	0%

Note. Responses gathered from the questionnaire administered to students in level IV.

On the other hand, all the teachers who were part of the study said that they mainly teach culture indirectly which explains students' perception on the amount of time devoted to learn about the target culture. Moreover, all the teachers' responses show that the book does include cultural aspects but it does in such a way that it could be unnoticeable for someone who is not immerse in the teaching world and that was not trained to identify those aspects.

Also, educators established that they need to implement other resources to teach culture in the classroom because what is portrayed in the book is not enough for students to have a clear understanding of the target culture.

When asked about the didactic resources they would like to use to learn about culture, most learners said videos. Also, they would like to have real life readings, and presentations as part of the teaching instruction. In the same way, most teachers agreed on that they use such resources during the lesson, especially videos (See Table 2); however, it was not clear if they use those resources for the specific purpose of teaching culture.

Material	Participants' Response
Flashcards	20%
Games	40%
Songs	60%
Readings	20%
Videos	100%

Note. Data collected from the questionnaire administered to teachers.

Additionally, teachers believe that what students need to learn about the target culture relates to how they have to behave on specific situations which constitutes the learning interaction 'knowing how' leaving aside the other cultural knowings (knowing about, knowing why, and knowing oneself) necessary to have a holistic understanding of the target culture. Finally, it is important to stress that both linguistic and cultural contents need to be backed up by specific linguistic and cultural goals to ensure optimal learning to happen.

4. Conclusions

After analyzing the data gathered through the instruments chosen, the researchers could draw the next conclusions.

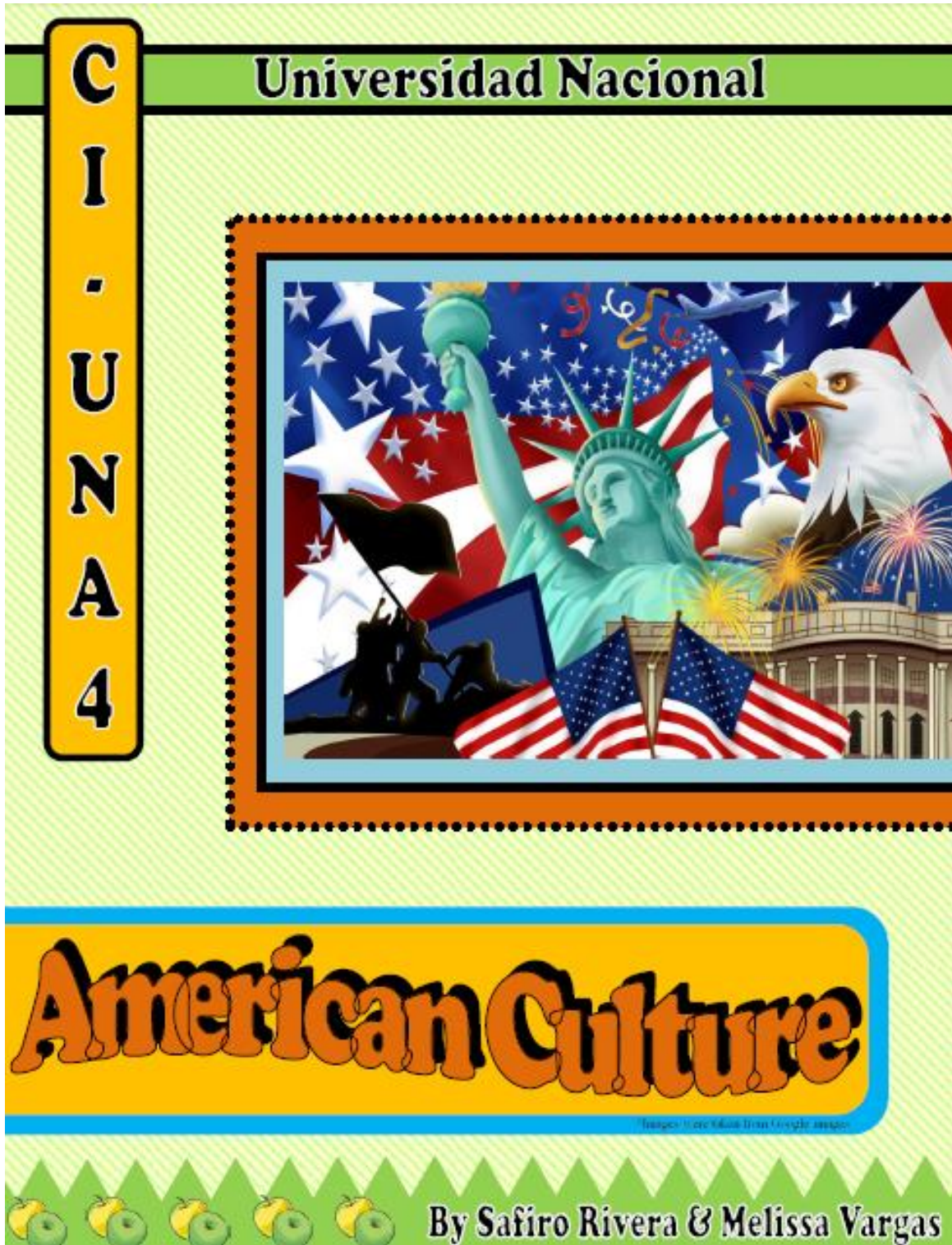
Researchers of this study concluded that learners enrolled in level IV are aware of some cultural aspects pertinent to the American culture; however, this is not mainly because of academic instruction. Moreover, learners stated that they feel like they are not learning cultural aspects from the target culture during the development of the class because teachers address such aspects indirectly. It is also important to mention that the book used at this level refers to some aspects of the target culture; nevertheless, most of the times it does it indirectly as well. Also, instructors in charge of teaching this level indicated that the book does contain some cultural matters, but the information presented is not enough for the learner to grasp what the target culture encompasses. Therefore, teachers need to look for extra materials and resources to address culture in a more explicit way. Additionally,

instructors tend to leave aside other important aspects of the target culture and focus only on how to behave or react in certain situations. The researchers consider that teaching culture in a more holistic way is possible if teachers set both linguistic and cultural objectives when planning the lesson. To do so, Moran's cultural knowings are of great help at the moment of integrating linguistic and cultural activities. Taking as a reference Moran's cultural knowings, the researches of this study designed a unit so as to enable teachers to address some cultural aspects more directly.

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Annex 1





Map of the Unit!



*Images were taken from Google images

A: Are you a party animal? 5-6	Linguistic Goal	Cultural Goal	Knowings
	To review the use of infinitives when talking about parties.	To recognize a number of products, persons, and behaviors that might be present in American parties.	Knowing About Knowing How Knowing Why Knowing Oneself

B: Shopping In America 7-8	Linguistic Goal	Cultural Goal	Knowings
	To have students use the target language to describe objects and events.	To have students express their perspectives related to the products and practices involved in shopping in Costa Rica and in The United States.	Knowing About Knowing How Knowing Why Knowing Oneself

C: School Life 9-10	Linguistic Goal	Cultural Goal	Knowings
	To have students become familiar with vocabulary related to education.	To have students perceive the practices, products, and persons involved in the education system of the USA.	Knowing About Knowing How Knowing Oneself

D: American People 11-12	Linguistic Goal	Cultural Goal	Knowings
	To use the simple past and the present perfect correctly when talking about people's life.	To have students get familiar with information about people who contributed to shaping the American history and that have a great influence in the target culture.	Knowing About Knowing How



A: Are you a party animal?



Definition: A party animal is someone who likes going to parties a lot and goes to as many as possible.

Example: She was a real party animal at college. I don't remember her ever staying in in the evening.

Taken from <http://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/>

1

Get in groups of three people and arrange the puzzles the teacher will provide you with as fast as possible. Write down the products you recognize on the spaces below.



2

In pairs, read the article below and answer the questions below. Share your insights with the class.

How to survive at a party...

Has this ever happened to you? You arrive at a party or wedding reception where you don't know anybody. Everybody there seems to know each other. What can you do? Here are five simple tips.

-Don't stand in the corner. You need to be positive. Find somebody you think you would like to meet and go and introduce yourself.

-Try to ask impersonal questions like "I love your bag. Where did you get it?" that will help to start a conversation.

-Try not to dominate the conversation. When you are nervous, it's very easy to talk about yourself all the time. Nobody wants to listen to your life story when they've only just met you.

-Smile, smile, smile. Use your body language to give a positive friendly impression. That way, people will want to talk to you.

-If you want to escape from a really boring person, say that you are going to the bar to get another drink or that you need to go to the restroom. Don't come back!

Taken from American English File 2B

*Images were taken from Google images

Can you remember the tips?

Have you ever tried one of the tips?

What do they tell you about American people?

When do we use infinitives?

5



B: Shopping in America



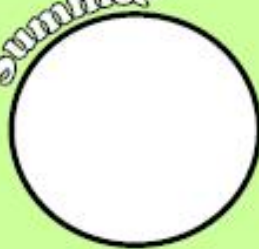
1

Spot & Shoot. Look at the pictures in the presentation and throw the ball to the picture that matches the name on each slide.

2

Look at the PowerPoint presentation and write down some examples of clothing that people in the United States use on each season.

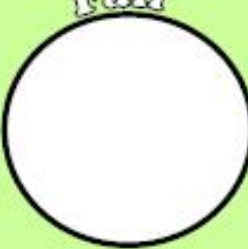
Summer



Spring



Fall

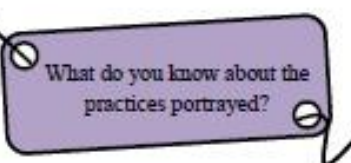


Winter



3

Look at the pictures your teacher will show and comment on the questions below with a partner.



4

Watch the excerpt of the TV series *Friends* and create a poster where behaviors related to competitiveness and materialism are exposed.



5

Look at your classmate miming one of the practices studied and try to guess it as soon as possible.



7

*Images were taken from Google images

Shopping in America



Evaluation: Read the statements below and draw a face that expresses how you feel about each assumption.

1. Most Americans are very competitive.
2. You think being competitive is a bad trait.
3. Most Americans are very materialistic.
4. You feel identified with some American practices.
5. You would like to go shopping to the United States.
6. Practices in your native culture are very similar to those of Americans.



You agree



You disagree



You don't care

Homework

Look for an article related to shopping and write a short reflection about it. What do you think? Which aspects you disagree with?

*Images were taken from Google images

C: School Life

1 Rally: Get in groups of three people and go around the building looking for hints that will lead you to some of the facilities in the institution. Collect five hints and solve the exercises contained on the back of each hint.



2 Pay close attention to the information that the teacher will provide you with by means of a PPT and take notes on the most relevant aspects related to education in the United States. Then, find a classmate to work with and answer the questions below.

*Images were taken from Google image

3 Listen to Melissa talking about her school days and choose whether the sentences below are true or false by circling T if they are true or F if they are false.



- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1. Melissa is a teenager in the photo. | T | F |
| 2. She used to write things on the wall. | T | F |
| 3. She didn't like any of the subjects at school. | T | F |
| 4. Her least favorite subject was PE. | T | F |
| 5. The PE teacher made her try to do difficult things. | T | F |
| 6. She used to break the rules about the school uniform. | T | F |
| 7. She wanted to be a doctor. | T | F |
| 8. Her parents wanted her to be a teacher. | T | F |



Taken from American English File 2B



School Life

4 Get in groups of three people and make up an oral story in which the most outstanding practices related to high schools or schools are portrayed. Include practices, persons, and products that are pertinent to American education. Use the vocabulary studied during the class and the pictures the teacher will provide you with.



5 Get in groups of three people and get ready to play. Place the board on a table and choose one token to represent you while traveling around the board. Pay attention to the instructions the teacher will give you.



Homework: Watch the movie *17 Again* and try to identify any other practices, products, and persons related to education. Write down whatever you recognize on the spaces provided. Be ready to share your insights with your classmates next class.



Images were taken from Google images

Evaluation: Read the sentences below and choose whether you agree or disagree with them by circling A if you agree or D if you disagree.



- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1. Students should wear uniforms when attending school. | A | D |
| 2. Homecoming dances are awesome. | A | D |
| 3. Students should not be taught foreign languages. | A | D |
| 4. Strict rules pertinent to makeup must be established in schools. | A | D |
| 5. There is nothing wrong with making out in the halls during recess time. | A | D |



D: American People




1 Who are they? Take the pictures of American people through history that the teacher will give you and match them with their corresponding name.

What do you know about the people in the pictures?



2 Pay attention to the biographies the teacher will present. In your notebook, take notes on how biographies are written.

When do you use simple past and when present perfect?

Feel free to share your ideas regarding the American characters

3 Listen to part of Martin Luther King Jr.'s biography and fill in the blanks with the missing words.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was the most important 1. _____ of the American civil rights movement. He helped unite a 2. _____ with his powerful speeches and use of non-violent protests. His 1963 "I Have a 3. _____" speech is one of the greatest in human history. King's efforts to end racial 4. _____ earned him the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964.

King was born in 1929 in 5. _____. His father was a reverend and so King had a religious upbringing. He 6. _____ from college with a degree and a Ph.D. in religious studies. King went to India to visit Gandhi's family. He was inspired by Mohandas Gandhi's success with 7. _____ resistance and saw it as a "potent weapon" in America's struggle for 8. _____ rights.

Taken from famouspeoplelessons.com

4 Work in pairs. Use your computer to look for information related to the person the teacher will assign you and create a short presentation of his/her life.

Be prepared to present



5 Hot Seat! Help the person sitting in front of the class to guess the character that is projected on his/her back by giving physical descriptions or personal accomplishments.



*Images were taken from Google images

Participation in the EFL Class at Colegio Científico in Pérez Zeledón

Teresita Rivera Rodríguez

Centro de Idiomas Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica
techyriv.29@hotmail.com

Gabriela Tosso Ramírez

Centro de Idiomas Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica
gabi_19tosso@hotmail.com

Resumen

La participación es un elemento invaluable en el proceso de aprendizaje debido a que esta fomenta la comunicación efectiva entre los estudiantes en un contexto escolar llamativo. Participando activamente, los estudiantes llegan a ser más aptos y competentes cuando expresan sus ideas y opiniones en cualquier tarea. Debido a la importancia de la participación activa en el proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje, esta investigación explora la ejecución de esta a través del uso frecuente de tareas del idioma por medio del trabajo en equipo como una técnica implementada del aprendizaje cooperativo. Ya que la participación depende del desarrollo de la clase y la disposición de los estudiantes; esta investigación cualitativa ilustra el ambiente natural en el aula. La cual se llevó a cabo con los estudiantes del Colegio Científico de Pérez Zeledón (CCPZ) con el fin de escudriñar este tema. Este documento propone un plan de acción con materiales didácticos, planes de lección y descripción de actividades adaptadas al formato del MEP que pueden ser usadas para incrementar la participación activa de los estudiantes en clase.

Palabras clave: participación voluntaria, participación solicitada, trabajo en equipo, juegos, clases comunicativas, técnicas, renuencia, disposición, retroalimentación, entendimiento, estudiantes, maestros

Abstract

Participation is a valuable element in the learning process given that it fosters effective communication among students in an engaging class setting. By participating actively, learners become more proficient and competent when they express their ideas and opinions in any task. Due to the importance of active participation in the teaching-learning process, this research explores its enforcement through the use of frequent team work language tasks as an implemented Cooperative Learning technique. Since participation depends on how the class is developed and students' willingness; this qualitative investigation illustrates the naturalistic environment in the classroom. The investigation took place with the students at Colegio Científico in Pérez Zeledón (CCPZ) in order to scrutinize this issue. This paper proposes an action plan with didactic materials, lesson plans, and descriptions of activities adapted to MEP's format that may be used to heighten students' active participation in the class.

Key words: volunteered participation, solicited participation, team work, games, communicative classes, techniques, reluctance, willingness, feedback, rapport, students, teachers

1. Introduction

In Costa Rica, specifically in high schools, some students are reluctant to participate in the learning process; therefore, there is a lack of motivation among students. Learners do not participate much in class, what makes some teachers look for new techniques to involve them as much as possible so as to create a comfortable teaching environment. The next research deals with a widely discussed topic among teachers, which is participation in the class, and how this may be enhanced by implementing a great variety of techniques. Teachers sometimes do not motivate students to be engaged in the class, and motivation may be achieved by putting into action games accompanied with creative materials. Educators must be aware of the different types of intelligences which may vary from student to student, and they may also help students learn the language or even perform certain tasks; therefore, teachers should guide and help students during learning, taking into consideration their abilities and differences. Indeed, the idea of this investigation is to examine the techniques used by instructors when teaching a class in order to make students participate. In this study, some aspects related to participation are explained so as to provide a wide perspective of the phenomenon under research. Relevant data about the development of this research is presented step by step in chapters to show the readers the importance and the contribution of the latter not only to educational purposes but also to society.

1.1. Research Questions

- a. What types of participation are displayed by the students?
- b. What techniques are used by the teacher to elicit participation in class?
- c. What action can be used to heighten students' participation?

1.2. General Objective

To investigate techniques implemented by the teacher when enhancing participation at Colegio Científico in Pérez Zeledón, so that an action plan can be evinced.

2. Literature Review

Since participation is a meaningful part of the learning process, it is fundamental to know what phenomena intervene in this process of interaction. This section explores previous studies that may enrich the development of this qualitative study.

2.1. Theories that Describe the Development of a Foreign Language

Through the analysis and understanding of EFL, different authors describe the process of developing a language as Behaviorist, Innate or Interactionist. Behaviorism suggests that learners imitate the language they hear, and at the same time, they receive input from the environment. This notion is connected to a child when he/she is acquiring the L1 since he/she copies every single detail of the language that is being spoken by interacting with others. VanPatten and Benati (2010) ascertained that behaviorism “is the belief that language is a set of patterns or habits” (p.68); in this thought, language is considered a collection of forms or attitudes which may be learned by simple imitation and where the environment plays a fundamental role since it provides input. Another essential point is when learners are instructed to learn the L2, and they are to suppress their habits so as to pick up new ones. In this process, the students are recompensed if their responses are correct.

On the other hand, learners are bound to make mistakes which must be corrected as soon as possible. Ellis (1997) stipulated that “learners imitated models of correct language (i.e. stimuli) and received positive reinforcement if they were correct and negative reinforcement if they were incorrect” (p.31); this affirms the idea that when students are corrected properly, they boost the creation of new knowledge, but when they are not corrected properly, they may get upset, and this may affect the learning process. Another primordial conception of how learners acquire the language is the Innatism Theory, which explains how inner knowledge may help children learn a certain language.

On the other hand, Innatism deals with the conception that children are preprogrammed with abstract knowledge, facilitating the first language learning. In this case, a child’s background does not affect or interfere in the acquisition of the native language. The child has the ability to master the language in the same way he/she carries out any other physical task during his/her growth. Shastri (2010) pointed out that:

All children acquire their mother tongue in a similar way irrespective of their socio-cultural background ... a child has an innate capacity to learn a language. He learns it naturally the way he learns to sit, stand, walk and run. It is a part of the natural process of growth and development. (p. 17)

This capacity that a child possesses to assimilate any language at a very young age comes naturally. They may not be aware of it, but his/her brain does so. This knowledge that was previously mentioned enables the child to find out the system of a language; in other words, the learner is capable of recognizing and using the rules and different structures of the language. VanPatten and Benati (2010) assessed that “this innate knowledge allows them to discover the underlying rules of a language system and minimizes guessing and hypothesis formation” (p. 97); this innate faculty helps the child acquire the language in a natural way with no instruction or cramming of grammatical structures.

In the case of the L2, learners are capable of learning any language but not in the same way they learn the L1. During the learning process, the learners may make mistakes related

to pronunciation and grammar. VanPatten and Benati (2010) proposed that “L2 learners can develop native-like underlying competence in some if not all domains, but there may be problems in terms of the interface between underlying competence and production” (p.16). Non- native speakers can be accurate when speaking the language, but at some point there are complications when they try to use a new structure that has not already been internalized. When students try to learn a second language, they must memorize a myriad of grammatical structures and sounds as vowels and consonants that may not be present in their native language; as a result, they may struggle with the L2. Therefore, learners may reach a high level of proficiency in the language, but they do not have the same facility at learning the language, and they may face complications during the learning process. Another aspect about learning a language is the Interactionist Theory, which explains how interaction may boost the process of becoming proficient in any language.

Interactionism refers mainly to conversations among students who are learning a second language. When interacting in any language, people share what they know about the language, and this may affect the process of learning since there is an exchange of knowledge. VanPatten and Benati (2010) identified that “...the Interaction Hypothesis believes that acquisition is input dependent; that is, like all mainstream SLA models and theories, the data for learners reside in the communicative language they are exposed to”(p. 99); thus, the exposition that learners might have to any language may help them recognize pieces of information either native-like or not. Speakers may give feedback to each other especially when they make a mistake; they modify their speech for an understandable conversation with the other interlocutor that may not be proficient at using the language. VanPatten and Benati (2010) remarked that “input modifications and feedback can bring something in the input into the learner’s focal attention at a given moment, offering an opportunity to perceive and process some piece of language the learner might miss otherwise” (p.99); in this way, students learn a structure or certain information that cannot be taught by instruction and they, the learners, are aware of the information that is provided while interacting. Then, the modifications in the input aid the learners to learn variations of the spoken language. The three last theories are reflected in the Costa Rican classroom through the EFL education system.

2.2. EFL in the Costa Rican Education System

Due to the fact that Costa Rica is a Spanish-speaking country and globalization is expanding, the Costa Rican education system promotes the teaching of English as a foreign language by implementing a well-structured plan called “Programa de Estudio”, which shows the subjects that are to be studied. This EFL program helps students cope with real-life and daily work situations in a world that is constantly progressing. English is one of the most required languages around the globe since most people speak it as a first or second language. This language has become a powerful tool to open the gates of success. For this reason, the MEP proposed teaching English in the education system due to the advantages that it may bring to the country. According to the MEP (2005), this plan “offer[s] students a second language which can enable them to communicate within a broader social-economic context in and outside Costa Rica” (p.13); this is one of the main reasons why English is essential in the

classrooms because it increases communication with developed countries. Moreover, teaching English allows students to know about other English-speaking cultures; in this way, the learners expand their knowledge by studying different civilizations. When learning English, students are offered the opportunity to practice the four linguistic skills (listening, speaking, writing and reading) and other techniques that may help them communicate in the target language effectively. In order to achieve this communication proficiently, the MEP has adopted the Communicative Approach.

2.3. EFL Methodology Suggested by the Ministry of Public Education

The MEP establishes as official the Communicative Approach to instruct English classes; the communicative syllabus' purpose is to build up the learners' communicative competence while the linguistic competence automatically improves; this is accomplished by making use of task-based and learner-centered instruction (Shastri, 2010, p.48). Hence, this approach leads to a series of methods such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), Content-Based Instruction (CBI), Cooperative Learning and Interactive Learning. The Communicative Approach presents some relevant features that are significantly described in the English Program as follows:

It provides sufficient chances to communicate in a stress-free environment; interaction is promoted in an enjoyable atmosphere in which positive feedback is offered to the learners; the center of the learning process is in the students' needs and interests. Moreover, the methodology implemented suggests dynamic *participation [emphasis added]* with real language; the instructor is a facilitator that encourages critical thinking, group work, risk-taking, discussion of different topics and understanding of English speaking cultures by using real-life events. Decisions are made by both the teacher and students, so that students engage in the learning process; and the communicative functions of the language elements should be built up in the goals of the syllabus. (Ministerio de Educación Pública, 2005, p. 22)

Based on the principles previously described, instructors are free to decide on the method that fits the students' context and needs in a given area of the country.

The CLT method has become very attractive to Costa Rican teachers since communication is perceived as the essential part of learning a language. If the facilitators determine CLT as the method to practice, they should understand the characteristics of it. Such characteristics are defined by Brown (2007) when he asserted that CLT focuses "on all the components (grammatical, discourse, functional, sociolinguistic, and strategic)" (p. 46). Fluency and accuracy are reinforced in different situations. The focus is on real-world contexts. The students obtain autonomy by being aware of their learning styles and strategies. The teacher's role is that of facilitator and guide, not of an all-knowing controller, and the students' role is that of active participants in the process (pp. 46-47). By using this method the learners obtain interest in the class environment and teacher. Therefore, more and more countries are integrating the CLT method in their language classrooms with a clear objective: to attain real

language in communication. A possible problem for some teachers is that they do not fully understand the meaning and principles of CLT, not producing the expected results in the learners. Highly connected to the last method, there is the concept of TBLT which is believed by some authors to be the heart of CLT because the former uses tasks to fulfill its purposes in communication. In Task-Based Language Teaching, “a task is an activity which requires learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning, to attain an objective” (Bygate, Skehan, & Swain, as cited in Brown 2007, p. 50), and these tasks include problem-solving, questions, exercises, and so on. Just as the task is the center of this method, the integration of content is the core of CBI.

CBI is one of the current communicative methods that allows students to acquire linguistic knowledge around the content established in the syllabus. CBI “refers to the current study of language and subject matter” (Brown, 2007, p.55), it means that language is taught in context to increase the language meaningfulness. For many experts such as Richards and Rogers (2001), the ideal manner to learn the target language is where the subject matter of language teaching does not focus on grammar or functions, but content since language competence would be a product of learning real-world content (pp. 204-205). The Costa Rican syllabus intends to teach language through a set of target contents assigned to every grade, in which teachers need to extent their expertise in content and language. The skills are integrated without the students knowing it. CBI then, results to be motivating because it leads to exchange of ideas and opinions on a specific topic; for example, geography, culture, tourism, art, family, technology, and the like. The use of tasks takes an active role and complements CBI; the implementation of tasks is called Task-Based Instruction, which increases participation in students either by working alone or in groups. Other two methods that intensify participation are Cooperative Learning and Interactive Learning.

First, in Cooperative Learning, students work together in pairs or groups exchanging information and supporting each other. Team work and information sharing are essential to achieve any goal and objective. Second, Interactive Learning is completely based on communication. Candid interaction opportunities are promoted to provide negotiation among learners. In Interactive Learning there are pair and group work, authentic language, classroom tasks, meaningful and oral communication. These features are significant for the class development and students’ growth. Participation is the expected result that initiates with basic communication in the class and a commendable rapport between the teacher and the student. The five methodologies, previously explained, take participation and interaction as the core elements that lead to a satisfactory product: proficiency in real communication. These methodologies include all students and aim at lowering the affective filter in order to achieve motivation and increase active participation during the lesson time.

2.4. Participation in the EFL Class

An EFL class without interaction would not fulfill the objectives previously prepared by teachers; participation and its varieties take place to identify different responses from students. Class participation is a meaningful part of the learning process since it relies on the knowledge growth and the improvement of the students’ linguistic skills. In fact, as Turner

and Patrick (2004) stated “participation is both a productive work habit, likely to contribute to learning, as well as evidence of student motivation to learn” (p. 2); hence, participation makes English classes more productive and effective because it reveals students’ weaknesses and strengths when interacting orally. Participation also demonstrates how interested students are in the teacher’s explanations and classroom activities. Moreover, classroom participation enables both, teachers and students, to have a broad perception of how the teaching-learning process is being developed and which aspects need to be improved.

Language may be acquired effectively if learners are constantly participating, giving ideas, asking questions and solving exercises during the class. Active participation enhances the students’ learning by putting into practice what they have already learned. However, there are different ways in which students may participate throughout the lesson. Some learners tend to be more attentive and interactive so that they make contributions voluntarily and spontaneously; others are shy and reluctant to participate; thus, the teacher has to ask for their contributions. Jones (2008) mentioned some types of class participation suggested by authors such as Cazden, Bean and Peterson. According to Jones’ explanations, there are five possible types of class participation to foster oral interaction in class.

The first type is called *Initiate-Respond-Evaluate* which remains on the teacher class control. The teacher asks a question and students respond; then, the teacher evaluates if the answer is correct or not. The second type is the *Cold-calling*; students are selected at random to answer a specific question. *Open and Unstructured Talking* is another type of participation, in this case, there is a whole class discussion; but students participate voluntarily. Then, *Stimulated Discussion* takes part in the participation process; students have a previous preparation regarding a specific topic or activity. Finally, the *Structured Discussion* in which students are motivated to participate because the topic is engaging for them, so that they feel comfortable for contributing with their ideas and opinions (pp. 60-61). Therefore, class participation depends on how the class activities are implemented and what kind of reaction learners have towards them.

Moreover, class participation entails not only oral interaction, but also students’ behaviors during the whole development of the class. It means that learners’ participation takes place as a non-verbal form when activities are going on. As Warayet (2011) argued, “Students are not only orally participating but are also non-orally constructing a kind of group participation through distributing meaningful signals...in addition to their speaking, they are gazing, smiling, nodding heads and glancing at each other during discussion in the classroom” (p. 44); in fact, participating actively also involves silent activities in which students contribute to the progress of the lesson. Some of these activities encompass solving individual exercises, reading, writing and listening tasks; following the track of the class and taking advantage of the lesson time. Although some students are unenthusiastic to take part in class discussions, they find opportunities to get involved in the classroom by expressing their emotions and responses without verbal interaction.

One main aspect related to students’ participation is feedback. As Brown (2007) mentioned, “one of the keys, but not the only one key, to successful second language learning

lies in the feedback that a learner receives from others” (p.345); in other words, students need to know what kinds of mistakes they make when they have the opportunity to speak in English in classroom. Thus, learners are required to be corrected in order to overcome those mistakes and learn the language accurately. If students receive corrective feedback, they may feel self-confident and willing to participate. That is why feedback plays an essential role in the learning of the language. Nevertheless, it is necessary for teachers to know when and how to correct the learner’s mistakes in the language classroom (Brown, 2007, p. 346). Teachers must be neutral when providing feedback since, depending on the way students are corrected, they may feel embarrassed or unwilling to take part in the lesson. Feedback must enrich and reinforce learners’ participation to obtain the expected results and to fulfill the teacher’s objectives. There is a diversity of individual abilities in the classroom that affect participation; for this reason, it is imperative to consider the students’ needs and the incorporation of different processes such as multiple intelligences (MI), learning styles, silent period and zone of proximal development(ZDP).

2.5. Processes that Affect Participation

Even before a person decides to learn a language, there are individual predispositions or processes that affect participation, among them MI, learning styles, silent period, ZDP, and affective filter. MI is a theory proposed by Gardner in 1983 that was against opinions in the past about students’ intelligence. Its main point suggests that all humans are intelligent, but at different skills; everybody has multiple intelligences which strengths differ among people. On the other hand, learning styles are the ways students learn more efficiently; it depends on the students’ innate preferences. Vodopija-Krstanoviæ (2003) suggested that “since the teacher’s preferred teaching and learning style may not be compatible with the learner’s, the outcome is that not all students are provided with equal opportunities to learn” (p. 1); consequently, involving the learners’ likes in a lesson may change the learners’ mind towards the lesson and language learning. All students are different regarding preferences although some can have similarities in their likes, but it does not mean that they are not intelligent; it means that, in fact, they are intelligent and proficient at different areas. Moreover, a match between students and teachers must exist, and the learning styles should be stimulated and widened to have students’ attention in any learning situation (Sabeh, Bahous, Bacha, & Nabhani, 2011, p. 163). Nevertheless, students should not be forced to speak if they do not want to or if they are not ready to do so.

The third aspect that affects students’ participation is the silent period. This process refers to the time when the students are not ready to speak. During this time, learners absorb the necessary vocabulary to speak and make themselves understood in the target language. However, this silent period is also seen as “students’ lack of confidence” which becomes a frustration for teachers because they do not know “what it means, why it occurs and how to respond” when they, students, take too long to speak in the target language (Harumi, 2011, p. 260). Nonetheless, this silent period is prohibited in children and adults “in formal classes” because they are “asked to produce very early in a second language class,” without considering their prior knowledge of the target language (Krashen, 2009, p. 27).

Another aspect is the Zone of Proximal Development which focuses on the instructor-learner relation. According to Vygotsky (as cited in Mohd, 2011), the performance of a student, when completing tasks, with some help would be more meaningful rather than without it (p. 163). Thus, students need teachers' help in the early stages of the target language learning. However, when can teachers see ZPD? Newman and Holtzman (as cited in Mohd, 2011) stated that "ZPD takes place during an interactive activity where a novice [student] and an expert [teacher] work together to complete the targeted task" (p. 163), in which some time after the students are requested to participate, they decide to volunteer when not being demanded to do so.

The final aspect that affects learners' participation is the affective filter which is a hypothesis established by Stephen Krashen in 1970s and 1980s. This affective filter is an imaginary barrier that defines to what extent the students learn or not. If the student is anxious, angry, tense, and bored; he/she would not be available to reach the process of language acquisition. Depending on the level of the affective filter, the learners may either have trouble learning a language or they may succeed in learning it. Du (2009) postulated that "people with high affective filter will lower their intake whereas people with low affective filter allow more input into their language acquisition device" (p.162); in other words, students with a high affective filter are not able to acquire or learn a second/foreign language in an efficient manner, while students that have a low filter may be capable of storing more knowledge of the language. Knowing all this may help teachers to influence students' participation by the implementation of clever techniques.

2.6. Techniques that Increase Participation in EFL classes

As part of the professional ethics and teachers' roles, teachers should be conscious about the manner of attracting the students' attention by implementing techniques that increase participation in EFL classes. Mingzhi (2005) explained that "taking the language as the learning target, competent learners are expected not only to be good, but also to be competent in language use, which requires adequate exposure to the language" (p.56); that is, if students are exposed to the language, if they listen to the language, they will understand it and use it as well. Nevertheless, when learners are not aware of how to express themselves in the target language, they will not speak, and if they do, they will not do it well (Mihn, 2010, para. 3). Consequently, teachers look for techniques which enhance that wished participation in students to assess their performance inside and outside the classroom.

One of the techniques to enhance students' participation is to bring interesting topics to the lesson; topics that are updated and appealing to students. For example, teachers should not use "world wars" as a topic for students in 2013, a period in which technology is everywhere. Shastri (2010) stated that "individual work, pair work, role-play, discussion..." (p.47) are other techniques that help attract students' participation. Individual work can be used for those who prefer to complete tasks alone; this technique helps teachers evaluate students individually. Pair work, as Brown (2007) said, allows teachers to have students engaged in "interactive (or quasi-interactive) communication" (p.231) during some time. This technique is used when students need to analyze and listen to other opinions which can

differ from theirs. Out of this technique, teachers can also implement team work which helps learners feel confident about expressing their opinions. Teachers use this technique to guide their lesson because it helps students not to be afraid of participating; however, it is key to let learners choose their classmates to work since they know whom they can or cannot work with, as Mihn (2010) stated:

Many students tend to talk more with their close friends. Therefore, when organizing group work, the teachers should take account of and accommodate these personal traits. For example, students can be allowed to choose who they are going to work with. (para.18)

Team work involves students in the activity or task and puts their skills and knowledge into practice.

Furthermore, another technique to increase participation is role-playing. Brown (2007) delineated that “role plays involve (a) giving a role to one or more members of a group and (b) assigning an objective or purpose that participants must accomplish” (p. 231); therefore, practicing role-plays promotes real life situations using the target language. This technique moves students to imagine themselves in situations that are common for them, but using the target language, which may change the point of view as a result of cultural differences and ideologies. Games are also beneficial in the classroom since they create a stress free environment, motivate students and are perfect to evidence their participation through communication (Deesri, 2002, para. 10). With this technique, students feel comfortable, excited and anxious to win. Deesri (2002) said that “it can be clearly seen that games can capture students' attention and participation” (para. 11); in other words, games give learners the adrenaline to compete and participate.

Asking questions is a technique currently employed by teachers since it helps them be conscious of their students' knowledge. Another technique is the use of debates in the class now that it puts into evidence the learners' opinions by using the target language. Moreover, the input hypothesis (comprehensible input) can also be a technique to enhance participation. As Krashen (2009) traced “we acquire, in other words, only when we understand language that contains structure that is ‘a little beyond’ where we are now” (p. 21); through the use of comprehensible input, teachers can help students speak up without being afraid of it. In addition, with this technique students behave according to the L1 theory; Behaviorism in which learners imitate what they hear.

Being aware of the factors that affect learners' participation and how to fight them little by little is the most appropriate manner teachers fulfill their job. If students do not participate in class, they will not learn; consequently, the most significant aspect is not accomplished. Moreover, the theories that experts stated to explain how language is learned are the same that explain why students take their time to internalize the use of language. In Costa Rica, English teaching is structured by the syllabus established by MEP that is based on the Communicative Approach.

3. Participation in the EFL Class

In this study, a former teacher and the current language teacher from CCPZ collaborated with an interview and questionnaire to gather information about the techniques they have used to enhance participation. Additionally, the 31 CCPZ's students provided significant data through eight observations, an interview, and a diary with their insights about the class development.

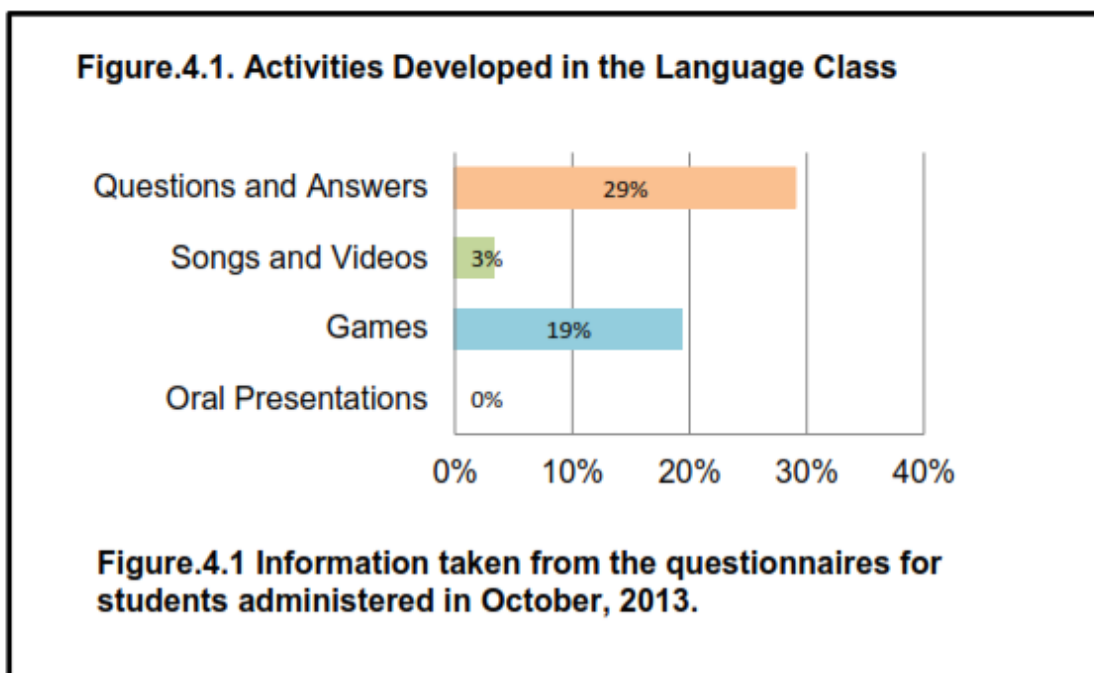
3.1. Techniques Used to Elicit Participation

Students were directly involved in the learning process, and an environment of confidence was provided. Students could develop their linguistic skills in a variety of ways. In the observations, the teacher always greeted the students by calling on their names, showing affection, saying “hello”, and waiting for an answer. Moreover, sometimes motivational phrases were read and discussed. During the interview, the teacher added that “teachers should make the student feel confident and create an adequate environment and also he/she must be a facilitator and a friend”; this reflects that the instructor gives importance to the construction of a suitable atmosphere for teaching in which the students express themselves freely, and the teacher communicates effectively.

Furthermore, in the students' interview, most learners ascertained that they [the students] “feel comfortable with the English class because [they] have enough opportunities to participate, and the teacher helps [them] to learn a lot”; this evinces the importance of rapport in the classroom in order to make the students participants in the learning process. The learners also admitted that the classes with the teacher were entertaining because he used different activities; the use of diverse tasks in the class helped the students be engaged in the classroom. Additionally, the students made the case that the teacher provided understandable explanations and motivated them to use English in the class; this reinforces even more the significance that motivation has in the classroom; since by doing this, the learners are motivated and involved in the learning process. These statements clearly stress that motivation was enhanced since the students felt comfortable with the class development and the suitable environment where they could develop their linguistic skills.

Feedback delivery and the target language use were dominant aspects during the class development. In the process of observation, the researchers discovered that the target language was influential because the students were always encouraged to speak in English; consequently, they barely spoke in their mother tongue. It was observed that immediate or delayed feedback were techniques used to correct mistakes; avoiding offence and humiliation. As Brown (2007) identified, “one of the keys, but not the only one key, to successful second language learning lies in the feedback that a learner receives from others” (p.345); this notion highlights the moment that providing feedback has in learning a new language. Moreover, the feedback techniques used were peer-correction, teacher correction, and self-correction. More emphasis was given to the last one since the students were asked to correct their own mistakes by rephrasing what they said.

Technology and competition are elements presented in the class in order to catch the students' attention. During the observations, it was noticeable that when technology and competition were involved in the classroom activities, students were excited about taking part in the class. In the interview, the learners remarked that they [the students] enjoy activities in which they could compete with their classmates; this evidences that the learners were provided with activities in which they could contend.



In the questionnaire, students shared information about the classroom activities carried out (see Figure 4.1). The learners mentioned that the teacher implemented role-plays as the most frequent activity for learning, which provide opportunities to practice the spoken language in different real-life situations. In the students' interview, some learners determined that they liked activities about current topics in which they could not only express themselves freely but also compete. This states that learners preferred up-to-date topics and competitive activities that allowed them to give their opinions. In the interview, the high school teacher argued that "any activity can be used for the students to participate ... but it depends on the teacher's attitude and motivation than on the activity. Activities must fit the students' level to improve the learning process"; this notion denotes the magnitude of motivation in the classroom and the adjustment of the activities to the students' level with the purpose of heightening not only participation, but also the learning process. Furthermore, the high school teacher concluded that "some authentic materials can be videos that may catch the interest of the learners; therefore, participation will be increased"; that is to say, authentic materials, like videos, can be useful in a language class in order to produce knowledge and keep the students engaged in the activities. All these aspects previously analyzed are of great importance in teaching a foreign language according to the participants' perspectives. The types of participation displayed by the CCPZ students will also be analyzed.

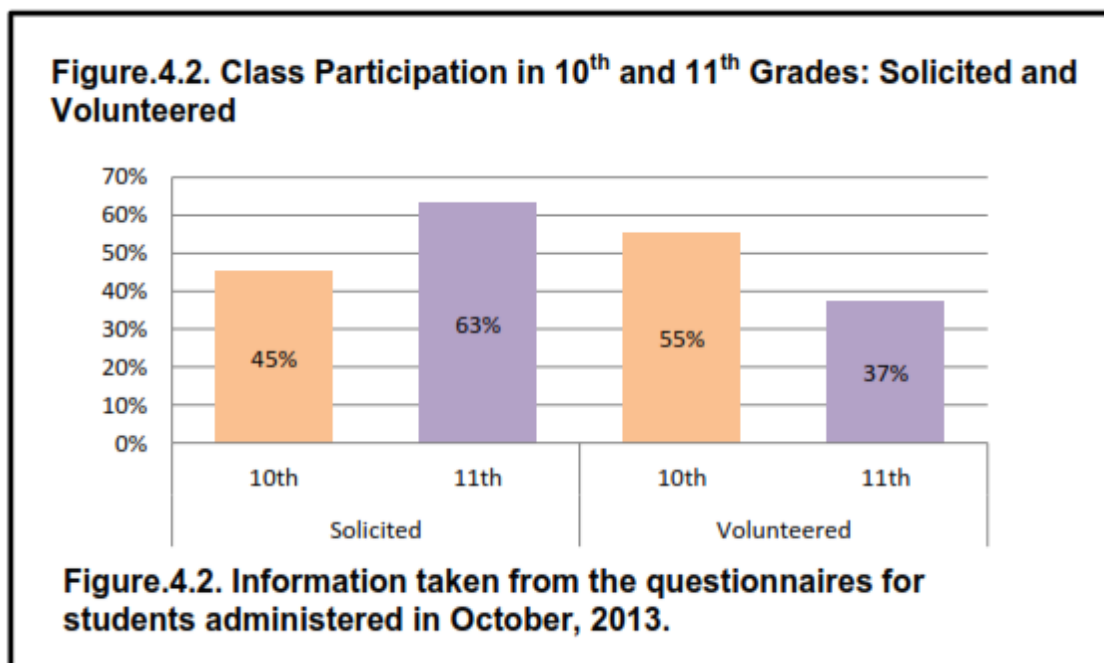
3.2. Types of Participation Displayed by the Students at CCPZ

Most of the students at CCPZ usually participated without being asked. The two groups, 10th and 11th grade, volunteered 44% as a summative total of the observations. The researchers noticed through the observations that the learners participated voluntarily by asking and answering questions, discussing the topic among themselves, paying close attention to the teacher's explanations, and playing games enthusiastically. The English teacher of this high school mentioned the fact that there were some students who always raised their hands to participate, but others participated very few times. He added that participation might be influenced by some factors such as difficulty when learning a new language, the affective filter, and peer pressure. In the interview and questionnaire, the majority of the students admitted that they like participating in class since they found it "enjoyable, interesting, enriching and important" for their learning progress, especially when they played games in class. These students identified the importance of practicing the target language in class; they constantly worked on their linguistic performance. However, they mentioned how difficult it was to find the right word, answer, or pronunciation when the teacher encouraged them to talk to their classmates. In general, the learners concluded that they were interested in the English lessons since the instructor tended to create an ideal learning environment through an appropriate rapport.

Even though the students volunteered frequently in class, they mainly participated when they were solicited to do so. As observed, solicited participation took 56% of the lesson time (as a sum of all observations). The researchers noted two factors; first, the students had more opportunities to participate when being asked by the teacher, and second, there were some students that only contributed when being solicited. Some manners of solicited participation revealed in the observations were answering questions, reading dialogues aloud, writing on the board, solving exercises, and giving personal opinions. In the interview, the teacher also remarked that it was necessary to solicit participation from the students because there were students who did not participate orally unless the teacher called out their names. Nevertheless, participation was present in different tasks; and he considered solicited participation annoying for some students since learners have different personalities. The students pointed out, in the questionnaires and interviews, that when the teacher asked questions or elicited participation, some classmates spoke first and the rest did not have the chance to answer; thus, they lost interest in participating. They added that in some cases they needed the teacher to ask them to participate (even when they felt kind of anxious, ashamed or forced); however, they needed to comprehend what the teacher expected from them to participate more accurately.

Both grades, 10th and 11th, presented a slight difference in their level of participation (see Figure 4.2). Tenth graders were just assimilating CCPZ educational system while the eleventh graders were already adapted and gradually acquiring a college life style. In general, the observers reported that during the nine lessons observed, none of the students demonstrated reluctance to give answers, pay attention, or play games. However, there was a predominant situation in 10th and 11th grades: three shy students sat at the front line and did not show interest to volunteer. It established the different personalities displayed by the

students. Tenth grade volunteered 55% and were solicited to participate 45% of the lesson time. In contrast, eleventh students were 63% solicited to participate, and they volunteered 37% of the time. Their level of participation varied depending on the type of lesson the learners attended, either conversational or grammar-based. Some of the students interviewed did not consider participation as a necessary way to improve their English because language represented a difficulty for them.



The last statement was true when they did not understand the topic or question, and when the rest of their classmates laughed at their answers. The CCPZ teacher identified the same problem. As he mentioned in the interview, some students were more dominant when it came to speaking, they raised their hands to participate all the time while some students did it just a few times. On the other hand, some of the students agreed with the idea that participating in the English class became more natural for them, and they saw target language participation as a dynamic, interactive and interesting task for them. The teacher also noted that the frequency in which students were engaged in the class depended on themselves and their willingness on a specific day. Each student in both groups showed diverse personalities; then, their way of participating and being involved in the class varied. Therefore, it was necessary to list several techniques that help teachers obtain positive results and responses from the students towards the class.

3.3. Techniques that Can Be Used to Heighten Students' Participation

In EFL classes, teachers should create a confident environment, considering students' likes and needs; here up-to-date and controversial topics are treated in a more communicative lesson in which cooperative learning is present. Learning a foreign language is difficult for many students now that such a language is new knowledge for their interlanguage. Mr. Montenegro, who worked at CCPZ, and the students interviewed considered rapport as a

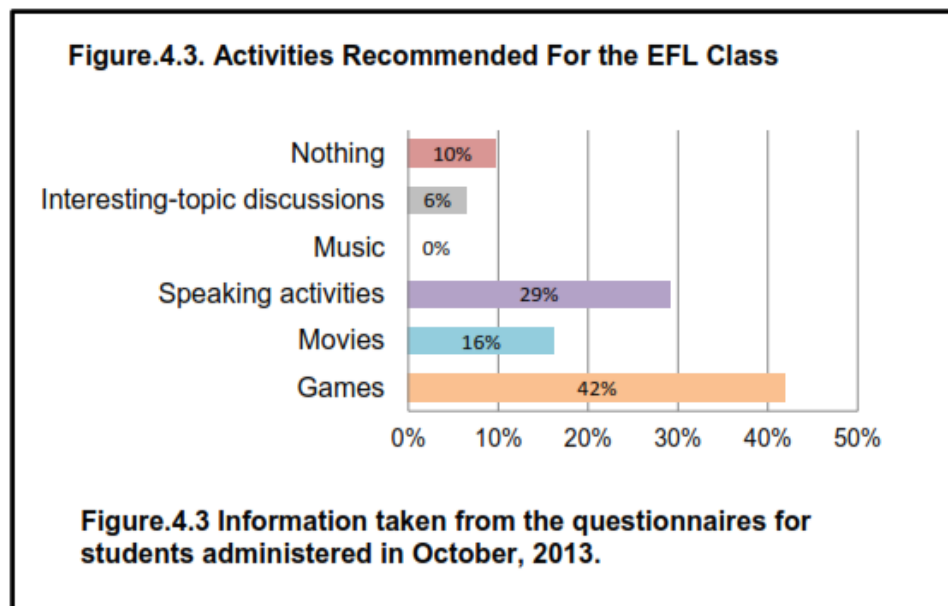
core element for successful EFL lessons because students understand the new information depending on how teachers present it. Moreover, the English teacher from CCPZ expressed that “the teacher should be a facilitator and a friend;” in other words, teachers have to be close to students as a way of gaining their trust. Thus, teachers should provide an environment in which learning becomes an easy-everyday activity.

Likewise, teachers should consider not only how to present data, but also the manner of presenting it. When students get bored easily in classes, it means that these classes have become monotonous. The interviewed students answered that if teachers considered their students’ likes, their reaction towards the target language would be different. By using technology for teaching purposes, students will be more involved in the class since they were born in an era in which people have the need to use technological devices not only to communicate but also to learn and entertain. Furthermore, games, role-plays, presentations, rallies, and even jokes were some of the recommended activities by the students as the ones that should be present in the English classes because they have to practice the language actively. On the other hand, Mr. Montenegro, the teacher who worked for CCPZ and Mr. Méndez, the current English teacher from the same high school, agreed that students enjoy lessons in which they have to infer, listen to music, or watch a video now that they are attention catchers. Although, the MEP is the institution that establishes the topics developed in the class, teachers must consider students’ preferences when designing the activities and materials for the topics to be taught.

Topics that generate different opinions and discussions were the favorite among the CCPZ students. It was observed how students liked to defend their points of view in debates where they could refute others’ ideas. Students preferred to talk about up-to-date and controversial topics because, as they said, it is not interesting to discuss the causes of the World Wars in a class which is not history. Likewise, the professor who worked at CCPZ mentioned that it is essential that students be motivated in studying the topic taught in class; this would increase participation and memory retention. As the students believed, in the unit of Health, it would be more engaging to talk about diseases or controversial topics, such as Euthanasia, than to practice how to buy pills in a drugstore. Moreover, the CCPZ language teacher said that what students are going to discuss in the class should fit in the students’ level of proficiency. As he affirmed, it is not the same to discuss the foods from other countries than the reasons why these countries eat what they eat.

If the class becomes a teacher-centered class, it will not be worthy to bring activities in which students are supposed to speak. Even though teachers believe that students do not like to talk in class, they do. The students alleged that they would like to have more communicative lessons in which they can speak what they know (see Figure 4.3). In addition, the teacher who answered the questionnaire said that discussion activities are an excellent technique that helps students show what they learned; consequently, students will practice the target language. The students like when the teacher explains the topics because in that way they can imitate the sounds and pronunciation, but, how can they do so if the class is not communicative? As the CCPZ English teacher said, it is a must to make students speak

for their own good, but it would be impossible if the class were not communicative; communicative means students talking without caring about making mistakes.



Sometimes students do not speak in the target language because they are afraid of making mistakes and being mocked. Teachers should be aware of how to correct students' mistakes in the most appropriate manner. During the observations, it noticed how students helped each other when they were working in groups. At this point, Cooperative Learning is a technique to increase students' participation since students gave feedback one another. The teachers held that Cooperative Learning helps teachers find out students' weaknesses and correct them in a most trustful way. As well, the interviewed students replied that they liked when the teacher corrected them and their classmates helped them during the classroom activities. Consequently, Cooperative Learning is a suitable technique, which teachers should implement to make students figure out their own mistakes and be involved in the target language.

Teaching a foreign language may be difficult, but it is more complex to learn it. Teachers should understand that students are not machines that store information; they need to understand and internalize such information. Before being teachers, they were students who made relations, connections and found ways to learn and study what they were taught. Therefore, taking advantage of that experience would be the cleverest manner to teach and involve students in the lesson. Learners' likes and needs are the paths that teachers should take to go faster and directly to their learning experience. If the information is presented in an appealing way, students will be motivated to internalize it.

The techniques used to elicit participation, types of participation displayed by students, and techniques that can be used to heighten students' participation at CCPZ were analyzed and described according to the participants' data and observations' results. Then, it is clear that students at CCPZ had an appropriate rapport, feedback, and target language activities,

which led to constant participation in the English language as well as encouraged learners. In addition, the students from 10th and 11th grades presented volunteer and solicited participation in their language classes at a different degree, but both were constantly willing to contribute to the class development and environment. Taking into account these students' and teachers' examples and suggestions, it is significant to denote the importance of considering students' interests and needs. If teachers wish to increase and encourage participation in their language lessons, they should first be aware of the students' different personalities. Some learners would prefer different techniques to be involved in the class, but at CCPZ, most of the students agreed that discussions, controversial topics, cooperative learning activities, and student-centered classes are the most appropriate techniques for them to learn regardless their fears and limitations. The methodological practices go together with a commendable relationship between learners and teachers since the period of an inaccessible teacher is over in Costa Rican high schools.

4. Conclusions

This investigation has provided concrete results obtained out of the research questions supported by the data gathered. First, the teacher's attitude is a key element in the class development; the rapport between the teacher and students takes an essential role in the learning process since it creates a confident environment in which students feel comfortable when participating. Students showed a positive attitude towards the language due to the fact that they found English enriching; consequently, they enjoyed practicing it. Motivation is what makes the difference when learning a foreign language; it provides enough tools for students to fulfill the learning process with the teacher's guidance. On the other hand, feedback is fundamental during the process of learning a foreign language because the students' progress depends on the way mistakes are corrected. If students received feedback properly, they would be interested in the target language and in participating more during the lesson development.

Moreover, an effective language use depends on the type of activities implemented in the class. In general, this research has shown that students prefer to participate more if interactive games and discussion activities are developed in the lesson. When these kinds of activities are implemented, students tend to use the target language to communicate and express their opinions, reflecting the positive reaction that students have towards the English language. If technology is involved and takes part in the classroom activities, students participate more actively. Technology is used as another way of creating knowledge and fostering communication to strengthen the students' cognitive skills. It is also the key to open the gates of learning since it transforms inert material into living knowledge, which can be taken as an advantage for both teacher and students. Furthermore, students like activities such as competitive games, group work and listening tasks that help them develop their language proficiency and at the same time enjoy the class. Students work more efficiently in groups as teams because they feel comfortable sharing their ideas with others; competition in the class makes students practice the language while cooperating with others.

Student's participation in the class is necessary to create an appropriate learning environment where students are able to express their ideas and opinions without feeling forced to do so. This study has demonstrated that students participate or interact in the class depending on the activities implemented by the teacher. Comprehensible input is significant to enhance students' interaction and participation in an EFL class. Students participate if they understand and have enough knowledge about the lesson topic; there are some students who participate voluntarily now that they strive to put into practice what they already learned; so that, they are able to make contributions spontaneously. Other students are more reluctant to participate because they do not have broad vocabulary to express what they want to say; those students participate only when the teacher asks them to do so. In addition, students' proficiency level is also meaningful in the language learning process due to the fact that lesson activities have to be connected to each student's linguistic skills in order to fulfill the learning objectives.

Implementation of activities takes into account the different students' learning styles. Since all of them differ in their interests and abilities, they require appealing activities that help them meet their learning needs. The results of this research indicate that the students at CCPZ usually took part in class because most of the activities are appealing to them. Nevertheless, if the topics are not catchy or related to real-life situations, students will neither pay attention nor be involved in the lesson. The selection of the topic or the way that it is presented to students is critical now that it may change the students' reaction towards the language and the activities.

5. Action Plan

The researchers suggest using the MEP lesson plan format composed of a warm-up, a presentation, a pre-activity, a while-activity, a post-activity, and a consolidation. This structure takes into consideration all the central aspects, either for students or teachers. In order to enhance cooperative learning, the lesson plans' warm-up, while activity and consolidation include teamwork tasks and competitive games, in which students help each other, put into practice the language and what they already know, and work as a team in order to fulfill a task. Furthermore, the presentation stage incorporates the grammar explanations or/and vocabulary. Individual and pair work will be implemented in the pre-activity and post-activity for students to practice the new knowledge. Following this structure in all the lessons, participation would emerge in the class. The next is a template that researchers created in order to illustrate the proposal.



_____ High School	Lesson #: __
_____ Period	Date: _____ Grade: _____
Teacher: _____	Lessons: __
Target Content: _____	
Linguistic Objectives:	

Pre-teaching: Greeting - Attendance - Date	
Warm-up: A dynamic activity that involves students to use the foreign language and cooperate with each other.	
Presentation: Grammar Explanations/Vocabulary	
Practice: Controlled () Creative ()	
Pre-Activity: Cloze exercises about the grammar topic, individually or in pairs.	
While Activity: An active and competitive game that involves cooperative learning and in which students practice the language and the knowledge learned.	
Post activity: Cloze exercises about the grammar topic, individually or in pairs.	
Consolidation: A group activity in which they practice the language and cooperative learning is present when they help each other.	

The following chart shows the activities, their purpose and the grouping technique in order to fit in the lesson plan format.

	Activity	Purpose	Grouping Technique
WARM-UPS	Human Bingo	Students practice vocabulary by listening to the words, their pronunciation and context. They move from their seats and stretch out their bodies while listening to the target language.	In groups
	Math-Travel	This activity allows students to study the topic, in a different way: mathematically.	In two groups
	Scrabble	This activity enables students to review prior and new vocabulary.	In two groups
	Buzz	This activity works as an attention getter to reinforce the listening skill.	Individually
	Zig-Zag-Zug	This activity works as an attention getter to reinforce the listening skill.	Individually

WARM-UPS (continued)	Steal the Eraser	This activity tests the students' knowledge about a specific topic.	In four groups
	Die Bomb	This activity allows students to review prior vocabulary and grammar structures.	In three groups
	Whisper the Song	This activity tests students' listening skill by listening to a song and the pronunciation of their classmates.	In two groups
	Stop	Students practice to write in English and to test the vocabulary already known.	In two groups
	Run and Stick	This activity tests students' listening skill. Students take words or phrases they listen to from a song.	In three groups
	Spot the Word.	This activity tests students' listening skill. Students take words or phrases they hear.	In two groups
WHILE ACTIVITIES	Presentations	Students present in front of their classmates their knowledge about a specific topic. They practice some language structures.	Individually or in groups
	Jigsaw-Debate	This activity tests students' listening by organizing written information from a listening activity. Then, students defend their points of view and refute others' ideas by using the target language and practicing structures.	In two groups
	Role-plays	This activity enables students to act, use the language and practice the structures already taught.	In groups
	Charades : What is it?	Students practice to get words from context or situation. Vocabulary will be practiced.	In two groups
	Do not say the words	This activity allows students to practice the target language through a competitive game.	In two groups
	Shooting the Tic-Tac-Toe	This activity enables students to speak in the target language by answering questions about the topic studied.	In two groups
	Writing a song!	Students practice in a motivating way to write about the topic studied.	In groups
	Board game: Actionary	This activity enables students to practice English vocabulary in a competitive game.	In three groups
	Rally games: Find the treasure Grammar Race	Students compete to fulfill a task. They have to go through a series of challenges about the topic studied.	In groups

CONSOLIDATIONS	Writing Race	This activity helps students to improve their writing skill and review vocabulary.	In two groups
	Electro Shock	This activity enables students to work as teams. It also helps them to review a specific topic.	In two groups
	Karaoke: Can you sing it?	Students practice pronunciation of the target language in a fun way.	In two groups
	Torch	Through this activity, students practice the target language by answering questions	In three groups
	Presentations	Described in the while-activities	
	Debates	Through this activity, students defend their points of view and refute others' ideas by using the target language and practicing structures.	In two groups
	Let's go travel!	Students practice vocabulary about a topic studied.	Individually
	Role Plays	Described in the while-activities	
	Stop	Described in the warm-ups	
	Mime the Sentences	This activity enables students to practice the structures of the language in a different context by miming it.	In two groups
	Steal the eraser	Described in the warm-ups	
	Guess my Riddle!	This activity allows students to practice writing on their own.	In groups

Description of the Activities

The following information illustrates the group activities suggested for enhancing participation in the EFL class. The description and the instructions to develop each activity are explained as follows:

i. Human Bingo

In this activity, students work in groups. Each member of each group chooses a word from the vocabulary in the copies. The teacher says the word aloud, if any student is called (the word from the vocabulary), she/he will have to sit down. If a group has all the members sat down, they will have to say "Bingo!"

Instructions:

- The class is divided into four groups.
- The groups stand in a circle.
- Each member of each group chooses a word from the vocabulary.

- The teacher says the word aloud, if any student is called (the word from the vocabulary), s/he will sit down.
- If a group has all the members sat down, they will shout “Bingo!”
- The group that first shouts “Bingo” when all the members are sat down is the winner.

ii. Math-travel

For this activity, students stand in a line facing the board. The teacher projects a Power Point presentation on the board with some math operations (additions, subtractions and multiplications). One turn at a time, students from each group go to the board and answer the problems by discovering the corresponding letter for each blank.

Instructions:

- The class is divided into two groups.
- Students stand in a line facing the board.
- The teacher projects a Power Point presentation on the board with some math problems.
- Students from each group, taking turns, go to the board.
- By solving all the math procedures (addition, subtraction and multiplication), students might discover the corresponding letter to each blank.
- The winner is the group that finishes first.

iii. Scrabble

In this activity, the teacher provides some basic categories about the topic; then, students write words related to these categories.

Instructions:

- The group is divided into 2 sub-groups.
- The teacher has a box with some basic categories.
- Each group takes one category and writes a word about it.
- The next word has to have one letter from the last word already written.
- Each letter of the word is worth one point.
- The winning team is the one that has more points.

iv. Buzz

In this activity, the whole group stands in a circle to play. Students need concentration and must pay attention to what their classmates say. The teacher starts counting from 1, and each student continues counting. Every 5 numbers, the students must say “Buzz”. If a student says a multiple of 5 and not a Buzz, s/he is out of the game. The winner is the last-standing student.

Instructions:

- The teacher starts counting from 1; then, each student continues counting.
- The trick is that in every 5 numbers, the students must say “Buzz” instead of the number. For example, 1-2-3-4-Buzz-6-7-8-9-Buzz.
- If a any student says a number instead of “Buzz”, he/she is out.

v. Zig-Zag-Zug

In this activity, students need to be focused on what the teacher says. The teacher places some chairs in a circle back to back. There is one student inside the circle formed by the chairs, the rest sit on the chairs. The teacher says the words zig (right) zag (left) and zug (change your place) aloud. Students move according to the words. If one does not get a seat, he/she is out.

Instructions:

- The teacher places some chairs in a circle back to back.
- There is one student inside the circle formed by the chairs, the rest sit on the chairs.
- The teacher says the words zig (right) zag (left) and zug (change your place) aloud.
- Students move according to the words.
- If one does not get a seat, he/she is out.

vi. Steal the Eraser

For this activity, the teacher places an eraser on the floor in the middle of the classroom. The teacher asks a question, if students know the answer they grab the eraser.

Instructions:

- The class is divided into 4 groups.
- The two groups stand in lines.
- The teacher places an eraser on the floor in the middle of the classroom.
- The teacher has a set of cards with general culture questions.
- The teacher asks a question, if students know the answer; they grab the eraser.
- The winner is the group with more correct answers.

vii. Die Bomb

In this activity, the teacher asks students to say a sentence using the vocabulary studied or using a specific sentence-structure. A number from 1 to 6 is chosen to be the bomb. If the student answers correctly, her/his group rolls the die; the number rolled corresponds to the points that the group gets. If the number rolled is the “number bomb”, the group loses 2 points.



Instructions:

- The class is divided into three groups.
- The teacher asks one member of each group to say a sentence using the vocabulary studied or using a specific sentence-structure.
- Each group takes turns rolling the die.
- At the end of the game, the group that has more points is the winner.

viii. Whisper the Song

For this activity, students have to work in groups. They must be in lines facing the back wall where the tape recorder or speakers are. The teacher gives a piece of paper to the first person who is next to tape recorder or speakers, this piece of paper has some words that are in the song, and some that are not.

Instructions:

- The group is divided into two groups.
- Students stand in lines facing the back wall where the tape recorder or the speakers are.
- The teacher provides students a card that has some words that could be in the song or not to the students that are next to the tape recorder or the speakers.
- The student next to the tape recorder or the speakers listens to the song and whispers the words to his/her classmates until the last one in front of the board, who writes the word whispered.
- The winner will be the group that has more correct words.

ix. Stop

The teacher writes some categories on the board. Then, the teacher says one letter and two members of each group write vocabulary about each category with the letter. Each word is worth 10 points; if the word is repeated, it is worth 5 points, and if there is no word, the other group gets 20 points.

Instructions:

- The group is divided into two groups.
- The teacher writes some categories on the board.
- Then, the teacher says one letter.
- Two members of each group writes vocabulary about each category. Words must begin with the letter chosen.
- When a student finishes and places the marker on the table, the other groups stop writing.
- The group with more points is the winner.

x. Run and Stick

For this activity, students work in groups; they have to compete in order to complete the lyrics of a song. Students listen to the song and when they listen to a missing word, they take the word, run, and stick it on the poster.

Instructions:

- The group is divided into 3 groups.
- The teacher sticks three posters with lyrics of the song. Each poster has missing words which are in cards on a table for each group.
- Students listen to the song and when they listen to a missing word, they take the word, run, and stick it on the poster.
- The winner is the group with more correct words.

xi. Spot the Word

In this activity, students line up in two lines facing the board. The teacher writes some words taken from a song on the board. Students listen to the song and when they identify a word, they run and circle the word.

Instructions:

- The class is divided into two groups.
- Groups line up in two lines facing the board.
- The teacher writes some words taken from a song on the board.
- Students run and circle the word hear.
- The group that has more circled words is the winner.

xii. Presentations

A presentation, in this case, is developed in groups of four. This type of activity allows the students to review or investigate a topic. The learners are provided with some time either to prepare or investigate the topic. Once they are prepared, they present the topic in front of the class.

Instructions:

- The students are asked to get together in groups of four.
- The teacher assigns a topic to each group.
- Each group is given some time depending on the topic to present.
- Then, the groups one by one present the topic in the front of the class.

xiii. Jigsaw Debate

In this activity, students listen to a video and match specific information provided on it. After that, students have a debate about the topic.

Instructions:

- The class is divided into four groups.
- Each group is given a set of cards to play a jigsaw game.
- The teacher plays the video. While the video is played, students match some specific information.
- The group that finishes first is the winner.
- After that, students have a debate about the topic presented.

xiv. Role Plays

In this activity, students work in groups of 4 people; they prepare a role play using the vocabulary already taught. They have to create a role play and then present it in front of the class.

Instructions:

- The class is divided into four groups.
- The teacher assigned a situation to each group.
- Each group prepares a role play based on the situation given and on the topic already taught (vocabulary and grammar structures).
- Then, each group acts its role play in front of the class.

xv. Charades: What is it?

This is a group activity in which the students compete. By using cards, the students mime the concepts shown in the card. Each group has five minutes to guess all the concepts they can.

Instructions:

- The class is divided into two groups.
- The teacher puts on a table some cards related to the topic.
- Each group selects one member of the group to go to the front to mime the card selected.
- The rest of the members guess what it is.
- Each group has 5 minutes to guess as many words as they can.
- The group that guesses more words is the winner.

xvi. Don't say the words!

In this activity, students work in groups. A set of cards containing words related to the topic are placed facing down on a table. Each card contains a main word at the top and four words below it. The color of the cards represents the points that a group gets if the word is guessed; for example, red = 5 points, green = 4 points, blue = 3 points, yellow = 2 points, purple = 1 point. A member of each group takes the role of the clue giver. Sh/e takes a card and gives clues to her/his team to guess the word at the top of the card; the other words written in the card cannot be mentioned when giving clues. Each group has one minute to guess as many words as they can. When the timer buzzes, the next group takes its turn. If a group cannot guess the word, the card is removed from the table.

Instructions:

- The class is divided into two groups.
- A timer is used to keep the track of the game.
- A set of cards containing words related to the topic are placed on a table. Each card contains a main word at the top and four words below it.
- A member of each group takes the role of the clue giver.
- Sh/e takes a card and gives clues to her/his team to guess the word at the top of the card; the other words written in the card cannot be mentioned when giving clues.
- Each group has one minute to guess as many words as they can.
- When the timer buzzes, the next group takes its turn.
- The group that has more points is the winner.

xvii. Shoot the Tic Tac Toe

The teacher divides the class into two groups. He/she draws a *grid* on the board to play *tic tac toe*; students throw a ball in any direction they want. Every square in the tic tac toe contains either a question or a description depending on the topic. When a student hits one of the squares, the teacher reads the question or the description and the student has to answer or guess. If the student answers right, he/she has the chance to make their symbol either an "X" or an "O".

Instructions:

- The class is divided in two groups
- The teacher draws a *grid* on the board
- Then, students are asked to throw a ball in any direction they like in order to hit any of the nine squares.
- Every time that a square is hit the teacher will ask a question or read a description, and if the student answers right he/she can make his/her symbol on the board "X" or a "O".
- The winner is the group that crosses three squares in any direction.

xviii. Writing a song!

In groups of 4, students write a song using a song's melody of their choice (from their cellphones if they want to). Then, each song is presented in front of the class.

Instructions:

- The class is divided into four groups.
- A sheet of paper is given to each group.
- Students write a song using a song's melody of their choice.
- Each song is presented in front of the class

xix. Board Game: Actionary

In this activity, the class is divided into three groups. The teacher places four boxes with cards and a die on a table in front of them. Students take turns to take a card from the box that says "level", then another card from the box that says either "easy", "intermediate" or "advanced", finally, to roll the die which says "charade, drawing, and description". So, students do what the die says; the objective is that each group guesses what their classmate does. The winner is the group with more guessed words

Instructions:

- The teacher divides the class into three groups.
- The teacher places four boxes with cards and a die on a table in front of the groups
- Students of each group, one per turn, take turns to take a card from the box that says "level", then another card from the box that says either "basic", "intermediate" or "advanced"
- Then, the students rolls the die which says "charade, drawing, and description"
- The student does what the die says, and their members of his/her group guess what her/his classmate does.
- The winner is the group with more guessed words.

xx. Rally: Grammar Race

This is a group activity in which students have to compete against other teams. In this activity, students write or say a sentence which can be negative or positive using any grammar structure studied in this chart. The learners run across the soccer field in order to get to the finish line to hand in or say a sentence. In this case, the students' knowledge about grammar is tested and the winner is the team with more correct answers. The students review grammatical structures and vocabulary.

Instructions:

- The class is divided into three groups.

- The teacher indicates what type of sentence is to be done, negative or affirmative, using any grammatical structure studied before. The sentence can be oral or written.
- Each team writes the sentence as fast as they can; once the sentence is written, one member of the team has to run around the soccer field and get to the finish line.
- Once in the finish line, the teacher checks if the sentence is correct; if it is correct, the team scores one point. The teams that lose receive a punishment which is chosen by the winning team.
- The winner is the team with more points.

xxi. Writing Race:

For this activity, they stand in lines in front of the board. The teacher says some categories about the topic aloud and students write words about them. The winner is the group with more correct words, so with more points.

Instructions:

- Students are divided into 2 groups;
- They stand in lines in front of the board.
- The teacher says some categories about the topic.
- Students write words about them.
- The winner is the group with more correct words, so with more points.

xxii. The Electro Shock

In this activity the teacher picks out one student from the class and asks him/her to stand in front of the class holding a handkerchief. The rest of the group is divided into two groups. The groups are asked to make lines and face the board. Afterwards, the teacher touches the last student's shoulder in each line at the same time so as to make them know that they must grip the next student's hand and so on until reaching the first student in the line. The first student that grabs the handkerchief is saved, but if the student does not grab the handkerchief, the whole group answers the questions asked by the teacher.

Instructions

- The teacher picks up one student to hold a handkerchief in front of the class.
- The class is divided into two groups.
- The students stand in line and face the board towards the other student that is holding the handkerchief.
- The teacher touches the last student's shoulder in each line at the same time in order to make them know that they must grip the next student's hand and so on until they reach the first student in the line.
- Then, the first student in the line must grab the handkerchief as fast as he/she can to save her/him.
- The group which does not grab the handkerchief is asked a question by the teacher.

xxiii. Karaoke: Can you sing it?

In this activity, the teacher divides the class into two groups. After that, the teacher places a microphone in front of the projection of a song's lyrics. Students compete in pairs; when they listen to the music, they run to reach the microphone and sing. The winner is the group with sings more songs correctly.

Instructions:

- The class is divided into two groups
- The teacher places a microphone in front of the projection of a song's lyrics
- When participants listen to the music, they run to reach the microphone and sing.
- The winner is the group that sings more songs correctly.

xxiv. Torch

The class is divided in two teams. The teacher has some questions about a certain topic. The teacher reads a different question to each team, one team per turn, and if a team cannot answer the other team has the chance to do it. Each team has to compete to obtain more correct answers than the other group. When a team is ready, they must say Torch. Each team has three minutes to answer and each question is worth one point.

Instructions:

- The class is divided in three teams.
- The teacher reads a question per turn to each team, and if a team cannot answer the other teams have the chance to do it.
- When a team is ready to answer, they must say Torch.
- Each team has three minutes to answer and each question is worth one point.
- The winner is the team with more correct answers.

xxv. Debates

In this activity, the learners are asked to discuss a certain topic which has two opposite sides. The students prepare their arguments for ten minutes and other ten minutes for the discussion of the topic. After that, they have some time to say a final argument. The winner of the debate is chosen taking into consideration relevance and validity of the arguments.

Instructions:

- The class is divided into two groups.
- The teacher assigns a topic that has two opposite sides.
- Each group has five minutes to prepare their arguments and refutations.
- Then, the teacher gives the opportunity to speak to every member of each group.
- Each group defends its position by refuting their opponents' arguments.

- Finally, the teacher decides who the winner is.

xxvi. Let's go Travel

For this activity, students are waiting in a line as if they were waiting for the bus. The teacher starts by saying a situation so that students say words related to a specific topic.

Instructions:

- The teacher sets classroom's chairs as bus seats.
- The teacher starts by giving a situation.
- Students say words related to a specific topic.
- Those students who discover the trick of the game can sit on the chairs.

xxvii. Mime the sentences

In this activity, students have to mime some simple sentences given by the teacher.

Instructions:

- The group is divided into two groups.
- Members of each group have to mime sentences given by the teacher.
- The winner is the group with more sentences guessed.

xxviii. Guess My Riddle!

In this activity, students take some time to create a riddle about the topic and say it to the other group.

Instructions:

- Students are divided into two groups.
- Each group creates a riddle about the topic and say it to the other group.
- The point is to guess the other's riddle.
- The winner is the group that guesses its counterpart's riddles.

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Student Self-evaluation and Autonomy Development in EFL Learning

Henry Sevilla Morales
Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica
al_deron@hotmail.com

Roy Gamboa Mena
Universidad de Costa Rica, Costa Rica
roy.gamboa@ucr.ac.cr

Resumen

Si bien la literatura sobre la autonomía en el aprendizaje de lenguas es extensa, lo mismo no es cierto sobre estudios empíricos que examinen la influencia de estrategias de autoevaluación y el desarrollo de la autonomía en el aprendizaje. A razón de esto, el presente artículo reporta los resultados de una investigación que estudió dicha influencia en el contexto de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL, por sus siglas en inglés). Para este propósito, 18 estudiantes matriculados en un curso de fonética del idioma inglés en una universidad pública de Costa Rica fueron inmersos en un proyecto de investigación-acción, el cual se basó en los principios de la pedagogía constructivista, durante 15 semanas lectivas. Por medio de una *hoja de planeamiento semanal* y un *diario del estudiante*, los estudiantes se fijaron metas de aprendizaje y estrategias de autoevaluación para potenciar su autonomía. Al final de las 15 semanas, ellos evaluaron la experiencia de llevar el plan semanal y el diario mediante una *lista de cotejo*. Para fines de análisis y discusión de datos, utilizamos el *diseño de métodos mixtos de triangulación*, en el cual se interpolaron datos cuantitativo-descriptivos con información cuantitativo-explicativa. En términos generales, los hallazgos revelan una clara relación entre las estrategias de autoevaluación como la aquí implementada y el desarrollo de la autonomía en el aprendizaje en EFL. Asimismo, estos sugieren implicaciones tanto teóricas como prácticas en la enseñanza-aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras.

Palabras clave: autoevaluación, autonomía del estudiante, inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL)

Abstract

While the corpus of literature on learner autonomy in language instruction is plethoric, the same is not true for empirical studies determining the link between self-evaluation strategies and learner autonomy development. Hence, this article reports on the findings of a research that studied this connection in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). In so doing, 18 students enrolled in a phonetics class at a public university in Costa Rica were immersed in a 15-week action research plan, which operated under the cornerstones of constructivism, during the first semester of 2014. Using a weekly plan sheet and a student diary, the students set their intended learning goals and self-assessment strategies to foster learner autonomy. At the end of the 15 weeks, they evaluated their experience of keeping a weekly plan and a student diary through a strategy-assessment checklist. For purposes of data analysis and discussion, we used a triangulation mixed methods design, where descriptive

quantitative results were used concurrently with the explanatory qualitative data. By and large, findings suggest clear-cut connections between self-evaluation strategies like the one implemented herein and the development of learner autonomy in the context of EFL. They also yield implications for both theory and praxis in foreign language teaching and learning.

Key words: self-evaluation, learner autonomy, EFL

1. Introduction

The theory on autonomy in language teaching-learning has been around for at least 40 years now. According to Benson, “the concept of autonomy first entered the field of language teaching through the Council of Europe’s Modern Languages Project, established in 1971” (2013, p. 9). Readily, autonomy was defined as the capacity to take charge of one’s own learning. As the concept of autonomy evolved it became part of the main stream of research and practice in the field of language education. Alternatively, the increasing number of publications and on-going discussions on the subject pose themselves as an indicator of the growth of autonomy as a specialized field of inquiry (Benson, 2013). Thus, current authors such as Reinders (2010), Bhattacharya and Chauhan (2010), Tamjid and Birjandi (2011), and Humphreys Wyatt (2014), and many others, have addressed different issues of learner autonomy in Asia and Europe and have helped shape a better understanding of its fundamentals, present status, and future directions in research and practice. In Costa Rica, however, research on the area has been relatively scarce, carried out only by few authors such as Solano (2008), Barrantes and Olivares (2014), Chaves and Zamora (2013), and Sevilla and Méndez (2013).

This being the case, our motivation to do research on learner autonomy sparks off from two major sources. First, it emerges from an initial small-scale action research inquiry conducted by one of the researchers; this was a pilot plan that explored the connection between self-evaluation strategies and the development of learner autonomy in the context of English as a Foreign Language (henceforth, EFL) in an eleven-student phonetics class at a public university in Costa Rica. Two self-evaluation strategies were applied and evaluated for a period of eight weeks: the weekly plan and the student diary. The results of this initial inquiry suggested that learner autonomy can be enhanced through the application of self-evaluation strategies as the ones piloted, but it also called for further research on the application of the strategies studied. Second, a revision of the state of the art in the field of autonomy suggests that despite its significance in language education, little research has been done in the context of Costa Rica that examines the incidence of self-evaluation strategies and the promotion of learner autonomy.

So, the purpose of the research reported herewith was to study the connection between self-evaluation strategies (the student diary and the weekly plan) and learner autonomy in the context of EFL. Because the study set off to solve a pedagogical problem, this research was framed within the action research paradigm. For purposes of data analysis and discussion, the QUAL-quant model was selected since the study combined qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis strategies. Roughly, findings suggest that self-evaluation strategies

do assist the nurturing of learner autonomy, and that they are best cultivated when devised from a constructivist, self-discovery pedagogical framework.

This study provides insights for both theory and practice. At the theory level, it extends the body of empirical evidence for the promotion and development of learner autonomy; while at the same time it complements previous scholars' (e.g., Hernández, 2011) findings on effective strategies to attain this objective. At the pedagogical level, it suggests ways to make the language classroom a more democratic, self-directed, and constructivist landscape.

2. Literature Review

This research sought to determine the connections between self-appraisal strategies and the promotion of learner autonomy in the context of EFL. Because the educational setting where the study was run bases its pedagogical practices on the philosophy of Constructivism, the execution of our action research plan rested upon the central principles of this approach, which are discussed as follows.

2.1. A Historical Overview of Constructivist Pedagogies

As many language specialists and scholars have made it evident, constructivism as a language teaching-learning philosophy is hardly a new subject (Brown, 2000, p. 11). The emergence of constructivism came into existence as the antithesis of the rationalist, innatist and merely psychological views of learning that prevailed during the first half of the 20th century. More specifically, the birth of Constructivism can be traced back to the emergence of the Humanistic Approach in the decade of the 70s, an approach that developed under the threshold of the humanist school of thought which considered the individual's emotions, personal dimensions, feelings and thoughts as central within all human progress (Wang, 2005, as cited in Solano, 2008, p. 182). Along with this, Solano explains, by the time Humanism came into fruition as a teaching approach, renowned scholars such as John Dewey, David Ausubel, Jean Piaget and Lev Vigotsky had advocated for a type of teaching-learning that considered the role of "the social and the cognitive contexts" of the language instruction experience: Constructivism (pp. 182-183). As a result of these two approaches, the language classroom underwent "a shift in power" and roles; now "the teacher's role had become that of a counselor, guide or facilitator, letting students take center stage" (Solano, 2008, p. 183).

But constructivism did not make its way through contemporary language education without its discrepancies. Two of the most recognized scholars in the subject, Jean Piaget and Lev Vigotsky, had polarized views regarding the scope and role of the social context in teaching and learning. For Piaget, an individual's cognitive capacity was a solitary act that depended largely on biological conditions: "biological timetables and stages of development were basic; social interaction was claimed only to trigger development at the right moment in time". For Vigotsky, however, the case was the complete opposite. For him, social interaction constituted the foundations of all cognitive development; he "rejected the notion

of predetermined stages” (Brown, 2000, p. 11). All in all, it would be valid to say that Piaget held a more psychological notion of learning while Vigotsky advocated for a more socially conditioned nature of it.

In the context of contemporary language education, constructivist teaching rests more upon the foundations of the socially mediated than that of the merely psychologically conditioned, of which Piaget was a great advocate. For the purpose of our research, the action plan was formulated following the tenets of social constructivism, as it is popularly known today.

2.2. The Role of Context

Virtually anyone in the teaching enterprise would admit that context plays a central role in every language education setting; but context, as understood within what Tudor (2001) has described as “a new technology of language teaching” (p.5), can be more complex a construct than we generally realize. For one thing, context is not necessarily an external variable that affects the learner in a one-directional fashion. It is a rather more complex matrix of realities in the form of either micro or macro contexts, where the former is integrated by the immediate geographical and psychological elements of the learner’s reality; whereas the latter refers to the broader political, historical and ideological reality in which learning is framed (Brumfit, 1991, as cited in Tudor, 2001, p. 19). For another, the acknowledgment of this view of context presupposes that the instructional activity should be framed within context-bound pedagogies that take into account the learners’ beliefs, expectations, and ethos of learning, as well as what society at large expects from them in the long run.

Because all learning happens within a given cultural and historical context, the pedagogical adaptations language instructors must perform in their everyday teaching are by far numerous and complex. On this, Brumfit has asserted that teaching is especially constrained by the context because the elements behind instruction are not only many, but usually conflicting (1991, as cited in Tudor, 2001). A potential solution to this, however, has been proposed by Tudor. In his book *The Dynamics of the Language Classroom*, this author states that given the many contextual constraints of language teaching, teachers need to take a stand in “exploiting local dynamics (p. 157)”; which means studying elements such as the culture of learning, classroom and social behaviors, educational context, and other contextual variables in order to devise teaching methodologies that best cater to the type of population and goals we are dealing with. In the case of the present action research, the selection of the action plan was done following all of the principles discussed herein about the role of context in learning.

2.3. The Role of the Learner

Since the emergence of constructivist teaching back in the 1970’s (Brown, 2000), a number of authors have conducted empirical studies and published theoretical reviews to illuminate the pedagogical practices that should gear the language education agendas. Examples of these

authors include, amongst many others, Jonassen (1994), Matthews (2003), Nikita (2010), Kootze (2010), Sivasubramaniam (2014), and Richardson (2014), and they all have in one way or another contributed to answering the many questions that surround constructivist language teaching and learning. But for the purpose of the current study, we resolved to base our action plan in what Sivasubramaniam (2014) has considered the underpinnings of constructivist learning environments, which include: The view of knowledge as mutually constructed between learners and instructors, the use of authentic activities and tasks, the provision of “stimulus for reflecting on experience”, and the acknowledgement of “collaborative co-construction of knowledge through interpersonal associations/negotiations” (p. 9).

In pedagogical practice, such principles are to be translated into opportunities for goal-setting and self-reflection, learner autonomy and initiative, and opportunities to become active members of the learning community and to be able to drive lessons and “negotiate strategies and alter content” (Watson, 2001, pp. 140). All of this, at the same time, can be harmonized with the principles of student-centered learning that has called the attention of many scholars in the past few decades (e.g., Gronich, 2004; Francess, 2009; Hickman, 2010; and Qasem, 2010).

2.4. The Role of the Instructor

Along with the idea that learners occupy an active role in the negotiation and construction of their knowledge, teachers are also attributed specific roles so that pedagogical practices account for true constructivist instruction. According to Sivasubramaniam, Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire has spoken of a need to shift from the traditional “banking-model of education” where the teachers would “deposit information into students as they would deposit money into a bank” (2014, pp. 10-11) to more problem-posing models of education where learning is treated as a dialogic process; as a more democratic practice; as a more literate undertaking.

On these same lines of argument, other current authors such as Virginia Richardson (2014) have proposed that constructivist pedagogies involve a series of intrinsic characteristics, such as:

- a. attention to the individual and respect for students’ background [...]
- b. facilitation of group dialogue [...]
- c. planned and often unplanned introduction of formal domain knowledge into the conversation through direct instruction, reference to text [...] or some other means.
- d. provision of opportunities for students to determine, challenge, change or add to existing beliefs and understanding through engagement in tasks that are structured for this purpose; and
- e. development of students’ metawareness of their own understandings and learning processes. (p. 1626)

In the context of language instruction, Sivasubramaniam claims that constructivist teachers must “treat language as communication” (not as a merely formalist decoding or structure analysis), “optimize students’ existing communicative competence” by developing systematic appraisal of the kind of teaching they do, and “foster cross-cultural sensitivity” through their language pedagogies (pp. 14-15). For the purpose of our paper we have summarized the role of the instructor in language teaching as: co-constructors of knowledge, negotiators of learning opportunities, facilitators of communication opportunities and reflection, and guides in the discovery of cultural, linguistic, pragmatic and semantic elements of language instruction and learning.

2.5. On Learner Autonomy

As many experts in the area have agreed, learner autonomy is by far an intricate construct. According to Tudor (2001), the body of literature on the subject is both vast and developing (e.g., Brenson, 1997; Oennycook, 1997; Usuki, 1999), which makes it difficult to claim for a universal definition of learner autonomy. But, as the author goes on to explain, Usuki (1999) has outlined two perspectives of learner autonomy: The psychological and the political perspectives, which are particularly pertinent within the scope of our research. The psychological perspective on autonomy deals primarily with “autonomy for language learning” (Tudor, 2001, p. 119). It is concerned with the extent to which the learner is able to undertake a participatory role in the language learning process, and it views the learning agenda as negotiated between instructors and students. Closely connected with the concept of learner involvement, this perspective advocates for a type of education where the learner engages in decision making, goal-setting, and the negotiation of the content to be processed throughout the program. The political perspective, alternatively, has to do with autonomy that transcends the classroom boundaries of learning. It is mostly concerned with the degree to which learning has social and/or cultural repercussions. From Tudor’s (2001) standpoint, the political perspective conceives the individual as evolving from “language learner to language user” (p. 118); which bears implicitly the idea that language instruction should be oriented towards the creation of individuals capable not only of meeting the economic demands of our society but also evaluating, critiquing, and proposing solutions to the many complexities that surround human development.

Naturally, the study of the political perspective on autonomy would require longitudinal studies that examine the impact of language instruction in the social, cultural, and political systems where the individuals function. Because of the complexity that this represents, it is the psychological perspective on autonomy with which this paper is concerned. Given that the English program had already-fixed goals and objectives and therefore allowed for little modifications in their organization, the action plan sought to give the students a chance to nurture their self-learning capabilities both in and out of the classroom. In this manner, not only did they get a chance to cultivate self-directed learning and linguistic empowerment but also stuck to the curricular goals established in the program.

With this in mind, and in order to provide some perspective on the status quo of self-evaluation and learner autonomy, a brief discussion of sample publications of the past four years is provided in the lines that follow.

2.6. Recent Studies on Self-Evaluation and Learner Autonomy

In his article, *Towards a Classroom Pedagogy for Learner Autonomy: A Framework of Independent Language Learning Skills*, Reinders (2010) explored some of the teaching aspects related to the development of learner autonomy and proposed a framework of skills that could be used by teachers as a guide to increasing learner responsibility. His paper was concerned mainly with the practical operationalization of learner autonomy and its implementation in the language classroom as he argued for a learner-autonomy based pedagogy. Therefore, the framework proposed is operationalized starting from the learner and his or her actions which in time can be encouraged, modeled and monitored by the teacher. He concluded that developing autonomy is a lengthy process and that the implementation of the framework proposed does not guarantee that students will develop autonomy but, he argues, will shift focus from the teacher to the learner.

In another study, Bhattacharya and Chauhan (2010) investigated the effects of blogging on the development of autonomy in a study conducted in India. They had 35 students in the second year of their Master's in English Language Teaching (ELT) courses create blog reports at the end of a one-month project in order to study the relation between learner autonomy and blog-assisted language learning. Their findings revealed that blogging impacted positively the development of learner autonomy constructs such as independent decision making skills, independence, and intrinsic motivation, among others. They concluded that blogging gives voice to students and in so doing it could provide a meaningful purpose for triggering off other attendant language-learning constructs like motivation and cognitive skills in an autonomous setting.

Along the same lines, in his article, *Misconceptions on Learner Autonomy: A Methodological and Conceptual Renewal*, Asik (2010) asserted that learner autonomy is the result of methodological innovations in second and foreign language teaching, especially in communicative language teaching and learner-centered approaches. He claims that while discussing and implementing a point of view in language teaching which places learner autonomy as a top priority, many misconceptions have aroused. Therefore, his study set forth to debunk some common misunderstandings about learner autonomy by addressing related terms and issues. His study proposes a process that includes the necessary phases to enhance autonomy in language teaching through disregarding the existing misconceptions. He arrives at three central conclusions: First, that learner autonomy does not mean learning in isolation. Learners develop a sense of interdependence with teachers and peers towards shared goals; second, terms such as individualized learning, self-directed and self-instructed learning are in a way related to autonomy but that this does not mean that they are the same; and third, teachers should be attentive with the concept of autonomy and the ways in which it can be used and encouraged in foreign language teaching as its operationalization has not yet reached solid consensus.

One year after the publication of Asik's paper, Tamjid and Birjandi (2010) conducted a quasi-experimental, nonrandomized control group, pretest-posttest design study at Islamic Azad University of Tabriz that explored how self and peer-assessment as compared to teacher assessment could promote Iranian EFL learners' autonomy. They found out that the incorporation of self and peer-assessment enhance the students' autonomy.

Later on, in 2013, Oğuz investigated teachers' views on supporting learner autonomy in the province of Kütahya, Turkey. The study included 492 teachers working in the primary and secondary public school system. The research design was based on a survey model. The author found that teachers ranked learner autonomy supporting behaviors as always being necessary, while in classroom practice they demonstrated these behaviors only most of the time. A major conclusion in this study is that teachers' view on the necessity of autonomy support is at a higher level than their view on its demonstration and that because of this teacher training with regards to the demonstration of autonomy supportive behaviors is necessary.

Even more recently, Humphreys and Wyatt (2014) investigated learner perceptions and practices regarding autonomy and collaboratively proposed ways to improve its promotion in an EAP program at an international university in Ho Chi Minh City with Vietnamese learners. Through their collaborative action research they found that the weak top-down approach to supporting autonomy employed at the university was inadequate. Therefore they formulated an intervention which they applied for five weeks. Thus they were able to conclude that socially mediated support for autonomy can help learners take greater control over their own learning.

The review of recent publications on the topic of student autonomy development and the different strategies used to prompt its development (Reinders, 2010; Bhattacharya and Chauhan, 2010; Asik, 2010; Tamjid and Birjandi, 2011; Oğuz, 2013; Humphreys and Wyatt, 2014) yields a number of conclusions that merit attention. First, learner autonomy is a desirable characteristic of second language learners. Second, learner autonomy development is a complex issue that needs more attention on the part of researchers and teachers alike. Third, because of the several misconceptions and misunderstandings, the term needs to be clarified and redefined. Fourth, teacher awareness and training regarding learner autonomy is necessary in language education institutions. Fifth, different frameworks, methodologies and strategies have proven to enhance learner autonomy development. In the particular context of Costa Rica's language education, however, research on learner autonomy is rather scarce in comparison to the volume of research conducted on areas such as methodology and program development. Because to date no research has been conducted that explores explicitly the link between self-evaluation strategies and the promotion of learner autonomy, our research sought to tackle this issue through the implementation of an action research project, as described in the section that follows.

3. Methodology

This section presents a description of the methodological procedures used in the completion of this research.

3.1. Research Method and Design

Because this study set off to solve a pedagogical problem which was particular to a specific educational setting, this research is best framed within the action research method; also referred to as *classroom research* or *teacher research* (Efron and Ravid, 2013, p. 2). As Efron and Ravid acknowledge, action research is particularly useful today because it allows teachers to devise their own solutions to problems that arise in their very educational contexts, which cannot be formulated through the traditional top-down educational recipes dictated from outsider experts of the field. In the action research process, the researcher embarks on a three-stage process which, according to Richards and Lockhart (1994), gives way to the ongoing development of educational change. In the first stage, the researcher-practitioner conducts an initial reflection on a given phenomenon by identifying an educational need or problem. Once this reflection has been completed, the researcher formulates an action plan that seeks to bring about changes to such need or problem. The last stage comprises the systematic observation of the interaction between research participants and the action plan implemented. Upon completion of these three stages, the reflection process may start over so as to further assess the feasibility of the action plan and to devise future courses of action along the lines of the problem identified. For the purposes of the present research, these stages are described in detail in the *procedures* section.

Because the study combined qualitative and quantitative data collection strategies and instruments, for purposes of data analysis and discussion we selected the *triangulation mixed methods* design, also known as the “QUAN-QUAL model”. In this type of research design, qualitative and quantitative data are collected and analyzed concurrently throughout the same study, and the weaknesses of the quantitative approach are counterbalanced with the strengths of the qualitative one and vice versa (Gay, Mills, and Airasian, 2009, p. 463). The conjunction of these two research designs allowed for a more thorough analysis and discussion of the results, as well as to blend the “research-then-theory” and the “theory-then-research” approaches that for decades divided the educational research agenda in the past (Ellis, 1990, pp. 4-5).

3.2. Participants and Context of the Study

The study was conducted in the IO-5309 English Phonology course, a second-year class (IV cycle) of the English Teaching Bachelor’s program at a public University in Costa Rica. Participants were a heterogeneous group of students aged 18 to 25 with diverse interests, backgrounds, learning styles, intelligence type and genders. All the participants were full time students and at the time of the study all of them had enrolled in all the seven classes in the IV cycle of the program. This was a four-hour a week, one-semester long class taught in the afternoons.

3.3. The Data Collection Instruments

For the sake of clarity, the first two instruments were used as a means to implement the strategy and the third one was used to assess the usefulness of the strategy from the participants' perspective.

The first instrument was the *weekly plan* (see appendix 1), which came about as a recommendation from the professional literature on the field (i.e., Calatayud, 2008). In this instrument, students were asked to keep track of their out-of-class learning activities related to the course, and it included two sections. The first section was designed in a five-column format and asked participants to record the content to be learned each week, the homework assigned for each week, the schedule to do that homework, a self-designed activity aimed at learning the content for each week, and the schedule to do the self-designed activity. In the second section, participants had to write a reflection assessing their plan for each given week. Such reflection was prompted by three questions: *How did the different activities help you learn the contents for this week? What part of the content, if any, couldn't you learn? How difficult or easy was it for you to meet the schedule you set to accomplish the activities?*

The second instrument was the *student diary* (see appendix 2), adopted from Fernández (2011). Here, participants were asked to keep a three-entry diary which they submitted for feedback on a weekly basis. Each of the entries in the diary was prompted by a question; and it also featured a section for instructor feedback.

The third instrument was a *strategy-assessment checklist* designed by the researchers (see appendix 3) for participants to assess the experience of keeping the weekly plan and the student diary. The checklist featured eight statements organized in three sections: Statements referring to the weekly plan, statements referring to the student diary, and statements referring to the experience in general, which were to be marked: 1= nothing, 2= a little, 3= quite a bit, and 4= very much, according to how the participant felt about the content in each statement. This instrument was administered at the end of the semester and yielded data that helped voice out the students' opinions regarding the self-appraisal strategy as a whole.

3.4. Research Procedures

Three stages comprised the maturation of the action plan. In the first stage, one of the researchers observed that the students had trouble taking charge of their own responsibilities, especially with the completion of homework and time organization. This reflection was conducted during year 2013 and hence a small-scale action plan was piloted (as described in the introduction of this paper). In 2014, we devised a more solid action plan that took into account the weaknesses and strengths of the small-scale plan and ran it with the participants described above. The last stage we collected data from the participants using the student diary, the weekly plan, and the strategy assessment checklist.

For the purpose of action plan implementation, the weekly plan and the student diary were used on a weekly basis during the application of the strategy. Participants filled in the instruments and handed them in to the instructor weekly for a 15-week period (a semester). The instructor checked the weekly plans and the student diaries, included individualized feedback, and returned the instruments to the participants every week. This constituted the strategy. As we have stated, the self-assessment checklist was used at the end of the semester for participants to assess the strategy.

3.5. Validation Techniques

For purposes of methodological validity, we followed two basic procedures. We first accounted for content validity by making sure that the content of the data collection instruments matched entirely the research objectives and the research design selected. In addition to this, the content of the instruments was drawn from those elements that the professional literature on the field (e.g., Fernández, 2011; and Calatayud, 2008) recognizes as suitable for student self-appraisal and autonomy development. Once we satisfied content validity, we pilot-tested the instruments. Because this study departed from a previous small-scale study where the same instruments were administered, the present study took advantage of the experience and fine-tuned such instruments based on weaknesses outlined during the conduction of the first study.

3.6. Data Analysis Techniques

This section displays the data analyzed for both the qualitative and quantitative data collected via the three research instruments. Our analysis is both, descriptive and explanatory, and it presents two major perspectives. On the one hand, qualitative data are analyzed through the researchers' lens as it draws from sample journals and weekly plans, and it is framed within two major categories (i.e., (1) positive outcomes and (2) major difficulties faced by the students) that emerged from these two instruments. On the other hand, the students' perspectives on the contribution of the strategy to their autonomy development are examined based on quantitative data yielded by the strategy-assessment checklist. Hereafter, we go on to discuss the results in light of our research question and the professional literature discussed in the literature review section of this paper. This discussion is also based upon the theoretical constructs of the role of the student, the role of the teacher, the role of the context, and constructivism in language teaching.

4. Analysis of the Results

As stated earlier in this paper, our research set out to determine possible relations between self-evaluation strategies and the promotion of learner autonomy in an EFL classroom of a public university in Costa Rica. Thus, this section presents an analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data drawn from the study's participants. In subsection 4.1., we analyze the results of the action research plan implementation from the professional and scientific standpoint of the researchers. In subsection 4.2., the students' perceptions of the action

research plan are voiced out by analyzing their appraisal of the autonomy development strategy.

For purposes of confidentiality and reader's traceability, we have created a table of codes for direct citation of qualitative information, which can be seen in table 1 below.

Instrument Type	Data Source	Citing Code
Weekly Plan	Phonetics Class Students	WP 01-018
Student Diary	Phonetics Class Students	SD 01-018
Strategy-assessment Checklist	Phonetics Class Students	SAC 01-018
Student Diary	Course Instructor	SD-CI 01-018

Source: Researchers' own design

In the analysis that follows, direct text gathered from the weekly plan will be cited as WP 001 up to 018, which was the total number of students who participated in the research. This means that direct text coming from student 11, for instance, will be cited as WP 011. Correspondingly, direct citations from the same student but from the student diary will be coded as SD 011; and from the strategy-assessment checklist: SAC 011. Lastly, since the student diary included a section for instructor feedback, any comments cited from this part will be coded as SD-CI, where CI means instructor comments.

4.1. The Researchers' Perspective

4.1.1. Positive Outcomes

Grosso modo, data in the student diaries show a reasonable clear link between self-evaluation strategies and learning autonomy development. As we gathered data and drew relations among them, it became evident that such positive outcomes could be better described and interpreted if grouped into two main subcategories.

The first subcategory deals with students' sense of interconnection among the already-studied contents. On this, we found that the action plan nurtured a feeling of continuity between the course content studied in previous lessons. For instance, participant 016 reports that the weekly plan helped him revise the topics studied: "it was very useful to me [the weekly plan] in order to revise the topics we got before" (WP 016, Sic.). Participant 07, likewise, stresses that the weekly plan assisted him in processing the contents as he was able to revisit them for better understanding. In this student's own words, "the activities [planned in the weekly plan] helped me to learn the contents because I studied them again for understanding them better." (WP 007, Sic.).

The second subcategory has to do with students' sense of achievement, which was reported at, at least, three different levels: linguistic, affective, and organizational. At the

linguistic level, evidence mainly from the student diaries suggests that the participants held a positive perception of their own language development upon partaking in the project. Participant 5, for instance, reports: “the activities have helped me to know more about pronunciation and to know more about where the places of articulation are” (WP 005); while a second participant, along with the above, states: “I learned that when I speak I don’t have to articulate some words, which is called neutralization” (SD 007). From these two quotes, we can realize that the students were able to consciously analyze their linguistic evolution in the course, particularly on how speech articulation and accent neutralization occur in the speech apparatus. But in addition to this, data suggest that they also became aware of the importance of vowel articulation in the paralinguistic dimension of speech, as made evident by participant 3: “[this lesson helped me to learn] vowels with communicative meaning—I can express different emotions in English by pronouncing vowels in a certain way” (SD 003). As we can appreciate here, this participant is aware of the role processes such as vowel *prolongation* or *reduction* exerts in conveying a given emotion or communicative intention, an accomplishment that merits attention because paralinguistic features in foreign language learning usually turn out challenging to learners, and even more so at beginning stages of their interlanguage. Further down the same diary entry, this participant reports sense of achievement in terms of prosody, when she points out that she believes “learning phonetic processes—suprasegmentals— improve the way you sound when speaking English” (Sic).

As for the case of the affective level, data from the student diaries indicate that participants believe the project positively impacted their affective domains. For instance, on being asked how they had felt about the lessons, participant 15 has pointed out: “I felt fantastic, because we practiced a lot about sounds and details, something that I enjoyed [...] I feel I improved [my participation] according to my participation last week” (SD 015, Sic.). Along with this, participant 2 has stated: “I felt great because I understood the content we covered without any problems. I think I am improving my pronunciation skills [...] and learned new vocabulary” (SD 002). As we may notice from these quotes, both these students perceive classes to have yielded positive outcomes on their affective dimensions; but if we analyze the data in detail we realize that they do not perceive the project as having impacted just their affective domains. Instead, they perceive the affective and the cognitive sides of learning to have overlapped, as their positive feelings about the lessons are the result of having been able to achieve the cognitive mastery of the class (i.e., pronunciation skills and vocabulary learning). Hence, we could call this a teaching breakthrough, since, as it has been shown in recent research, the affective domain has remained neglected because of the generally held belief that the cognition is more important than the affection (Sevilla, 2014).

That being said, the third level of sense of achievement reported by the participants is time organization, chiefly in the weekly plans. By and large, students had trouble meeting their schedules in the first seven or eight weeks of the semester, mainly, as they make it evident, because they had too many homework assignments and they were not used to meeting schedules. Nonetheless, by week 9, most of the participants started to state that they were being able to meet their schedules successfully. Participant four, for instance, by week ten, reported: “this time was easy for me to meet the schedule I set because I organized my time very well” (WP 004, Sic.). Three weeks later, this same participant goes on to state: “it

wasn't difficult for me to meet the schedule I set". Another participant, along the same lines, affirms: "[on week 12,] I got to meet the schedule I set so I accomplished my self-designed activities" (WP 003). As one may see from these data, there is an evolution in the organizational side of the learners that, apparently, did not exist before the students were immersed in the project. What stands out from this evidence is that there is a rupture in the participants' ethos of learning; that is to say, there seems to be a change in the culture of learning that is shifting from disorganized to organized; from not being able to take charge of their own responsibilities to a more mature way of coping with academic assignments, a point worth discussing if we keep in mind that (1) these students were only in their second year of their English teaching major and that (2) they are preparing to become teachers, a profession that, as anyone knows, demands a lot of planning and organization.

4.1.2. Major Limitations Faced by the Students

To continue with our discussion on the link between self-evaluation strategies and learning autonomy development established through the examination of data obtained via the weekly plans and the student diaries, at this point it becomes necessary to discuss some of the major challenges faced by the students. Such difficulties can be grouped into two categories.

The first category refers to time management where three difficulties were evident. First, students found it difficult to follow the schedules set for homework and other out-of-class activities. To exemplify, participant 005 reported: "Finally this week I have been practicing but is very difficult organize the time" (WP 005, Sic.). In turn, participant 016 asseverated: "It was so hard to follow my schedule, because I didn't be aware about how much time I spent in other activities, however this week I got to invest more time in my schedule" (WP 016, Sic.). Second, students experienced trouble organizing time. As a way to illustrate, participant 005 reported: "[...] This week I have been practicing but is very difficult organize the time" (WP 005, Sic.). Third, the workload, especially in the form of homework, was perceived as an obstacle that kept students from meeting their schedules. Participant 004, for example, declared: "To meet the schedule was a little difficult because I had a lot of homework [...]" (SD 004, Sic.); while student 015 complained: "[...] like in every course the variety of homework is the only limitation" (WP 015, Sic.). As evidenced in these data, there is a culture of learning that surfaced in the participants' assertions; a difficulty setting priorities (they had trouble setting the schedule), which has to do, as stated elsewhere in this section, with the students' ethos of learning. Also, feature that stood out here was the students' perception that the system saturates them with too much homework, which affected their meeting of the schedule.

The second category has to do with the mastery of content. Through the student diaries and weekly plans, participants were able to reflect upon the bits of content that were difficult for them. Such was the case with participant 017, who experienced trouble mastering phonetic symbols: "I couldn't identify the well the symbols that I have to use for each sound in every word that I had to transcribe" (WP 017, Sic.). This was also the case with participant 002, who had difficulties with tongue twisters: "The content in general wasn't really difficult but something that give me problems is, in some cases, the tongue twisters" (WP 002, Sic.);

or participant 003, who reported to find *omission* difficult to learn: “I didn’t feel good because I find the content regarding omission, difficult to learn there are many cases and rules.” (SD 003, Sic.). Along with this, in the weekly plan this student points out: “I need to practice more regarding cases where omission occurs” (WP 003, Sic.).

On first hearing, the students’ report of difficulties in learning certain course contents might be perceived as a limitation. However, on a closer look at the issue, what this suggests is that students were able to become aware of the areas that needed improvement. This awareness, at the end, is actually the goal of every teaching that seeks autonomy development in learners.

4.2. The Students’ Voices

As stated in section 3.3. of this article, the third instrument of three used in this investigation was utilized to assess the usefulness of the strategy from the participants’ perspective. Their voices are echoed in the paragraphs to come through the analysis of their views on the usefulness of the weekly plan, the student diary and the strategy in the development of learner autonomy.

The Weekly Plan aimed at assisting students in organizing time, learning of contents, taking charge of their own responsibilities and reflecting upon their learning. The data in table one shows that clearly the Weekly Plan served its purpose. All in all, most of the students reported that this instrument helped them to effectively organize time, learn the contents of the week, and think over their own learning. Interestingly, a small percentage of the students reported that the weekly plan did not help them to take charge of their own responsibilities. All of this strongly suggests that the use of a weekly plan as a strategy to promote the development of learner autonomy is effective from the view point of the student. Table 1 below details these numerical data.

Table 1
Student Perception of the Impact of the Weekly Plan on their Learner Autonomy Development

Criteria	Nothing	A little	Quite a bit	Very much
<i>THE WEEKLY PLAN helped me to:</i>				
effectively organize my time.		16,66%	55,55	27,77%
better learn the contents proposed for the week.		11,11%	50%	38,88%
take charge of my own responsibilities.	5,55%	11,11%	38,88%	44,44%
think over my learning actions of the week.		16,66%	16,66%	66,66%

The student diary, in turn, purported to help the participants become aware of their role as learners and see how the class aided them in their learning process. Data show that the goal was attained since all students reported that the diary allowed them to recognize their role as learners, as it also assisted them in visualizing how the class contributed to their overall language instruction. The implication is clear-cut: the student diary does work as a means to prompt learner autonomy, as shown in table 2 below.

The general strategy, that is, the use of the student diary and the weekly plan in the way and for the time period described elsewhere in this article, had a two-fold purpose. On the one hand, it intended to motivate students to do more for their learning than what was required in the class; on the other, it purported to make them more independent in the course. According to the data examined, the strategy was successful because students noted that it did motivate them to walk the extra mile in their intent to learn the contents; they also made it evident that they became more independent. It then should be asserted that the strategy was fruitful in prompting learner autonomy development. Table three below details these numbers.

Table 2
Student Perception of the Impact of the Student Diary on their Learner Autonomy Development

Criteria	Nothing	A little	Quite a bit	Very much
<i>THE STUDENT DIARY helped me to:</i>				
become aware of my role as a learner in class		5,55%	44,44%	50%
clearly see how the class contributed to my learning		5,55%	22,22%	72%

Table 3
Student Perception of the Impact of the Strategy on their Learner Autonomy Development

Criteria	Nothing	A little	Quite a bit	Very much
<i>THE STRATEGIE:</i>				
motivated me to do more than required to learn the class contents		5,55%	33,33%	61,11%
made me more independent as a learner in this course		11,11%	38,88%	50%

4.3. Discussion of Findings

Having described and analyzed the data in the preceding subsection, we now shift our focus to discussing and theorizing the major findings based on our research objective and the professional literature reviewed.

The first major finding comes along from the lens of both researchers and students. On this, we found out that the action plan yielded positive results in terms of students' sense of interconnectedness of the contents studied and their sense of achievement in the course.

Among some plausible explanations for these findings are the conjunction of elements such as the role of context, the role of the instructor, and the role of the learner, especially if we bear in mind that the class was heterogeneous in terms of ages, interests, sociocultural backgrounds, and type of intelligences and learning strategies. Earlier in this paper, we went through Tudor's (2001) notion of context as not being one-directional but rather dynamic and multilayered, as well as framed within a particular political, historical, and ideological setting. In the case of our project, since the plan emerged as an initiative to attend to a need as detected through systematic teacher observation (before the actual formulation of the project), the positive outcomes can be linked to the design of a pedagogical intervention that focused on the micro context where the class was being taught. This hints out that, had the action plan been designed by an outsider expert, as it has been traditionally the case in some language institutions, the findings may have varied significantly. The findings also support Reinder's (2010) idea that while learner autonomy cannot flourish in a short period of time, its development can be boosted through systematic teacher's monitoring; and also Asik's (2010) conclusions that autonomy is the product of continuous pedagogical innovation in the language teaching scenario.

Another element that may have influenced the project's positive results is the synchronization of the role of the instructor with the students' responses to it (the learner's role). In constructivist language teaching, effective instruction is that which gives students the chance to participate actively in goal-setting, content coverage, and reflection, among others. Since the project allowed the students to set their own goals and chose their own self-assessment strategies, we hypothesize that the positive appreciations they had about their own autonomy development are in part because of the active, constructivist role they took on. The instructor's role as a guide and facilitator of learning opportunities, on the other hand, was a medullar element throughout the action plan, as it is shown by data from one of the diaries, where a student complained that he had been struggling too much to process the subject matter, and the instructor replies: "sorry to hear that. If that's the case always talk to me and let me know so we can figure something out" (SD-IC 017). On analyzing the different data sources, we cannot see these two variables as separate elements, but as overlapping components that amalgamated to aid autonomy development.

At this point, it is important to go back to the operationalization of autonomy as reviewed by Tudor (2001). As the author explains, autonomy can be developed at either the psychological or the political levels; the first one being (in its simplest definition) autonomy

for learning and the latter meaning autonomy that has social and/or cultural repercussions in the long run. If we take a look back at our data analysis, we realize that what the students report is mostly related to autonomy in its psychological scope, a finding that should not be surprising if we remember that autonomy at the political level can be developed and verified only throughout long periods of time.

That having been said, the second major finding comes from the perspective of the students, who assessed the autonomy development strategy as generally positive, both in their quantitative and qualitative evaluations of it. On this, they pointed out as their major challenges time management and mastery of linguistic content. In the case of time management, this finding suggests that either (1) the students were just sticking to a culture of learning (a *modus operandi*) that is customary in their language learning setting (procrastination and the like), or (2) homework and their academic load in general were placing too much pressure on them. In the case of content mastery, we made the point in the preceding lines that if this may appear as a limitation, it is in reality an achievement because the participants became aware of their own weaknesses, which is a crucial step in the shaping of learner autonomy. But beyond these seeming obstacles, what stands out is that the participants were able to reflect on their own progress, a desired characteristic in constructivist teaching-learning (see Sivasubramaniam, 2014). Along with this, this finding echoes Reindeer's (2010) conclusion that autonomy development is not only a complex but also a lengthy process, as well as Tamjid and Birjandi's (2011) finding that self-assessment helps enhance autonomy.

In general, the findings suggest the strategy has been perceived as highly successful on the part of both participants and researchers. But most importantly, they indicate that by being able to pinpoint their own limitations in the completion of the action plan, the students have started to walk their first steps into what Tudor (2001) has called the political dimension of autonomy.

5. Conclusions and Implications

As stated elsewhere in this paper, this study set out to examine the link between self-evaluation strategies and learner autonomy in a public university in Costa Rica. Upon its completion, we have arrived at three major conclusions.

First and foremost, there is a connection between self-evaluation strategies such as the ones used in this action plan and the nurturing of student autonomy, as evidenced in the positive appraisal of researchers and participants alike. The study complements previous assertions by Fernández that, out of the whole inventory of autonomy development strategies, weekly plans and student diaries help build up the essentials of learner autonomy.

In the second place, the study allows to conclude that autonomy is something that can and must be fostered. While it is not something one can teach as a discipline or as content per se, it is a life-skill that can be nurtured through strategies such as the one implemented

herein. Self-discovery and students' opportunity to set their own goals play a crucial role on this, especially in a constructivist context where the learning experience is to be shaped not so much by outsider experts, but by what the students consider to be their major learning needs and wants.

A third conclusion is that promoting autonomy is a paramount need. As researchers, we observed that students had difficulty organizing their time and meeting the tasks proposed in the weekly plans, which implies that issues such as time management and procrastination may be left unattended if teachers do not overtly address autonomy in class. The occasion may well serve to claim that, as suggested by Richardson (2003), instructors are responsible for a great share of the work, chiefly the implementation of constructivist teaching principles such as guiding the students into constructing knowledge, set up "opportunities for students to determine, challenge, change or add existing beliefs and understanding through engagement in tasks that are structured for this purpose" (p. 1626), and their awareness of their own limitations in the learning process.

Lastly, although the study focused on the connections between self-evaluation strategies and learner autonomy, the findings may well have a bearing on how to approximate more to the implementation of constructivist pedagogies, a central element not only in the context of the study, but also in the educational agendas of many language institutions in Costa Rica and worldwide.

6. Limitations and Future Research

While findings were generally positive, we have identified three major limitations that need to be acknowledged and tackled in further research. Since the study was limited to a small sample population, it can only account for what was done within the constraints of the action plan; naturally, then, we cannot imply that this will solve the problem of autonomy in contexts elsewhere. An additional uncontrolled limitation is the fact that we cannot assure that students will keep on approximating to the political dimension on autonomy unless enforced and verified through further, longitudinal studies. A last limitation is comprised by the scope and depth of the study, which, in turn, limits the transferability of findings to larger populations. Henceforth, only more research will finally prove whether our teaching paradigm will render the positive outcomes it rendered in our study.

On this, we suggest that future research studies adopt bottom-up rather than top-down (i.e., outsider expert) methodologies. We support this type of research because it allows for the local solving of educational needs, as it allows the teacher-researcher to engage in a process of continuous inquiry that does not end upon conclusion of the study, but continues to shape and reshape the teaching enterprise until more solid, context-bound pedagogical models are finally devised.

All things considered, we would like to conclude by reiterating the need to undertake similar research projects in EFL contexts, as well as to work collaboratively with fellow teachers, researchers, and institutional authorities alike. But, most importantly, we need to

assist our students in developing their own autonomy habits and strategies for life, which is best summarized in the old proverb: “if you give a man fish, you will feed him for a day; but if you show him how to catch fish, you will feed him for a lifetime.”

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Appendix 1: Weekly Plan



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Bachillerato en la Enseñanza del Inglés
IO-5309 Fonología del Idioma Inglés
Segundo semestre 2013

WEEKLY PLAN SHEET

Week N° _____

Date: _____

Student's name: _____

Instructions:

1- Write the correct information under each category presented. The information you write must refer to the present week.

Content to learn this week	Homework assigned for this week	Schedule to do the homework assigned	Self-designed activity aimed at learning the content	Schedule to do the self-designed activity

Appendix 2: Student Diary



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Segundo semestre 2013

STUDENT DIARY

Week N° _____

Date: _____

Student's name: _____

Instructions:

Answer the following questions based on this week's lesson.

1- How did in general you feel about today's lesson? Why did you feel this way?

2- How would you assess your participation in today's lesson?

3- In which two ways has today's lesson contributed to the improvement of your pronunciation?

Instructor's comments:

Appendix 3: Strategy-Assessment Checklist



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Segundo semestre 2013

Through the past weeks you have been creating weekly plans and a class diary. Assess this experience by responding to the following statements. Mark with an X the number that best depicts your appraisal of the statement given. Feel free to make any comments you feel necessary. Take the following scale into account:

1= nothing 2= a little 3= quite a bit 4= very much

Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
THE WEEKLY PLAN helped me to					
1 effectively organize my time					
2 better learn the contents proposed for the week					
3 take charge of my own responsibilities					
4 think over my learning actions of the week					
THE STUDENT DIARY helped me to					
5 become aware of my role as a learner in class					
6 clearly see how the class contributed to my learning					
In general this EXPERIENCE					
7 motivated me to do more than required to learn the class contents					
8 made me more independent as a learner in this course					

Identity Formation through the Use of English in Spanish Contexts

Jairo Eduardo Viales Angulo
Universidad de Costa Rica, Costa Rica
jairoedo@gmail.com

Adrián Carmona M.
Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica

Ronny Carmona M.
Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica

Resumen

A lo largo de este estudio, se investigó cómo los adolescentes usan palabras en inglés en contextos del idioma español. Esta investigación también propone averiguar cómo los estudiantes usan palabras de léxico Inglés y la forma en que aumenta cuando se reúnen para estudiar, socializar o simplemente por placer. Por lo tanto, el objetivo principal fue analizar los agentes que instan a los adolescentes a usar palabras en inglés como "Sólo bueno", "¿qué pasa?", "Hombre", "hombres, Bro" y cómo esos agentes moldean su identidad. Una de las razones por las que los estudiantes adquirieron este léxico es a través de dispositivos tecnológicos como ordenadores, internet, teléfonos celulares, ipod, wii, videojuegos, y tabletas. Estos dispositivos han ayudado a moldear su identidad al usar las palabras en inglés a la hora de ser usados o cuando los mezclan con el español. Esta situación con el tiempo hará que las palabras del idioma inglés sean parte de la lengua vernácula de Costa Rica. Como resultado de este fenómeno, el término "spanglish" se ha convertido en lenguaje común en jóvenes estudiantes. Esta investigación se llevó a cabo en el Liceo Experimental Bilingüe de Moravia, Liceo Vargas Calvo y Liceo de Río Frío donde los adolescentes han comenzado a utilizar Spanglish como una mezcla híbrida de dos idiomas (español e inglés) con el fin de definir su identidad mientras interactúan con los otros.

Palabras clave: espanglish, identidad, léxico, vernacular, híbridos

Abstract

Throughout this study, it was investigated how teenagers use English words in Spanish contexts. This research also proposes to find out how students use English lexicon and the way it increases when they get together to study, to socialize or just for pleasure. Therefore, the main purpose was to analyze the agents that engage the teens to use English words such as "sólo good", "what's up?", "man", "men, Bro" and how those agents mold their identity. One of the reasons why students acquired this lexicon is technological devices such as computers, internet, cell phones, ipod, wii, video games, and tablets. These devices mold their identity under English words when they mix them with Spanish and if this situation will eventually make these words part of the Costa Rican vernacular language. As a result of this phenomenon, the term "**spanglish**" has become common language in young learners. This research took place in Liceo Experimental Bilingue, Liceo Vargas Calvo and Liceo de

Río Frio where teenagers have started to use Spanglish as a hybrid mixture of two languages (Spanish and English) in order to define their identity while interacting with others.

Key words: Spanglish, identity, lexicon, vernacular, hybrid

1. Introduction

It is well known that verbal language is the most effective way that humans use to express feelings and to shape their behaviors according to their own variation of the language. English words used by teenagers; for example, reveal communication and behavioral patterns that distinguish them in terms of projecting themselves as being different in society. They use the language that makes them feel and act different from other groups. In this case, teens' use of English words in Spanish contexts differentiates them from adults. It is quite interesting to observe that words which are sometimes considered inappropriate or fashioned by adults contain lots of information about how teenagers express their personality, their feelings and their thoughts regarding to everything surrounding their contexts.

In Costa Rica, it is noticeable how native language has changed because of the introduction of English words to the vernacular vocabulary. Further, the use of English words in Costa Rican contexts has recently become popular among people of all ages but especially among teenagers. Through these English words they construct their identity of belonging to a different cultural and social group who shares common ideas, and expresses thoughts freely in different contexts in which they behave according to the language that they have chosen and shaped. Additionally, teens have created and started using a kind of hybrid language: "English lexicon in Spanish conversations". Therefore, English vocabulary has started to be part of the Costa Ricans culture, language and identity. For example, it is very common to hear teenagers using expressions like "sólo good", "what's up?", "whatever", or "vámonos de party", when they talk to each other in homogenous groups. Mitchel (2005) states that, it is very common to observe how in different countries around the world, there is a mixture of the native language and English that the younger people create and use in their interaction with others specially those with whom they share similar features: like age, social events, music, studies and T.V programs. (4). Many people, especially older adults, have criticized the influence English language has had in young people behaviors and many of them believe it can cause negative consequences preserving native languages because it may represent a way to lose peoples' identity. However, Gaper has mentioned that the expansion of English is a good source to motivate all those who speak other languages to identify themselves as bilingual and bicultural and to be proud of it (2009). In other words, there is a place not only for local languages but also for English as the global business language between countries around the world. According to Mitchel, English has become the international language used by more people around the world. He also suggests that in the future, there will be three different versions of English: one will be conversational, another will be proposed as a language variation used by people in very specific settings like at school, at work, at reunions and a third variation will be the use of English as a

standardized language to communicate with foreigners (4). People act about situations in ways which are like the ways they talk about them.

Objectives of the Research

This study aims to investigate the variation of English that the teens are constructing to mold their identity by using English words in Spanish contexts.

1.1. General Objective

The main objective of this study is to find out if the use of English words makes the teenagers, at the Liceo Experimental Bilingüe (LEB) different from the teens at the Liceo de Río Frio (LRF) and the teens at the Liceo Vargas Calvo (LVC).

1.2. Specific Objectives

- a. To identify English words that have been added to teenagers daily vocabulary.
- b. To describe agents of identity that transform the teens in regards to the hybrid language that they have created.
- c. To find out if teens from LRF and LVC use English Lexicon.

2. Review of the Literature

In order for a language to survive and grow, each new generation must acquire the language. Conversely, a language can be virtually destroyed if one generation does not learn it. Because of this, every language group must have a plan for passing on the language from one generation to the next. This may occur at home, at school, or in a combination of places, but it does not happen without effort because languages evolve as the cultures and identities of the communities are affected by social, cultural, political, technological, educational changing agents in progress. In that way, language variations emerge.

As much as language is connected to traditional knowledge and culture, community groups should act as agents of change to be capable of incorporating new vocabulary meaning to meet the needs of young people without affecting the traditional identity. For example, since the 21st century technological advances such as television, computers, fashion and cell phones have made that people read and understand written manuals that contain technical words in English. Thereafter, people have started to use those technical words that they read, write and listen even without having any knowledge of English. But from the context in which those words are shaped, people learn to identify the meaning of that vocabulary by relating it to the technological instruments. Soon, people, especially the younger population mold their lives around technology and the words that emerge from it. Nowadays, technological terms are used naturally, if they are English words, people just make semantic

and phonologic adjustments or adaptations and keep using them until they have become part of the Costa Rican language. We establish our identity through our use of language; according to the contexts and needs that we face as the world evolves.

2.1. Language and Identity

People are constantly building language. They negotiate the meaning of the words when they interact with others. Riley (2007), states that one of the main areas of ethnolinguistic includes the relationship between language and culture (11). Further, he emphasizes that language is the mean source by which a person becomes an inhabitant of the world shared by others and also provides the means by which, in conversation with others, the common world becomes plausible to him. So language is molded by the individuals who use it to negotiate meaning of ideas and expression of feelings and project their behaviors as groups of people who shape their self-image around their language. Velasquez (2007) similarly, affirms that language is the basic devise for, thought, knowledge, imagination, construction and interaction with reality that allows individuals interact with their environment (86); in fact, language allows the construction of the human culture, serving as a support for different cultures and languages to communicate between them. People need to interact and construct their lives around language.

2.2. Language and Educational Policies

Language tends to dominate and it often must be learned in order for young people to become educated and find an employment. As they start to use the language in power, to survive in a global world, they act as agents or transmitters of change. In the case of English in Costa Rica, teenagers and young adults adopt the language that has relevance to their everyday lives. In this particular case, young people are learning English to obtain individual development and at the collective progress, Costa Rica benefits economically because more multinationals companies that require qualified labor force is settling down in our country providing more young employees with job opportunities. For these reasons, the native language of a country can suffer modifications in its lexicon and these changes can be transmitted to future generations who acquire new words that they modify and use as part of their native language. Consequently, cultures and languages are transformed by the language in use. In the case of teenagers, they are consolidating their personal and social identity and it is language which lets them name it and elaborate it, and interact in and through speech, language let them take referents for their differentiation as a social group different from the children and adults. Because of its use all over the world, English is considered today's lingua franca. It is the language in which many nations around the world carry out their economic, political, cultural and academic transactions. Mitchel states that globalization has brought on the internalization of English which is been adopted as the non-native English speakers of all over the world. (54). People have impressed their own identities into the language, thus creating regional variation when modifying semantic and phonetic features of the standard version of the language. Very soon, the world might be using a conventional form of English to conduct foreign communication and a form of dialect for domestic use. In the case of Costa Ricans, people are mainly influenced by the United States

in many aspects. For example, Costa Rica's economy depends on the United States. The Costa Rica's government works around the transformation of a national identity because the international demands of United States have made that more Costa Ricans learn the language of that country. This phenomenon is happening too fast, and young Costa Ricans are the most affected ones, politically molding their national identity to find employment at the multinationals. They are learning a Tico English variation which is a mixed of English with Spanish. Because the English teachers of the public schools are not native speakers of English so they make mistakes and teach over them. (Powell, 97). It might be identity transformation in progress, more evident in the youth. Since the official language of the Ticos is Spanish, there are linguistic attempts to acquire English under the educational policies. It is also important to mention that according to the Plan Nacional de Inglés (4) not all the Costa Ricans understand and speak good English, the Ticos have been exposed to English. For instance, they have access to it everywhere from billboards for movies in San Jose, television programs, different brands, internet items and telephones among others; however, they do not speak English well because their teachers are not well trained in English. In order to provide more people in the country with the opportunity to learn English, the Ministry of Public Education has integrated a new educational program which is called "Costa Rica multilingue" using strategies to train workers to communicate in English to attract international investments from the United States. The Costa Rica Multilingue program was announced by Mr Arias Sanchez, the president of Costa Rica, he promoted this program as the XXI century's strategy for the country development. Eventually, in 2008 the President of Costa Rica, Dr Oscar Arias Sánchez said that because of globalization, English is quickly becoming a universal language. For instance, business across borders as well as over the internet, whether it is conducted by small companies or multi-national corporations is largely conducted in English. In this regards, Ilan suggests that "the path of English in the twenty-first century is being defined by two opposing forces: on one hand, the language is solidifying its universal reach, consolidating its status as the lingua franca of business, advertising, and scholarship; on the other hand, it becomes fragmented inside the United States, Canada, India, and other so-called English-speaking countries by virtue of its localisms" (45). For Costa Ricans to survive in that globalized world, they must learn English under any cost. So, it might be happening that the mixture of English and Spanish words and context is the result of that transformation of the Tico identity and instructed and molded by the state and external agents to serve their purpose. This change of culture and language is reflected by the teens who are exposed to English not only at school, but a home and at other places: internet cafes, meetings with friends and any electronic tools.

Furthermore, Whorf adds "human beings do not live in the objective world alone; they live within a language use, which is their medium of expression for their society" (241). That is why language is their main source of communication through which they transmit who they are, and negotiate who they want to be taken for. Global politics and diplomacy are largely conducted in English as well. In fact, English is the world's second largest used language. Part of this can be attributed to the USA's status as a major world power in economic, political and military aspects and by the huge influence of American movies. Because of the English language's popularity and use all over the world, many non-English

speaking countries including Costa Rica in 2003 increased English lessons in the public education. This definitely affects the way people talk since many English words have been adopted by Costa Ricans. Dr. D'Amore states, "English has influenced Spanish and that many people especially the younger generations have adopted English words replacing the already existing Spanish ones (241). Furthermore, she mentions that in their interaction with other languages, both Spanish and English throughout their history have both borrowed vocabulary from each other. Linguistic change is an inevitable part of the constant evolution that human society undergoes. She also states that purists and academies may delay in accepting innovation, but history teaches that the prolonged use of vocabulary, borrowed from other languages or neologisms, eventually leads to acceptance and formal adoption in the standard language.

In the case of Costa Rica, teenagers have been changing the way they speak by adding English words to their native language when they interact with others, which may represent a way of enriching Costa Rican's lexicon for future generations.

To conclude, people are all marked by the language they speak. It definitely proclaims their identity to others, and it shapes their minds along cultural barriers. Language is also the main way that people use to connect with those they love, those they serve, those we belong to. In communicating with strangers and foreigners, we can find that the language barrier is a more immediate obstacle than cultural differences. And it is in learning and using another language that we come closest to the understanding of the cultural universe of others.

3. Methodology

Qualitative researchers can apply their standards to quantitative research or quantitative researchers applying their standards to qualitative research. Each functions within different assumptions. Finding fault with one approach with the standards of another does little to promote understanding. Each approach should be judged on its theoretical basis. The quantitative approach relies primarily on the collection and analysis of numerical information. The primary aim of this type of research is to collect, count, measure, and assess the meaning behind specific variable and ultimately, devise statistical explanations for what the researchers have learned. Additionally, quantitative research is based on numbers and pure data, the focus of the study are the variables in isolation.

In education, qualitative research seems to provide tools that contribute to the development of knowledge not only of the teachers, but also of the students in their daily life situations. In this qualitative research it is important to identify what the relationships between the students and the teachers are.

3.1. Type of Research

This study is a qualitative study because the researchers followed the principles of a qualitative research to collect data on the participants' natural environment. This study is based on the principles of a qualitative research because the investigators have gathered data from non-participant observations, field notes from the participants while interacting naturally within their environment. LeCompte suggests "field notes to keep scenes and events fresh and to maintain fieldworkers' concentration intense and their awareness sharp" (90). Additionally, a survey and unstructured informal interviews were carried out.

The data gathered from the fieldwork through the data collection instruments was coded, described, analyzed, categorized and examined to interpret the results of this study. In the case of this study, data was collected and analyzed from three public high schools of Costa Rica. Two from the urban area and one from the rural area, all of them are public high schools. The first is located in San Pedro de Montes de Oca (San José, Costa Rica) in which students have less English lessons per week (5 lessons) compared to the Experimental Bilingual High school sample from Moravia (San José, Costa Rica) where teens have 10 English lessons per week. The other is a high school located in Río Frío, (Sarapiquí, Costa Rica).

Once the schools were selected, the sample was reduced to 9th graders whose ages are 15 years old because they have enough instruction in English. It was determined that lower graders would not contribute much to the study because due to their ages they might not have been good informants.

This may be also considered an exploratory study because as Hernández, Fernández and Baptista state that, "the purpose of the investigation is to know more about the phenomenon relatively new in this context" (258-59). Additionally, the researchers have been using a qualitative data collection method which Mackey and Gass define as "the type of research that is based on descriptive data that does not make use of statistical procedures" (162). Besides, qualitative research tends to work with few participants who share similar attributes. In the case of this research project, teenagers who are 15 years old were observed while interacting with others in real situations. Additionally to observations and field notes, other data collection methods such as questionnaires or survey and informal interviews gave relevant information to test the research hypothesis: teenagers at the LEB negotiate their identity based on the use of English lexicon.

3.2. Population

The participants of the study were criteria-based selected because "the researchers established in advance a set of criteria that the participants must have for the study. In regards to this sample selection strategy, LeCompte (2003, 69) states that ethnographers based their sample selection in a set of criteria or list of attributes that the subjects must have for the study.

There were a total of 79 subjects divided into a sample of 30 students from the LEB, 20 from the Liceo the Río Frío (LRF) and 29 from the Liceo José Joaquín Vargas Calvo (

LVC). The 79 participants were selected because of their common features that make them homogenous: all of them are 15 years old, they are in 9th grade. They are students of the public system, and they all are having English instruction at the time of the study.

The entire population of this project includes all the Costa Rican teenagers of the central and urban valley who share the same attributes with the sample. They are Costa Ricans, both boys and girls who watch T.V. all of them are students. Our sample is more specifically teens from La Trinidad de Moravia, more specifically from the Liceo Experimental Bilingüe, from Vargas Calvo high school and from Liceo de Río Frio, in Sarapiquí. One particular characteristic of the Experimental bilingual high school is that the students take more lessons of English per week than the other two traditional public schools.

3.3. Data Collection Instruments

For the purpose of the study, the researchers designed and adjusted the following data collection tools: non participant observation, informal unstructured interviews, survey and filed notes.

3.3.1. Observation

As Mickey and Gass (2005, 175) point out “observations refer to the methods of generating data which involve the researcher immersing in a research setting, and systematically observing dimensions of that setting, interactions, relationships, actions, events and so on. Within the project, some teens were observed interacting with groups of their same age, same school, and same preferences in order to see with whom they use English words. Then, the researchers observed teens interacting with other groups of people of different ages and with different preferences like their teachers and parents who were interviewed too. By observing teens interacting with other who do not share similar attributes it was detected to whom teens used English words and with whom they did not. During the observation, the investigators wrote field notes of the situations in which the English lexicon was used. By observing participants from two different high schools, the researcher could analyze and compare if the ones from the Bilingual system distinguished from the other institutions where the students were not taking the same amount of English lessons per week. It had helped researchers to determine if the language exposure has any influence on the student’s use of English vocabulary.

3.3.2. Informal Unstructured Interviews

This allows researchers to investigate phenomena that are not directly observable. LeCompte (2003, 45) suggests key-informant interviewing. “Key informants are individuals who possesses special knowledge, status, or communicative skills and who are willing to share knowledge and with others.” Definitely, teenagers’ parents and teachers will be key- subjects for this study.

3.3.3. Confirmation Survey

A survey is used to involve a large number of participants. Gordon establishes that (1975, 164) this instrument can be administered to more people at the same time. In this study, survey was administered to 79 participants from the three high schools. Definitely, this instrument has helped to carry out a more objective research.

3.3.4. Field Notes

Transcription is a kind of field notes as it is pointed out by Clifford (1990 47-71) transcription is writing something down as it occurs, recording as much as possible as it exactly happened. But we will also use description which is another strategy for field notes used by the investigator to form a comprehensive account of whatever has been observed in the field or even out of it. For the purpose of this study both transcription and description were used.

4. Data Analysis Procedures

The data that is going to be collected through unstructured interviews, observations and surveys is going to be triangulated by the researchers in order to get some findings and reach into the conclusions of the research project.

4.1. Presentation and Discussion of the Research Findings

The data gathered from the survey, interviews and observations was analyzed. The information was organized by coding the different questions and answers and synthesizing the information from the survey. From the interviews the researchers categorized the data to confirm patterns. The researchers compared contrasted and established linkages and relations between the information from three types of instruments to finally come up to a consensus and report the conclusions. The researchers administered the survey, the unstructured interview, and they took field notes from the three different groups, below is the report of the data gathered from the three groups as follows:

It was necessary to know if English words were used by teenagers at LEB² in their daily conversations. So, researchers gave them a survey to complete. However, in order to know if this population was the only one that used this English lexicon, the survey had to be applied to other two public high schools, Liceo Vargas Calvo (LVC) and Colegio de Río Frio (CRF):

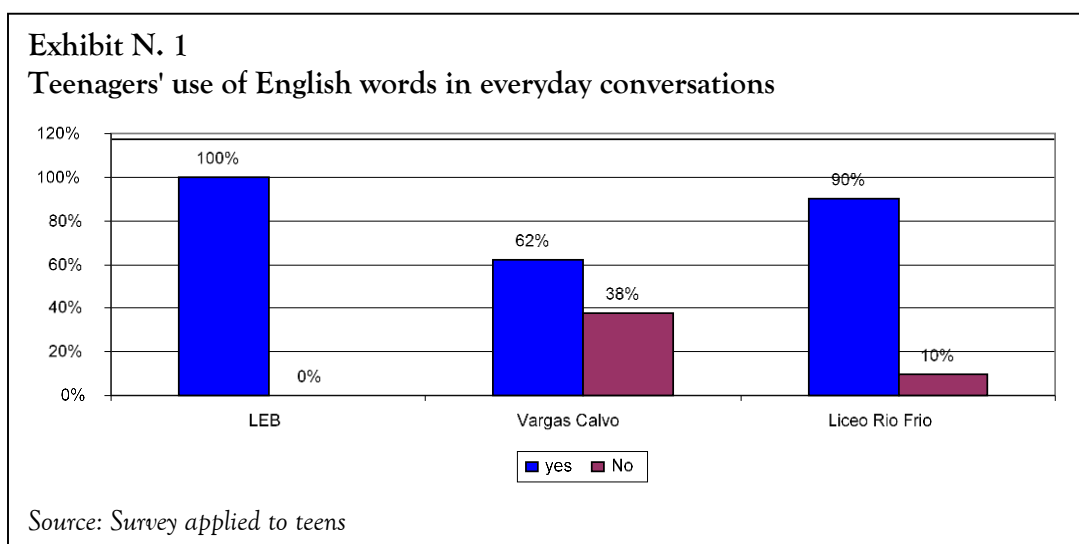
The results of this study has helped researchers to find out if the use of English words in Spanish contexts happens at the LEB only or if the other teens at the CRF and at the LVC are influenced to use them too. The analysis has shown that the students' identity is molded as a common situation around English words used by teens from public high school in Costa Rica. The purpose of this chapter is to interpret the information gathered from the survey.

² Liceo Experimental Bilingüe

The analysis of the data about the teens at LEB, at LVC and at CRF using English words as a symbol of identity has revealed three important aspects in relation to identity formation. 1. In the first place, the analysis has shown that teens from the three high schools use English words and that they do so when interacting with other people: for example, their friends, parents, teachers, and other teens. It was English lexicon sometimes. 2. The analysis also demonstrated that in the three high schools the teens' parents and teachers use English lexicon and that the teens from the three high schools use English words mostly at places like high schools, cafeteria and at homes, but the students from LEB differentiated from the other two high schools because they use those words in more varied places. 3. Third, it is discussed the frequency of the use of those words, the transmitters of those words and the reasons teens from the three high schools had to use the English lexicon.

4.2. Teens Negotiate their Identity by Using English Words while Interacting with Others

Adolescents are consolidating a personal and social identity and it is language which lets them name it and elaborate it; therefore, interactions through speech with others let them take referents for their differentiation as a social group different from that of children and adults. As Velázquez states, "Identity, whether it is or an individual, social or institutional level, is something which we are constantly building and negotiating all our lives through our interaction with others" (87). While listening to teenagers talking at school specifically at the Liceo Experimental Bilingüe, an interesting phenomenon was found and it was that most of teens at this high school use English words while they talk in Spanish. For this reason, the researchers found interesting to investigate about this situation and how it may help teens to construct their identity within society. However, it was necessary to collect data in other two schools so that we could find out if the phenomenon was proper of the teens from the LEB, or if it was a pattern that was also seen among other teenagers in different high schools.

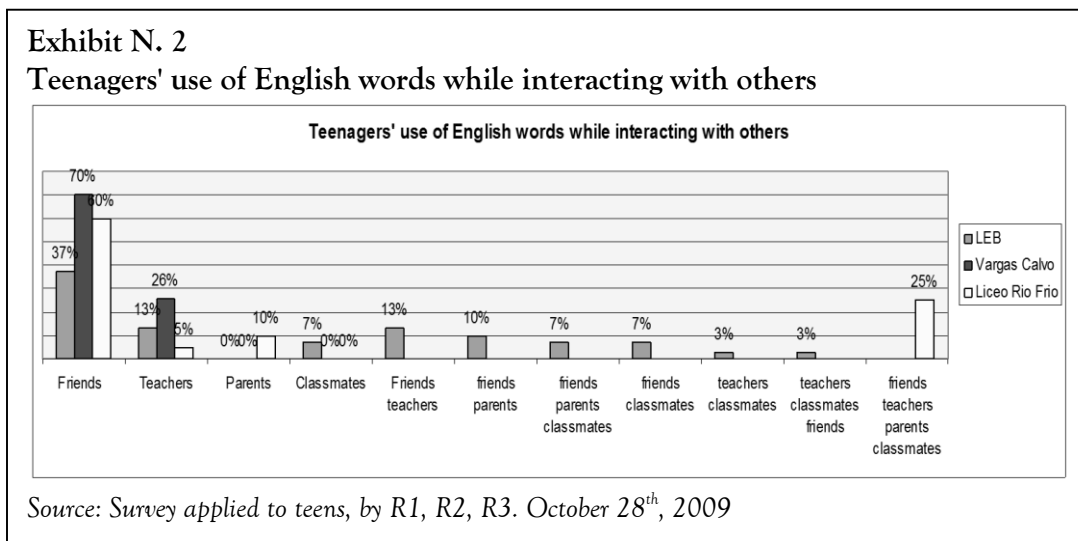


The main purpose for the first question of the survey was to investigate if teens use English in everyday conversations. The graph below (exhibit number 1) compares the English words that teenagers use in the three high schools. As we can see 100% of the teens at LEB use English words, 62% of the teens at LVC, and then, 90% of the teens at CRF manifested to use English words in Spanish context.

In sum, teenagers from the three high schools use English in Spanish contexts, but those from the LEB use them the most, followed by the CRF with 90% and finally, the ones who use English words the least are the ones from the LVC.

4.2. Teens use English Words with People who are Near Them

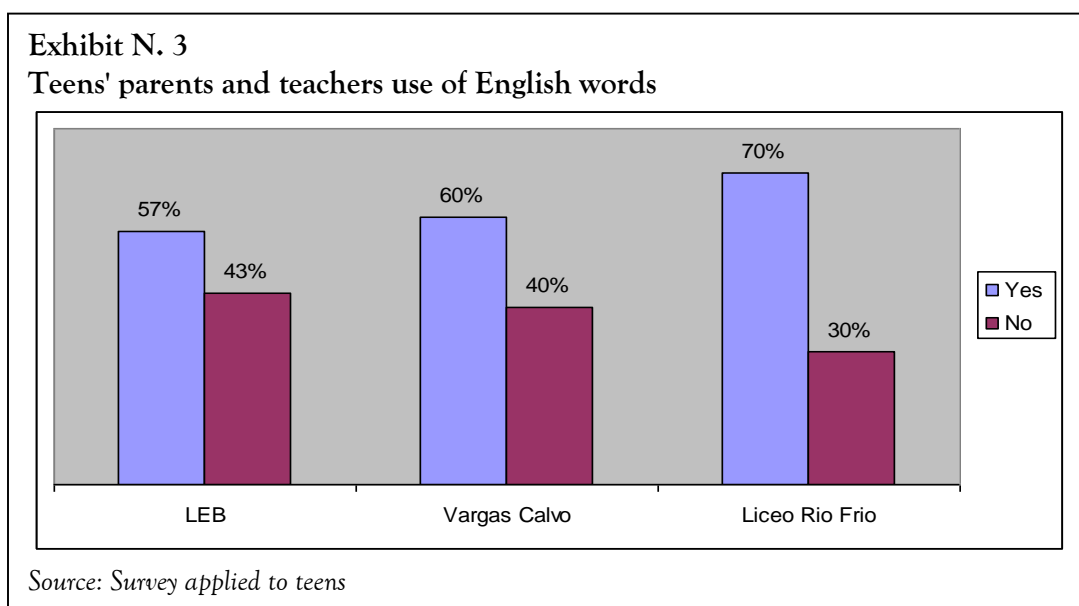
According to Riley “social identity is made up a configuration of membership and each membership is knowledge-and-language based. It is social, that is constructed in our communicative dealings with others in inter-subjective couplings” (113). Teens construct their identity by following patterns that can be provided by their parents as primary models or their friends. In the case of language, it can give a sense of belonging or of being excluded from a group. Not being able to speak a language may exclude the person from a group. Once it was found that teens definitely used English words within their conversations in Spanish contexts, it was also important to know with whom they use these words the most. The findings were very interesting as seen in the graph below. Teens use English words with most of the people who are around them every day. Additionally, the purpose of this is to synthesize gathered data from the three high schools and compare the three settings. Based on the results in exhibit number 2 it is established that the teens who use English with their friends are the ones from L.V.C with 70% followed by 60% at the CRF and 37% at the LEB. However, the graph shows that at LEB, the teens use English with more people besides their friends. On the other hand, teens at L.V.C use English combined with Spanish only when they are interacting with friends. In the case of the teens from the CRF, they include English words when talking in Spanish with teachers, parents, friends and classmates.



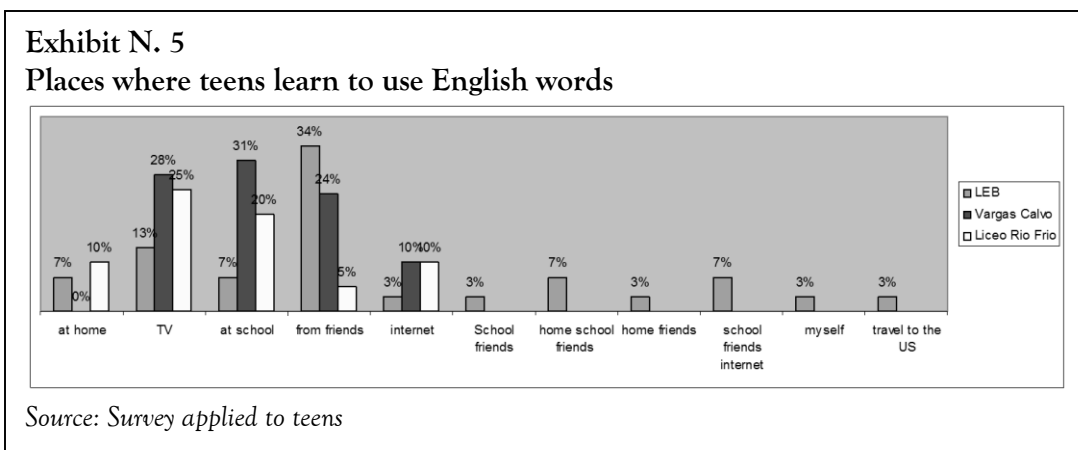
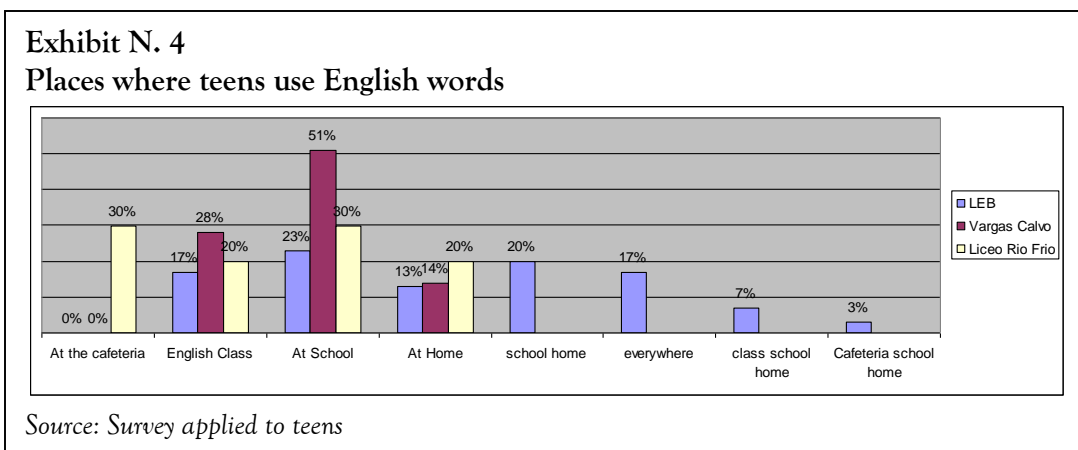
To conclude, we can say that the use of English words among teenagers is becoming very common not only among those who are part of a bilingual educational system, but also among those who follow a traditional educational system (three lessons of English per week). Besides, it is important to point out that this type of hybrid language is actually being used not only when they interact with friends but also when they talk to anyone who is near them such as parents or teachers which make us think that this language is becoming part of their teen's identity.

4.3. Institutions as Agents of Identity Construction Where Teens Learn English Words

People who are very close to teens besides their friends are their parents and teachers. Most of the time teens follow lexicon patterns that are learnt at home or at school. For this reason, it was important to see if teachers and parents also use English words while they speak Spanish. The information collected and analyzed to know if they used English words with their parents and teachers shows that the highest percentage 70% of the students' teachers and parents from LRF use English words when speaking in Spanish, 60% of the students from LVC mentioned that their parents and teachers use English when talking in Spanish, and 57% of the students at the LEB mentioned that their parents and teachers use English when speaking in Spanish. Additional information was obtained from unstructured interviews showed how teachers from other subjects at the LEB are using such lexicon in their classes since they have noticed that it is becoming part of the LEB context. Moreover, parents are also trying hard to understand their children new way of talking in order to get closer and have a better relationship with them. It is also important to identify what places teens frequently visit to use English words in order to find and understand why these teens use English words in these places. The research shows the most common places teens use English words.



The graph below (exhibit number 4) shows the places where English words are used by the teens at the three high schools 30% of the students from the LEB mentioned that they use English at the cafeteria, 51% from the LVC and 30% from the LRF. In regards to the classroom, 28% at the LVC, 20% at the LRF and 17% at the LEB. The places where they use English the most is at the high School, there is 51% from the LVC, and 30% from the LRF and 23% from LEB. There is a significant distribution of places where English is used by the teens at the LEB. That means that these teens are more frequently developing their English language in many places such as the English class, the school, home, cafeteria, and everywhere. In contrast, students from CRF and LVC use their English words in places like cafeteria, class, school, and home.



After the interpretation of the data, it was found that 34% of the teens from the LEB learn to use English words because of the influence of their friends and T.V programs. Even though, the bilingual instruction teens at the LEB have said that they learn English words from other contexts different from school. For example 7% of them take it from home, another 7% from friends and internet and 3% of the selected population use English because they have had the chance to travel to the United States or because they like the language so much they learnt it by themselves (as they stated in question number 6 of the survey).

Different from the other teens from the LRF, who 25% said to get English from T.V, 20% at school and 10% at home.

From the answers described in the graph above 34% at the LEB gets the words from their friends and 31% at the LVC get them from their high school and only 7% at the LEB.

4.4. Frequency and Reasons Why Teens Use English Words in Spanish Contexts

This chapter discusses and analyzes some reasons why teenagers use English words in Spanish contexts during their daily day conversations. It is also necessary to know the frequency these teens use these English words while interacting with others in order to know if this use of English words in Spanish contexts becomes part of their personal identity. This use of the English language when interacting with others reinforces what Riley states about identity, he states that “...identities are the product of social interaction” (16). Language also plays an important role in defining peoples’ identity because it contributes to the development of an individual’s personality. Language is not only an instrument, but an essential element of one’s knowledge and identity. Language is a vehicle human beings use to transmit culture and to construct their identity within a society. It is a construction of people’s identity in order to define who these people (teenagers) are and how they understand themselves and others.

4.4.1. Frequency of English Words Defines Individuals Identities

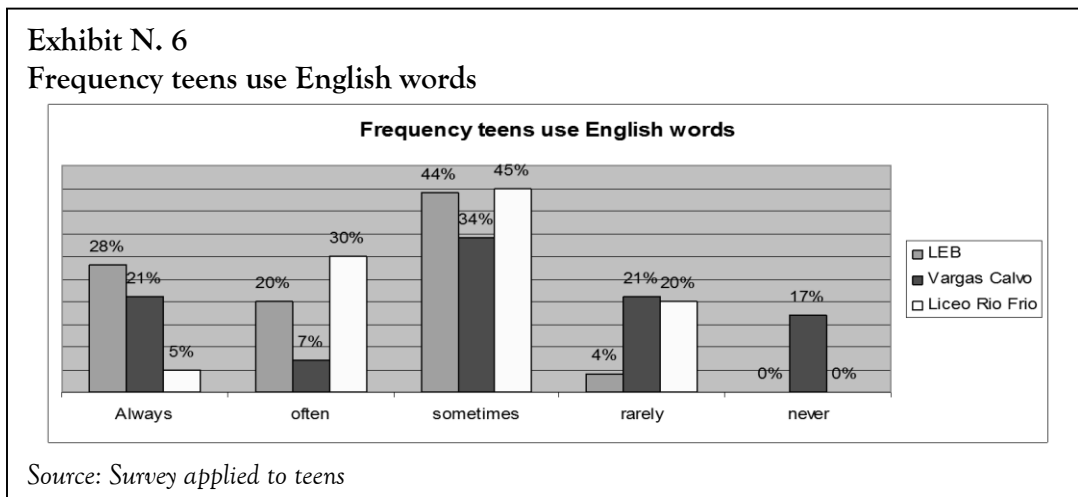
All type of knowledge is provided by group interactions in which “...participants establish intersubjectivity to enter into social contact with another. This process helps individuals for the formation of their inner identity” (Riley 33). As is shown in the graph below, students from the three high schools mentioned that they use English words sometimes which mean that English is becoming part of their daily day conversations. Exhibit N° 6 compares the students’ frequency use of English words, 45% of the students from LRF mentioned that they sometimes use English words, 44% of the students from the LEB and 34% of the teens from the LVC.

Additionally, two informants from the LRF said that they use English words because they work on weekends for Sueño Azul Rainforest Hotel and they must be in touch with the language.³

Human beings have to understand that they belong to a group identity. The sense of belonging and the quality of self -esteem are the two ingredients to be part of a group into society. In addition, Fantini mentions that “Yet, words serve only to evoke conceptually what is meant; thereby, providing vicarious experiences for both speaker and hearer. Once acquired, words are a powerful influence throughout our entire lives, mediating all that humans think, say, and do.” (14). Language contributes to the forming of the development of the individual personality. Fantini also states that “Contact with individuals of other

³ Research Field Notes N 2

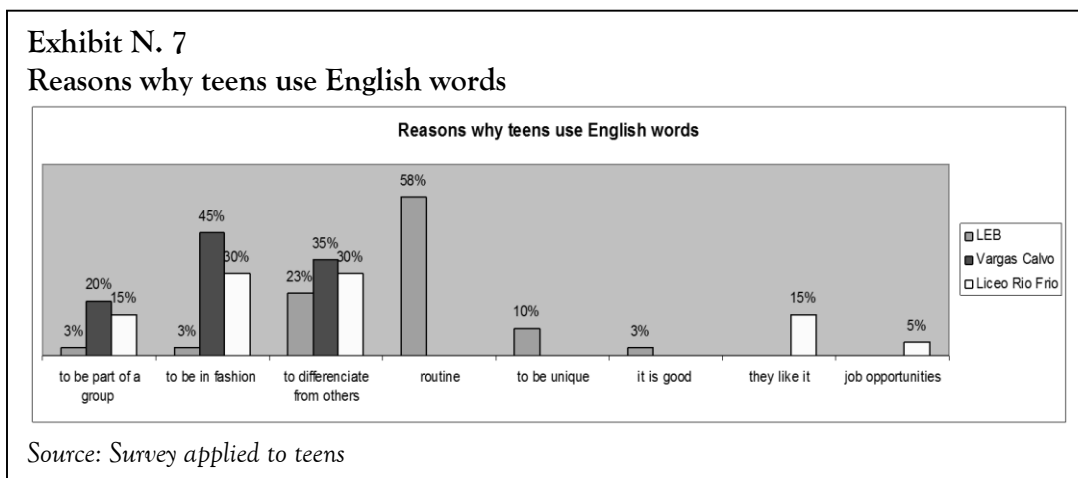
language and culture backgrounds not only opens a door to exploring another worldview but also ultimately provokes questions about one’s own values and assumptions. Intercultural exposure provides opportunities not only for learning about others but also for gaining new perspectives on oneself.” (16).



The research has shown that English is becoming part of the teen’s way of talking, but it was also important to know about the frequency they use this language and where they learn to use such a way of talking.

4.4.2. Reasons to use English Words Help to Construct Teens Identity

Teens are building their identity. They are constantly looking for patterns to follow in order to belong to a specific group that is why for the researchers of the project, it was important to know the reasons why teens are using this new way of talking. Exhibit No.7 shows the most frequently reasons why teenagers use English words in Spanish contexts.



Identity is not only a set of natural characteristics (learnt, acquired or inherited) that define individual’s personality but also constitutes a way of living and being. In other words,

these characteristics to some extent determine the type of person these teens are. Nonetheless, human beings are dynamic and can change their ways of life, appreciate different values and identify other social groups. They will never be able to escape some aspects of their original group identity, but they will be able to acquire some new traits that characterize them. It is evident that individuals can have a perception about who they are and what characteristics they have to develop in this world. In fact, people interact accordingly. Identity according to Riley is “A quality which is ascribed to an individual human being by other human beings” (86). It is mentioned that the speaker’s social interaction in the construction of identity is based on compensations strategies. It is fundamental to all social interaction and to the construction of our society and culture.

People want to know about others’ beliefs, affiliations, and intentions in order to interpret their words and actions and to predict their future behavior. “Human beings do not live in the objective world alone or alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society.” (Sapir 209).

Considering Sapir’s point of view it is concluded that most of the students in the three different high schools interact and use English words for routines, to be in fashion, and for differentiate from others. Through the use of the English language these teens not only interact with others but also let them use it as a mean for communication and expression within their society. Further, Sapir also mentions that “It is quite an illusion to imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language and that language is merely an incidental means of solving specific problems of communication or reflection. The main point is that the 'real world' is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation” (210).

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Considering that the use of English words are becoming used by teens at the LEB, there was doubt if it was happening due to the many English lessons that the students from that school receive, or whether they used those words as a symbol of differentiation from the students at other high schools. From this study the following conclusions aroused. The analysis of the data shows it should be discarded that the teens from the LEB are the only ones who use English because it was found that the other teens at the LRF and at the VC did too. By comparing the three high schools, it was identified that the teens from the rural area, Río Frío de Sarapiquí, are highly using English words too.

Indeed, the teens from the LEB do not distinguish from the others due to the use of words because the teens at the VC and at the LRF use them as well. It was shown that the teens use English words as a kind of created slang in informal conversations with friends mostly. However, the LEB students distinguished from the students of the LVC because of their use of a mixture of both languages not only happens at the schools, but it was found

that at contexts: cafeteria, home, school and in class. In contrast to the LVC, the teens limit their words to the classroom. Moreover, we can also see from the analysis of the data that teens from the three institutions use English words that are short, simple in pronunciation but that contain meaning to the contexts. They use a more informal lexicon with friends than with teachers or parents.

Equally important is to mention that most of teens get the vocabulary from T.V, internet and friends. It can be interpreted that from the three settings, there was one where the teens learn the words from high school. The rest of the subjects get them from different media. Furthermore, it is essential to rescue that the reasons for using English words vary at the three high schools. For example, the reasons at the LEB are for they have more contact with English, more time exposure as they said it is for routine, they are using words naturally. Then at the LRF, they like it, job chances, fashion and feel part of a group. The same happens at the LVC. It was noticed however that there were some limitations through the study. For example: the researchers needed more time to devote to this study. Also the data collection instruments like photos were not appropriate for this study. So the ones that were more useful were a survey, observation and interviews, but feel that with more time in the fieldwork, they could have recorded the teens and use more varied tools to gather data. For further studies, the researchers consider it would be interesting to study more in detail if those words will remain in the Costa Ricans' dialect as product of a language shift. It can happen that as the teens get mature, the words vanish.

Then, it would be interesting to study more in detail if teens' behavior around those words have significant effects in the Costa Rican's identity, or their behavior is temporary as the words are in fashion. Another study could be an investigation to find out if the people who do not know English in Costa Rica understand the conversation with words in English, to see if the use of those words affect meaning.

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Annex 1. RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

SURVEY

Research Project: Teenagers from Liceo Experimental Bilingüe, La Trinidad, who are 15 years old, negotiate their identity based on the use of English words in Spanish contexts.

Course: Ethnolinguistics Perspectives

General Objective: The purpose of this instrument is to collect data regarding whether or not teenagers at the LEB use English words in Spanish contexts.

Specific Objectives:

1. To know the English words teenagers at the LEB use when they communicate in Spanish.
2. To find out when and where teenagers at the LEB use English words while communicating.
3. To identify who teenagers use English words with.
4. To find out where teenagers learn to use phrases in Spanish that include English words.

Instructions: Please answer the questions with blue or black ink only. You can add more information to the answers.

1. Do you use English words in every day conversations when speaking in Spanish?
Yes () No ()

If yes mention four of them

2. When do you usually use English words when you speak Spanish?

- () when interacting with friends
() when interacting with teachers
() when interacting with your parents
() when interacting with your classmates

Other: _____

3. Where do you usually use English words when you speak Spanish?

- () at the cafeteria
() at the English classroom
() at the school
() at home



4. How often do you use English words to express ideas?

- always often sometimes rarely
 never

5. Do your parents and teachers use English words when talking in Spanish?

- Yes No

6. Where do you learn to use English words?

- At home
 from television
 At school
 From friends
 From the internet

Other: _____

7. Why do you think you use English words while speaking Spanish?

- To be part of a group to be in fashion to differentiate yourself from other.

Other: _____



Annex 2. RESEARCH FIELD NOTES

Research Note 1

Observation done at LEB, La Trinidad on Monday September 7th

While teenagers were taking lunch, they were talking among themselves and these were some of the expressions they used

- “La teacher de Espa nos dejó un tareón”
- Que mae, me compra una “burger” “please”
- Présteme el “phone” para llamar a mi casa
- “Ok” nos vemos a la salida
- Que “cool” estuvo la clase, mae
- Qué “brother” a qué hora se va a su chante.
- What? Está loca
- Me presta el “CD”

Observation 2 done at LEB on Wednesday September 9th while teenagers were in the Library

- Hola “tea” (referring to teacher) como está?
- “Hellooo”, está loca yo no expongo
- “Sorry”, me pasa el diccionario
- “Really” no le creo
- Esta “crazy”, es demasiado
- “Wait”, ya casi termino
- Oh “my God” ya tocaron
- Hola teacher, hoy anda muy “fashion

Negative Lexical and Syntactic Transfer on EFL Learners' Written Production

Joselyn Zúñiga Garro
Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension
joselyn22-z@hotmail.com

Roger Segura Arias
Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension
segura.roger79@gmail.com

Mauricio Espinoza Fernández
Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension
maue2009@hotmail.es

Resumen

El aprendizaje de un lenguaje es un proceso natural para los seres humanos el cual les permite comunicarse con otros sin dificultad. Sin embargo, cuando se trata de otro sistema lingüístico, la labor se vuelve aún más compleja ya que demanda a los estudiantes a pasar por una serie de etapas para lograr un óptimo dominio de cierto idioma, proceso conocido como interlenguaje. Durante ésta progresión, varios mecanismos cognitivos interactúan, siendo uno de ellos la interferencia del lenguaje. Por lo tanto, cuando se aprende una segunda lengua (L2), los estudiantes se enfrentan a una variedad de retos como la transferencia de estructuras de su lengua nativa (NL). Este proceso se vuelve más complicado cuando se trata del aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) ya que los aprendices encuentran diversidad de obstáculos debido a la transferencia negativa desde su primer lenguaje (L1). Basándose en esta premisa, un estudio cuantitativo fue realizado con el propósito de investigar la presencia de transferencia negativa del primer lenguaje con respecto a léxico y sintaxis en inglés en la producción escrita en estudiantes de primer ingreso del Diplomado en Inglés de la Universidad Nacional (UNA), Sede Regional Brunca. Este pretende identificar palabras y estructuras transferidas negativamente, con la intención de ofrecer un mejor entendimiento del proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje. Con el fin de cumplir con los objetivos principales, se aplicaron tres instrumentos, siendo el de recolección de artefactos el núcleo del análisis. La recolección de materiales escritos da comprensión de la transferencia negativa lexical y sintáctica. Así, los ejemplos lexicales proporcionan suficiente evidencia de la presencia de interferencia con respecto a ortografía, categoría gramatical, y uso incorrecto de artículos; y los sintácticos explican inconsistencias en relación al orden de palabras y desacuerdo de tiempo y número. Después de analizar la información, la transferencia de lenguaje parece ser un proceso innegable a nivel sintáctico y lexical el cual evidencia la transferencia negativa del primer lenguaje como un proceso común de interferencia.

Palabras clave: interlenguaje, transferencia, transferencia negativa, léxico, sintaxis

Abstract

Learning a language is a natural process for human beings; it allows people to communicate with others without difficulty. However, learning other linguistic systems is a more complex undertaking. Indeed, people go through a series of stages of language proficiency development referred to as interlanguage. During this progression, several cognitive mechanisms take place, being language interference one of them. Hence, when learning a second language (L2), students endure a variety of challenges such as transfer of structures from their native language (NL). This process becomes more complex when dealing with the learning of English as a foreign language (EFL) since learners encounter an array of obstacles due to negative transfer from their first language (L1). Based on this assumption, a quantitative study was performed with the purpose of investigating the presence of L1 negative transfer regarding lexis and syntax in English written production in first year English Associate Program students from the Universidad Nacional (UNA), Brunca Extension. It aimed at identifying negatively transferred words and structures with the intention of offering insight into the EFL learning and teaching process. In order to meet the main objectives, three instruments were administered, being the artifact collection the core of the analysis. The collection of written material yields understanding of negative transfer concerning lexis and syntax. Likewise, the former provides ample evidence of the presence of interference regarding spelling, part of speech, and article misuse, and the latter sheds light on syntactic inconsistencies in terms of word order, and number and tense disagreement. After analyzing the data, language transfer appears to be an undeniable process at the syntactic and lexical level which authenticates negative L1 transfer as a common type of interference.

Key words: interlanguage, interference, negative transfer, lexis, syntax

1. Introduction

When learning a second language, a learner develops an idiosyncratic system which lies in between his mother tongue and the target language, this process is called interlanguage. In fact, it was regarded as a dynamic system that is created by the interaction of several factors formed by five central processes that have been attributed to it; one of these processes is negative language transfer (Selinker, 1972, p. 35). The purpose of the following research is to analyze L1 negative transfer in written production as an important source of evidence of the interlanguage system that exists in the development of students' target language. This study is based on the collection of reliable data from the administration of several research instruments and the collection of artifacts with the aim of categorizing students' most common errors in written production. Furthermore, samples gathered will be identified and explained in order to help English teachers in EFL classrooms understand, correct, and if possible -at any extent - timely deal with language interference coming from L1 negative transfer when attempting to communicate in a written mode in the target language. The following sections address the problem and its importance which are essential to justify why this issue is worth analyzing. Subsequently, the general and specific objectives are acknowledged as a means to frame the study. Finally, various possible constraints that can limit the study are scrutinized.

1.1. The Problem and its Importance

Learning is a process that occurs in all human beings. It can be done without any formal instruction like leaning to walk, or it can demand the need of formal instruction instead. However, learning can turn into a more complex process, especially when the learning of another language is involved since different factors and variables such as transfer are present. Odlin described transfer as “the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously acquired” (as cited in Arabski, 2011, p.16). This definition clearly states the fact that transfer is an influence that will frequently be present in the process of learning a foreign language. Transfer that occurs as a result of similarities in both languages is known as positive transfer. However, when the two languages, the one acquired and the one learned, have differences between them, negative transfer appears. In other words “more similarities between two language systems produce more positive transfer, whereas more language distance may lead to more negative transfer” (Wang & Liu, 2013, par. 4). This argument highlights the importance to focus on negative transfer as a process that affects learning; hence, its effects on writing may be identified.

In this paper, L1 negative transfer will be analyzed in terms of written production only. Through different experiences with different learning contexts, it has been noticed that negative L1 transfer is found in the early stages of learning. It is common to identify native structures syntactically transferred into the target language in written production. In this sense, Grabe and Kaplan argued that “native language and the second language negatively influence how an L2 writer organizes the written discourse in the second language” (as cited in Hui, 2010, p. 98). This reinforces the idea that the differences among languages disrupt the process of learning in terms of written production. That is why, it is important to investigate the main areas of writing in which negative L1 transfer interferes and decreases learning as a way to help students overcome such hindrance. As teachers, it is necessary to understand that the mother tongue will have an impact in the learning process, but it is also essential to know the areas in which it is most often present, in this case written production.

This topic is relevant to the field of teaching because it helps teachers be aware of the mechanisms involve in the learning of a foreign language, at the same time, it provides instructors with the necessary understanding to contrast the effects of negative transfer in students, and take advantage of the positive transfer as well. Even though, there has been a lot of controversy in regard to the influence of transfer in the learning process; it has been proved that transfer does have an effect in such process, and that it is most of the time negative caused by the variances between languages. Different authors have supported the importance of L1 transfer in an EFL context, and it has raised its relevance from a practical and theoretical perspective because it is an issue that affects the learning of a foreign language, and it is worth to be analyzed and discussed as an intrinsic part of the teaching process. Thus, the purpose of this study is to identify the most common negatively transferred words and structures to provide insight in the EFL learning and teaching process.

1.2. General Objective

To investigate the presence of negative L1 transfer regarding lexis and syntax in EFL students' written production in the first year of the English Associate Program at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension, Perez Zeledon Campus.

1.3. Specific Objectives

- To gather free writing samples from first year students in the EFL Associate Program.
- To analyze the data obtained from the artifacts in terms of lexis and syntax.
- To identify the most common negative L1 transfer patterns in first year students in the English Associate Program.

1.4. Possible Constraints

When carrying out a research study on language features, many aspects are influential and can have negative implications in the flow of the investigation; therefore, characteristics as the contact time with the target language learner, the willingness of the participants to provide the appropriate answers, and the extraction of results from substantial data might not be in favor of the aims and objectives of the research project. Next, these limitations are explained separately.

1.4.1. Contact time

Due to the fact that the present project has a cross-sectional style, the contact time with the students will be shortened. This may be a critical aspect for the sufficient collection of reliable data since contact time will be limited to the administration of an instrument; this may lead to a restricted amount of usable information having as a result an inadequate quantity of valuable material of L1 transfer samples as to draw pertinent outcomes related to the analysis of interlanguage processes, specifically negative transfer. A practical solution to this problem is the design of accurate and well-administered instruments as to collect the necessary data to reach the objectives of the research.

1.4.2. Willingness of the participants

One relevant variable in the collection of data for a research study is the willingness of the participants to be involved effectively in the process at the moment of administering the instruments and collecting the artifacts. In many situations, students are not willing to provide their work for study purposes because of feelings of shame, insecurity or simple reluctance. Likewise, participants may feel constrained to do the task which leads to inaccurate answers, careless answers, or even no answers at all. This may be a problem when gathering a satisfactory sum of data or language samples to really state a conclusion in regard

to negative transfer. A plausible solution for this constraint is to remind participants that all data collected has academic purposes and to indicate in the instruments used that the information gathered is absolutely anonymous.

1.4.3. Substantial data

The administration of well-prepared instruments is a useful data collection technique for research studies; nonetheless, even if the instruments are precise, it cannot be assumed that students will actually present interference problems. After the administration of the instruments, the researchers may detect that there are not enough language samples to suffice determinant conclusion about the effects of L1 transfer into the target language and as part of the interlanguage existence.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Implications in Language Learning

Learning languages has become a necessity for many people around the world; however, this process can be long and difficult for many. In fact, Brown (2007) referred to learning a second language by stating that “[it is] a long and complex undertaking. Your whole person is affected as you struggle to reach beyond the confines of the first language into a new language, new culture, a new way of thinking, feeling and acting” (p.1). Learning a new language requires dedication, practice, and understanding about the intricacies met in the process. Moreover, there are many variables which may affect the learning development. Shoebottom (2014) outlined some of these variables; they can be internal such as age, motivation, and personality; others can be external and deal with the curriculum, instruction and access to native speakers (para. 3-14). The latter point is of great significance in the EFL context and affects learners directly.

2.2. Implications for EFL Students

Students of English as a second language do so in countries or areas where English is spoken natively. On the contrary, Brown (2007) remarked that learners of English as a foreign language learn it in their native culture with not many direct opportunities to use the language outside the classroom (p. 205). In this sense, EFL students may face harsher circumstances since their only sources of input are the teachers and the materials used during instruction. Some students can also benefit from target language media, but it is not a widespread resource. Therefore, the language teacher plays a central role in EFL instruction. Teachers become bridges between the target content and the students’ learning. Harmer (2007) stressed that teachers need to be able to create and support rapport, and know a lot about the subject matter. Also, language instructors must keep abreast of new developments in teaching and learning (p. 30). Even when the teacher does a good job, it is the learners themselves who must take advantage of everything being provided by the educator and make it work for their benefit. Once students have taken language in their hands and realize that

they are the constructors of their own leaning, production in the target language appears and aspects of their interlanguage start to show.

2.3. Interlanguage Development

Learners' language can show characteristics that are unique and that are different from the target and native languages; Ellis (1997) referred to interlanguage as "a mental system of L2 knowledge" (p. 310). The concept of interlanguage has served as a basis to explain the process of language development in learners. The first attempts to produce language will most likely have many traces of the students' native language, and it will progress to be more target language-like. Selinker (as cited by Ellis, 1997) remarked that learners create their own linguistic system and claimed that there are certain premises to target language learning; the most important ones for the purpose of this study being: Learners' grammar is permeable and transitional, and the employment of learning strategies to build interlanguage data. The former deals with the flexibility that interlanguage has of being influenced by external factors and to be modified through rule addition. The latter focuses on variability presented in each individual learner's interlanguage by the use of their own tools to construct language (pp. 33-34). It is, therefore, imperative to analyze interlanguage in more detail with the intention of understanding EFL learning in a holistic fashion. To do so, it is significant to hone in on one of the five central psycholinguistic processes involved in interlanguage development: language transfer.

2.4. Language Transfer

When analyzing interlanguage in the EFL context, it is key to comprehend the processes that underlie this idiosyncratic linguistic system. Selinker (1972) identified five central processes to interlanguage. The first, and the one that is to be the basis for this project, is language transfer, where the native language is responsible for the fossilization of linguistic items, which are part of the interlanguage. Thus, it is crucial to examine the types of transfer present in the process. Transfer can either be positive, or negative. Positive transfer facilitates target language performance while negative, also called interference, hinders communication. In this sense, Lado (as cited in Cook, 1993) alleged that when faced with transfer of structures, one must worry about the differences between the languages; the similarities can take care of themselves (p. 13). In fact, positive transfer would be hard to identify since it will take the form of the target language, and it could be difficult to distinguish it from already acquired linguistic forms; especially in languages that share some similarities as English and Spanish.

2.5. Negative Transfer in Context

English and Spanish are two languages that, owing to their widespread use around the world and their importance, come into contact when learners of one attempt to learn the other. At first, they may seem immensely different, but as learners start to use it, they find several similarities that can be employed in positive transfer processes. Some of these similarities are lexical, grammatical, and syntactic but are limited as a cause of linguistic disparity. Indeed, Spanish is a Romance language and English belongs to the Germanic family, which makes

them quite different in nature. Lexical items are rather troublesome among learners; in effect, English spelling is a difficult aspect to master by Spanish speakers. Swan and Smith (2001) argued that Spanish high correspondence between sounds and letters makes getting acquainted with English irregular spellings a challenge (p. 96). Negative transfer is also found in syntactic structures. English and Spanish have clear cut differences regarding the construction of sentences, the placement of particles, adjective order, and the use of auxiliaries. Swan and Smith (2001) observed that Spanish is freer in terms of word order; it marks number and gender in both adjectives and nouns, and Spanish does not use modal auxiliaries (p. 98). Such differences can be identified in learners' difficulty to construct English-like utterances.

The importance of identifying transferable items in EFL students lies on the possibility language instructors can have to better understand their students' interlanguages, and to appropriately deal with errors. Indeed, teachers may have more chances to avoid linguistic items from fossilizing; thus, helping students attain higher proficiency levels in their target language.

3. Methodology

Before analyzing the data, it is important to refer to the methodology employed by providing information in regard to the research design, and the setting and subject of study. This investigation follows a quantitative approach. In these types of studies, as expressed by Gall, Gall and Borg, the researcher “develop[s] knowledge by collecting numerical data on observable behaviors of samples and then conduct numerical analysis on the collected data” (as cited in Barrett, 2007, p. 48). This means that the information gathered will be quantified to support the aim of the investigation. According to Earl Babbie (2010), the main characteristics of quantitative studies are:

- The results are representative of a population.
- Data is analyzed in terms of numbers and statistics.
- Studies can be replicated since it uses larger sample sizes (p.1).

In the case of the scope, it is descriptive because “subjects are usually measured once” (Babbie, 2010, p.1). This is done through the use of a set of instruments administered to a specific population to gather the necessary information to support this research. In fact, three different instruments were designed: One for the teacher; one for the students; and one for artifact collection. Regarding the setting and subjects of study, this research takes place at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension, Perez Zeledon Campus; the target population is students from the same institution. The sample population is students from the Associate Program; this group is composed of sixteen students, and their ages range from eighteen to early twenties. The sampling method is convenience sampling. According to Kenneth Ross (2005), this type of sampling is “used to describe a sample in which elements have been selected from the target population on the basis of their accessibility or convenience to the

researcher” (p.7). In this case, the researchers are familiar with this setting, and the teacher was open to let investigators administer the instruments.

4. Data Analysis and Results

The main purpose of this investigation is to analyze the effects of negative transfer on students’ writing. In order to gather relevant information to support the research objectives, three instruments were administered: One to the sample population, one to the teacher, and one related to artifact collection. The results of these instruments are triangulated in order to fulfill the objectives of the study. The following analysis presents a compilation of the most relevant data obtained.

First, an inventory of lexical transfer errors found in the students’ written production is presented. It illustrates errors in spelling, parts of speech, and misuse of articles (see appendix 1. Second, samples from syntactic transfer errors were also collected and quantified (see appendix 2).

4.1. Difficulty When Writing in English

The majority of the students asserted that they agree to have some difficulty when producing written language. The first question deals with their general acuity with regard to the complexity that writing in English may have. In fact, writing, just like speaking, is a productive skill, so its mastery is usually delayed owing to lack of input. Only a six percent has selected “neutral” and no participant chose disagree or strongly disagree; this tendency emphasizes that writing, due to its complexity, may be subject to negative transfer from the mother tongue (see appendix 3). This information is supported by the teacher who thinks that negative transfer is present in most, if not all linguistic areas; phonology and syntax being the most clearly identified. This fact emphasizes students’ perception and at the same time, reinforces the idea that it is hard for students to produce target language forms. If the inventory of students’ main mistakes is analyzed, it is noticeable that students do have problems when writing in English, especially when it is related to spelling. The majority of the learners’ setbacks are related to spelling because of the interference from the L1.

In fact, spelling is a complicated linguistic aspect to master in the target language, and abundant spelling mistakes are usually found in students’ compositions, especially at lower levels. The students questioned have agreed that spelling is a complex aspect to overcome. Most of them have expressed that spelling is a common mistake in their writing (see appendix 4). As a matter of fact, in the analysis done to the writing samples, it is clear that students have serious problems regarding spelling, and that the majority of them are attributed to language transfer since they represent common spellings of the native language. Spelling is, unquestionably, an important source of mistakes in students’ writing, and it shows relevant characteristics of the native language, supporting the fact that L1 interference is present at the moment of producing written target language forms, particularly at lower proficiency

levels. The teacher also agreed on this fact by mentioning that negative transfer is present throughout the learning process, but it diminishes in intensity as the learners advance.

4.2. Use of Parts of Speech in the Target Language

Parts of speech are a troublesome point in students' writing. Gaining mastery of the use of correct parts of speech is an intricate task when learning English. Most of the surveyed students expressed that they are often corrected on this matter; placement of suffixes and prefixes as well as the lack of vocabulary combine to make this point a transferable structure. Students either use the wrong part of speech or transfer its uses from their native language to fill in the knowledge gap (see appendix 5). Thus, the error inventory from the students' writing samples illustrated that they have difficulties using possessive and personal pronouns since they are used randomly most of the time since in Spanish, there is no clear distinction in this aspect of language. For this reason, students rely on the Spanish form, often misleading the reader from the intended message. The teacher also cited that negative transfer can be a significant source of deviant forms, like the case of parts of speech in which a word can change the overall meaning of the sentence.

4.3. Problems Regarding the Use of Articles

Article use also seems to be a source of transfer to the target language. Spanish use of definite articles to refer to personal nouns, as opposed to English preferable use of possessive adjectives, can cause major difficulty. In English, articles are not pluralized as opposed to Spanish. Students proved to have troubles when using articles in the target language, especially when the word that follows is plural, since they tend to use an indefinite article. This fact clearly evidences the misuse of articles because, in the target language, the construction *a(n)+plural noun* is not possible; however, in the mother tongue it is a possible structure as in "unos tamales." It is clear how the vast majority of students are aware of article misuse. It is important to analyze how much article mishandling affects students' written production (see appendix 6).

4.4. Subject-verb Agreement in the Target Language

Subject-verb agreement is a particular linguistic form in English. Although it may seem easy if compared to other languages, it has proved to be difficult, mainly in adult learners. In fact, verb inflections such as simple present third person singular have been regarded as a late acquired form. In their opinion, the students have clear problems related to subject-verb agreement. Some difficulty may come from native-language transfer. By analyzing the written samples, it is evident how negative transfer affects students' writing since students tend to pluralize adjectives, and in the target language, it is not correct (see appendix 7). It was very common to find constructions such as "important" in which not only adjective, but also quantifiers were given a plural form as in "much". Both structures are impossible in English, and they are the result of negative transfer from the L1. The teacher also believed that negative transfer is the influence that the native language has in the target language, reinforcing this view.

4.5. Word Order in the Target Language

Many participants believed that word order is complex in the target language because English word-order has many differences from Spanish syntactic patterns. For this reason, it may result in a frequently transferred item. The respondents considered word-order as a usual mistake in their writing; fifty percent of the students believe it is almost always difficult for them; thirty one percent of them think word order is always a problem while only thirteen percent of the surveyees deemed it as somewhat difficult. Since Spanish is much more flexible than English, students may fail to provide the correct forms. In the writing samples analyzed, it was observed that students tend to translate literally what they want to say. Another important finding is the omission of pronouns in sentence which is not permitted in the target language. If these two features are compared, it is noticeable the effect of negative transfer in the L2 writing because this omission is allowed in the L1. The teacher regarded this issue as interference from the L1; and this aspect is the responsible for making students produce deviant forms in the target language.

4.6. Is Spanish a Source of Mistakes According to Students?

Students do not attribute all their mistakes to native structures only. However, it is evident that the students considered many of their mistakes as transfer from the native language. The influence that the already acquired linguistic system has on the target language may be significant when the students attempt to produce written material, but it may not be the only source of mistakes made by students. Nonetheless, it is important to remark that a great amount of students do believe that their mother tongue is responsible for their mistakes in the target language. This is supported by the 83% of students between the categories almost always and always (see appendix 8). At the end, the teacher affirmed that syntactic negative transfer is very common among language students, and he suggested that interference can only be minimized through exposure to input and explicit grammar instruction.

5. Conclusions

After analyzing the samples that were collected, it was observed that most of the students have a clear tendency to use faulty structures when producing written tasks. Errors were found at different syntactic and lexical categories, and they exemplify that language transfer is an undeniable process happening to each individual while developing foreign language skills. As found, negative language transfer affects some areas more than others; for example, in the case of lexis, spelling was the category where the most quantity of errors was found. An important aspect about these examples is that they clearly demonstrated that there is a strong influence from the mother tongue into the process of learning a foreign language. Thus, it can be pointed out that negative L1 transfer is one of the most common types of interference when students try to produce written texts in the target language.

Another example of the influence of negative transfer in the learning process of a foreign language is the inaccurate use of parts of speech. It was noticed that some of the

students made use of inappropriate words when writing paragraphs. Students make use of words as possessive adjectives for different purposes as the real English usage, but the use is not standard. One relevant aspect that was identified in this category is that some of the students made use of adjectives either as adjectives or as nouns as they would in Spanish statements with words like “cansado” or “aburrido” with a specific pattern. Moreover, an aspect that was detected is that language transfer also disturbs the natural learning because learner’s make use of several structures that they have in their native language as part of their production in the target language, which can be clearly observed in their repetitive misuse of articles. Several deviant structures were identified in this category. The analysis proved that students used Spanish constructions when attempting to write articles in English. As it was detected, they attempted to use definite and indefinite articles, but generally tracing their usage back to their already acquired language system; that is, Spanish; in fact, students constructed English sentences, following the Spanish usage leading them to have language errors.

The second area examined was syntax; and only two categories were analyzed; in this case, word- order and disagreement in number and tense. In the former, most examples indicated a solid evidence of the negative transfer reflecting Spanish word-order. Students, in several cases demonstrated that they write sentences in the L2 by applying Spanish word order rules and structures replicating that of their mother tongue’s, some of the sentence organizations that demonstrate this issue are: adverb placement or word-by-word translation, in which negative transfer can be easily distinguished. The latter is related to the disagreement in number and tense; in this instance, learners exhibited pluralization of quantifiers and also pluralization of adjectives, procedures that cannot be applied to the English language but that are extensively common in the first language; thus, one more time it can be assumed that negative transfer taken from Spanish is an irrefutable source of L2 errors, and that it affects written production at different levels as syntax and lexis.

Problems in writing tasks are a clear issue during language learning. After the analysis of the results, it is suggested that teachers take action by addressing the most problematic features in the classes. Since spelling is the area where most students have problems with, it is recommendable that the teacher employs more activities to expose students to the differences that Spanish and English spelling patterns have; either during the lesson or as homework, students may benefit from activities that can raise awareness of such differences. In the case of parts of speech usage, teachers can promote grammar understanding through specific exercises that pinpoint problematic areas. As of syntax problems, helping students to master word order and subject-verb agreement seems to be the goal. Constant practice can improve writing drastically, and not all of the students’ writing piece need to be reviewed by the teacher; self and peer assessment can help students get feedback in a less intrusive manner promoting confidence and favoring practice.

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Appendix 1

Table 1 Inventory of Lexical Errors Found in Students' Written Production			
<i>Lexis</i>			
<i>Type of data</i>	<i>Type of error</i>	<i>Errors Found</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
Written samples	Spelling	1.swimming	1. Lack of consonant doubling, not common in Spanish.
		2.pudin (pudding)	2. Spelled as Spanish word.
		3.spanish	3. No capitalization of languages in Spanish.
		4.contry	4. Spanish pronunciation correspondence.
		5.Augosto	5. It comes from the name of the Spanish month <i>Agosto</i> .
		6.critmas	6. The spelling sequence <chr> is not present in the Spanish inventory.
		7.a interesting person	7. In the L1, no distinction is made if the next word starts with a vowel.
		8.carrer	8. Transfer from the L1 is used to refer to a university major.
		9. father name	9. Lack of apostrophe, not used in Spanish.
		10.delicios	10. Lack of the diphthong <ou>, not commonly used in the L1.
		11.dinamic	11. Use of the Spanish spelling reference from the word <i>dinámico</i> .
		12.he preferes	12. Use of spelling forms similar to those in the mother tongue: <i>prefiere</i> , <i>prefieres</i> , <i>preferencia</i> .
		13.visite	13. Use of Spanish spellings for English words.
		14.intereses	14. Direct use of Spanish word "intereses" to refer to <i>interests</i> .
		15.lenguajes	15. Clear Spanish spelling interference from the word <i>lenguajes</i> . Written exactly as in Spanish.
	Parts of speech	1.Your address (his address)	1. Generalization of possessive adjectives (<i>Spanish use of "Su" to refer to she/he/you</i>).
		2.Him job	2. The use of an object pronoun, instead of a possessive one (<i>Spanish use of "Su" to refer to she/he/you</i>).
		3. Because is bored for him.	3. Wrong usage, the person uses not only a Spanish structure, but also an adjective as a noun.
		4. It was good but so tired.	4. The use of a wrong adjective form whereas in Spanish there is only one adjective form.

Table 1 continued

Written samples	Misuse of articles	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The next week 2. ..is celebrating the Holy Week 3. Take a vacations 4. Want to cook a tamales. 5. The sports 6. He hates the Mexican food. 7. Joshua works as medical assistant 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1, 2. Use of article not used in English but obligatory in Spanish. 3. Literal translation from Spanish: <i>Tomese unas vacaciones</i>. In Spanish articles can be pluralized as opposed to English. 4. Missuse of the indefinite article. Spanish <i>una/unas</i> usage transfer. 5. Article not needed in the target language as opposed to the L1. 6. Article use as in a Spanish structure, not in the target language. 7. Omission of the indefinite article <i>a</i>; not needed in the L1.
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Note. Data obtained from the artifacts collected: Unplanned written English production.

Appendix 2

Table 2
Inventory of Syntax Errors Found in Students' Written Production

<i>Syntax</i>			
<i>Type of data</i>	<i>Type of error</i>	<i>Errors Found</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
	Word order	1. I want that you visit my country. 2.the most part of the time 3. because is delicious. 4. my mom cooks leg pork. 5. he is single still. 6. but is very hard to walk. 7. since is holy week	1. Wrong order of words by cause of word-by-word translation: <i>Yo quiero que usted visite my país.</i> 2. Literal translation from the L1: <i>la mayor parte del tiempo.</i> 3. The learner uses the exact word order as s/he would use in the Spanish sentence. 4. Use of Spanish word order. 5. Use of Spanish word order for adverb placement. 6. Omission of the pronoun as in Spanish structures where it is not necessary. 7. Omission of subject, possible in Spanish.
Written samples	Disagreement in number and tense	1. he practices sport and have a good job. 4. it has much nature. 5. the firsts 6. muchs 7. differents languages 8. favorites hobbies 9. a little things 10. Importants	1. Use of sport (<i>deporte</i>) as a non-count noun known in Spanish. 4. literal translation from: <i>Tiene mucha naturaleza</i> ; causing disagreement. 5. In the L1, <i>primero</i> can be pluralized as opposed to English. 6. Transfer of pluralization of quantifiers in Spanish as in <i>muchos</i> . 7. Transfer of pluralization of adjectives in Spanish as in <i>diferentes and favoritos</i> . 8. The same as number 7. 9. In the native language, there is no distinction between a "little" (+ noncountable noun) and "a few" (+ countable nouns). 10. Spanish plural forms being used to pluralize adjectives.

Note. Transfer Errors related to Syntax in EFL students' written production.



Appendix 3

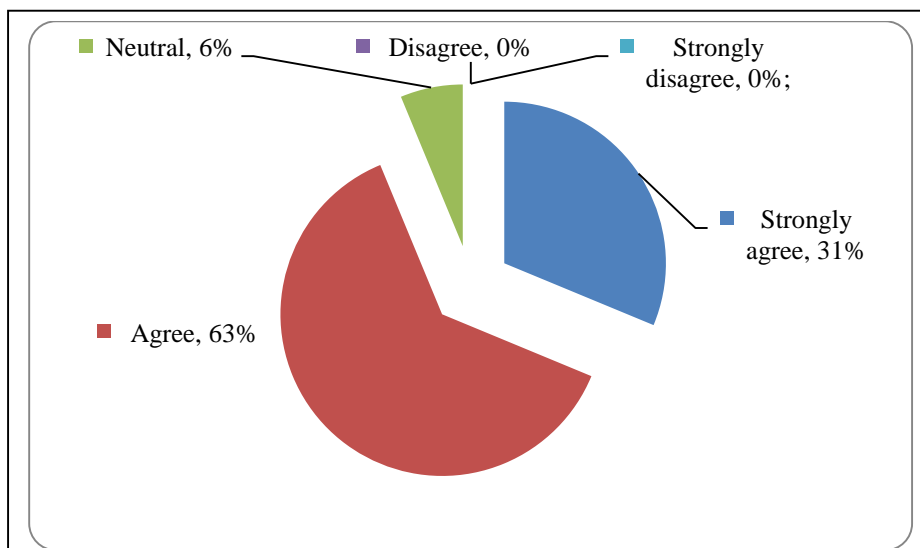


Figure 1. Difficulty when writing in English. Data taken from "Questionnaire #1: Questionnaire for Students." This figure represents the students' perception about how difficult writing in English is for them.

Appendix 4

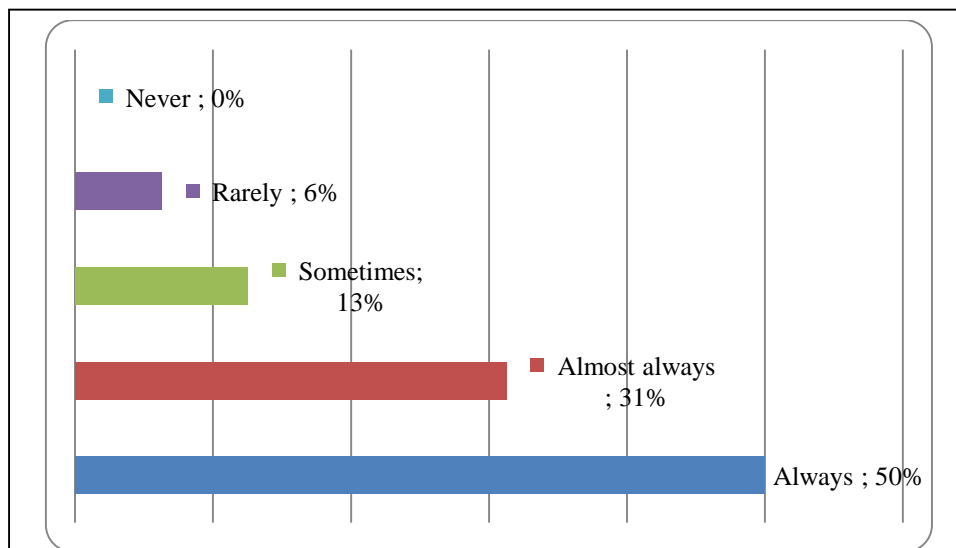
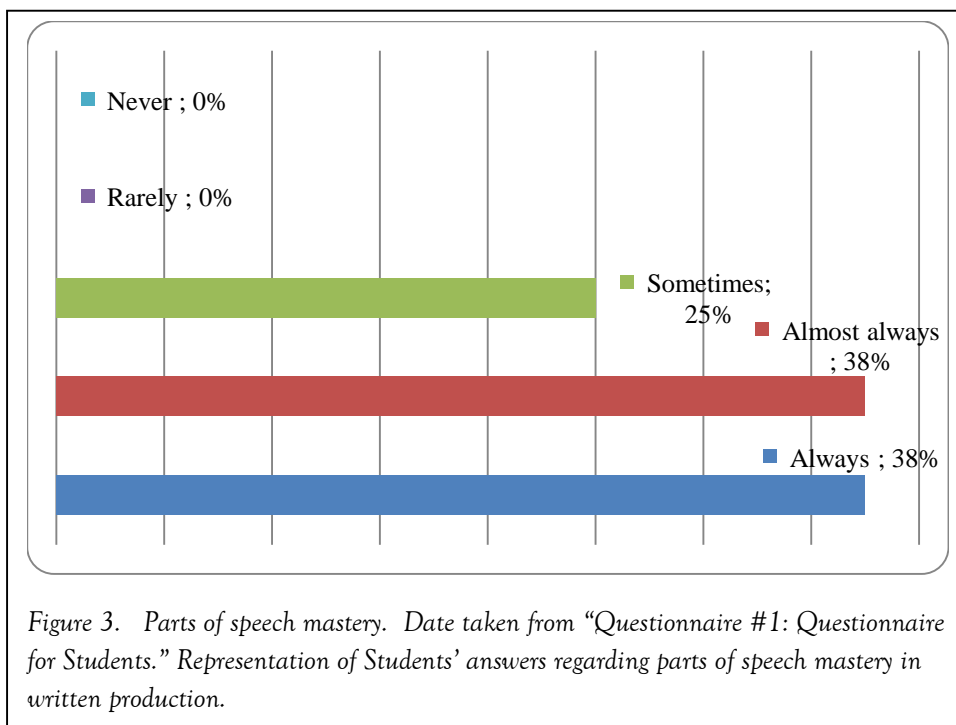


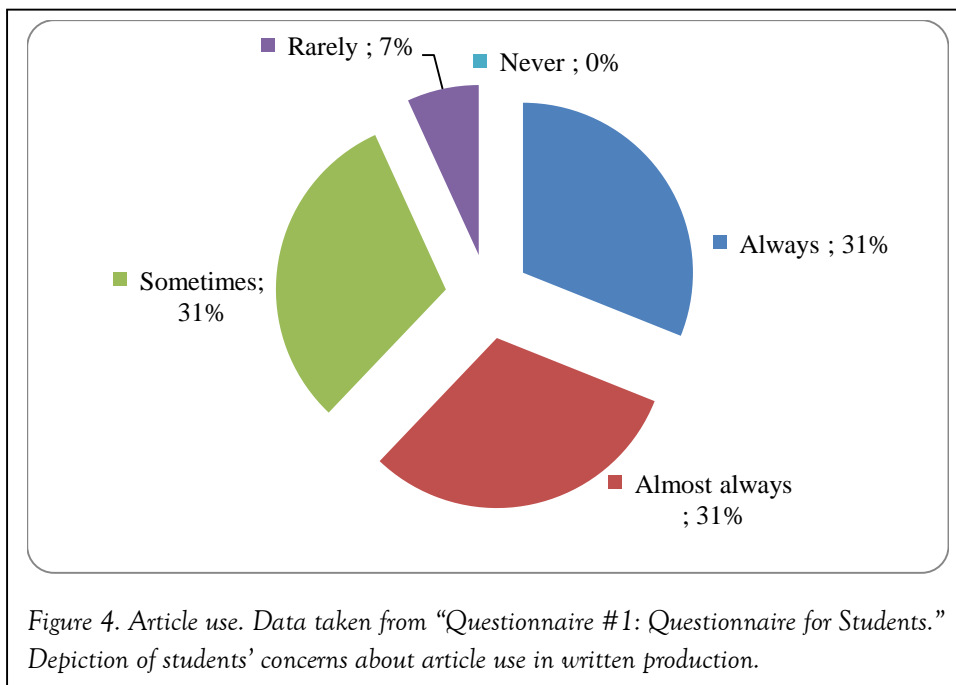
Figure 2. I make mistakes regarding spelling when writing in English. Data taken from "Questionnaire #1: Questionnaire for Students." This figure explains Students' answers concerning spelling pattern complexity in their target language written production.



Appendix 5

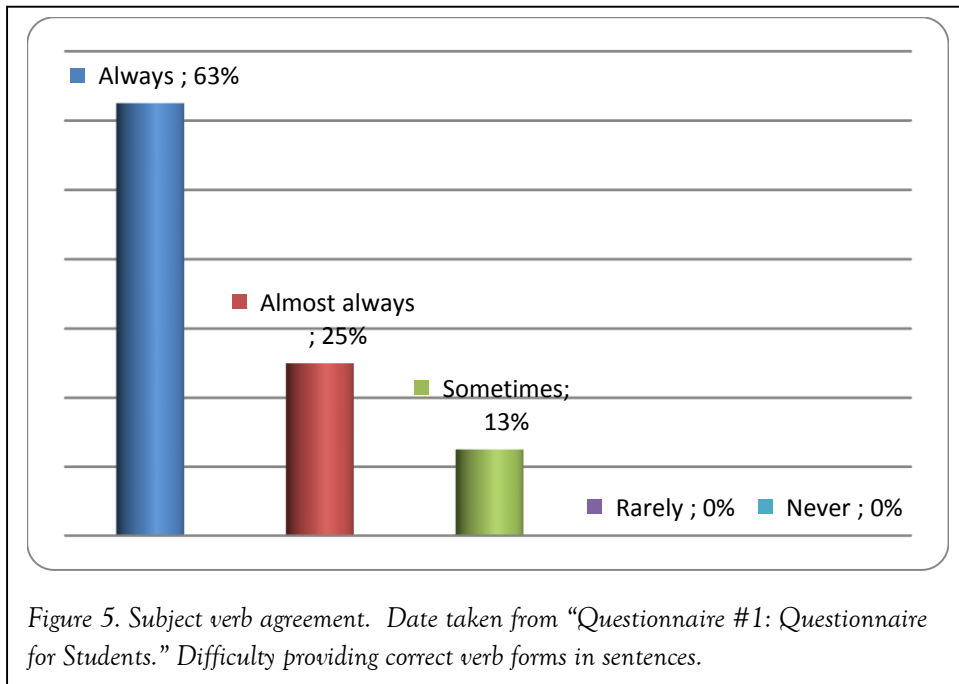


Appendix 6

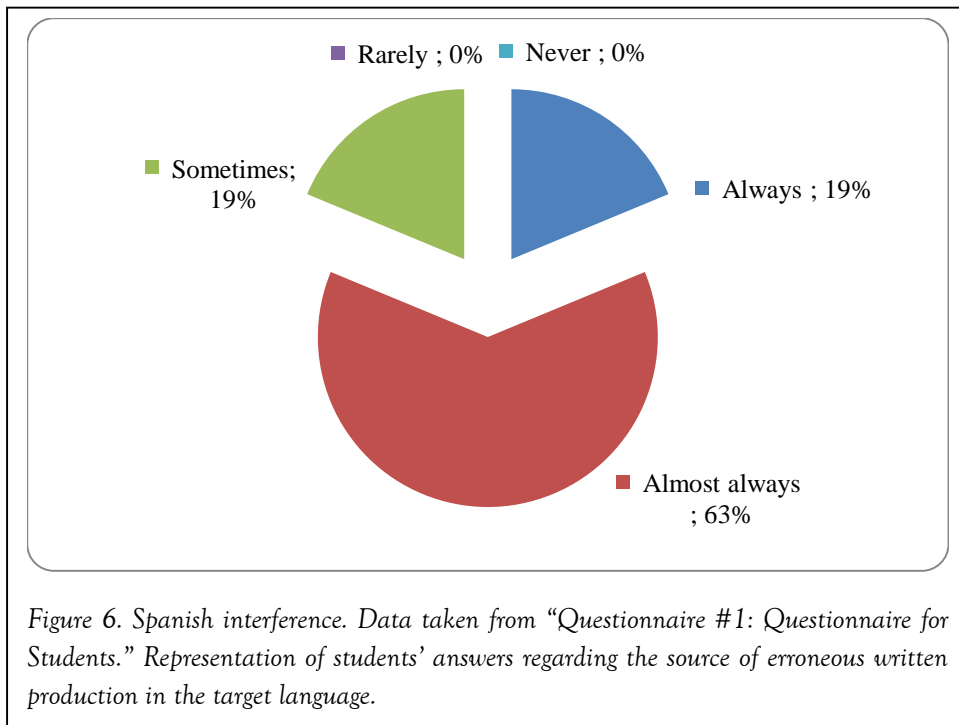




Appendix 7



Appendix 8



EFL Professors' Perceptions and Intentions towards the Integration of the Tools in UNA Virtual Program at UNA Brunca Campus

Lesly Zúñiga Vargas
Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica
lesly.zuniga.vargas@una.cr

Resumen

La ponencia se basa en una investigación que enfoca de manera primordial el uso, o desuso, de las herramientas ofrecidas por el programa UNA Virtual el cual se encarga de incentivar la utilización de las Tecnologías de la Información y la Comunicación (TICs) en ambiente educativo de la Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica (UNA). Asimismo, el estudio identifica y explica algunos factores que intervienen para que dichas herramientas tengan una limitada integración en la práctica educativa de once docentes de inglés como lengua extranjera de la Sede Regional Brunca de la Universidad Nacional. A la vez, se recogen y analizan las percepciones de los estos profesores en relación con el uso y la importancia que tienen el Internet y las herramientas educativas basadas en la web para ellos y su práctica docente. En la investigación se utilizaron métodos cualitativos y cuantitativos de recolección de datos pero el estudio tomó un diseño fenomenológico. Bodgen and Biklen (2003) se refieren a este tipo de diseños como aquellos que intentan reconocer las percepciones de las personas y los significados que ellas le atribuyen a un fenómeno o experiencia. (como se cita en Hernández, Fernández and Batista, 2010, p.515). El diseño generado es valioso para la investigación pues son las experiencias de los participantes las que se convierten en el centro de análisis y sus puntos de vista son sobre los cuales se basan los resultados del estudio.

Palabras clave: Tecnologías de la Información y la Comunicación (TICs), tecnología educativa, herramientas WEB, Programa UNA Virtual

Abstract

This research primarily focuses on the use or lack of use of the tools offered by the UNA Virtual program which is in charge of incentivizing the utilization of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in the teaching and learning environments at Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica (UNA). In addition, the study identifies and explains some factors affecting the integration of Web-based tools (tools based on the Internet) in the teaching praxis of a group of eleven EFL (English as a Foreign Language) professors teaching in the English Teaching Major at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension. Moreover, it recognizes the perceptions of these professors in regard to the use and importance of Web-based tools in their teaching praxis. This research made use of qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection, but the study took an overall qualitative phenomenological design. Bodgen and Biklen refer to this type of designs as those intended to recognize the people's perceptions and meanings attributed to any specific phenomenon or experience (as cited in Hernández, Fernández and Batista, 2010 p. 515). What made this specific design valuable for this investigation is that the participants' experiences become the center of the analysis their views towards the phenomenon are the focal point upon which this research is grounded.

Keywords: Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), educational technology, Web-based tools, Web-based Instruction, UNA virtual Program

1. Introduction

The advent of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and the fast growth of the Internet offer multiple opportunities for English-as-a-Foreign Language teachers (henceforth EFL teachers) to innovate and improve their instruction. Nevertheless, there are many instructors around the world who do not make use of computer technology even though its availability, familiarity and sophistication increases every day. Costa Rica's higher education is not the exception to this reality. This is a very risky scenario considering that at this educational level future professionals are being formed and they will have to be ready for a job market where technology skills are highly valued.

There is no doubt that teachers play a major role in promoting and integrating new technologies in teaching and learning. Nevertheless, this integration might be limited sometimes by a series of factors of different sources. In general terms, teachers' lack of the information and skills required for integrating new technologies is a relevant issue. Other teachers might be skeptical of the advantages of new teaching practices compared to traditional ones. Other sources of fears are more related the trustworthiness of technology or the lack of interest and commitment shown by professors.

In addition to teachers, school authorities also have a responsibility. They are to lead initiatives if they expect their faculty to use more technology in their teaching. Carefully planned actions towards a better integration of technology are in the hands of administrators. They should be in charge of enhancing changes in their own institutions.

The central issue inspected in this study is that, on one side, today's technological generation demands teachers to integrate Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) in their instruction, but on the other side, many teachers are not fully taking advantage of the tools that are available and provided to them by their institutions. Particularly, this research aimed to identify why EFL professors at the Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica in its Brunca Branch Campus are not integrating the Web-based tools offered by the UNA Virtual Program in their teaching praxis.

Challenges in adapting, integrating and promoting the use of technology constantly increase and educators should be ready to face them. Meloni (1998) states that "Technology will not replace teachers...teachers who use technology will probably replace teachers who do not" (p.10). It is important that teachers be able to trespass the barriers for the adoption of modern technologies for they might be at risk of becoming obsolete or distant from the exigencies of a modern world. In the advent of a technological century, the use of modern technologies and virtual learning seems to be a convenient, promising option for professors to enhance their students' interest and knowledge, especially when it comes to higher education and second languages.

Research questions

- a. What are the EFL professors' perceptions about the usefulness and ease of use of Web-based tools in their teaching praxis?
- b. What are the EFL professors' perceptions and intentions in regards to the potential integration of the tools from UNA Virtual program?
- c. What factors are affecting the EFL professors' potential integration of the tools offered by the UNA Virtual program in their teaching praxis at UNA Brunca Branch Campus?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Internet and English Teaching

Due to the fact that the Internet was originated in the United States, nowadays most of the information that is available through this means is in English. Experts say that this is one important reason why the Internet has become a very rich source for instruction and a convenient tool for English language teaching (Teeler and Gray, 2000; Mubireek, 2001). These qualities make of the Internet not only an efficient communication technology, but also a fundamental tool for ESL teaching and learning.

The Internet has also changed the way people see the world and has influenced a great number of areas such as communication, science, arts and others. Education has not escaped from its influence. Jalobeanu et al. (2003) place the origins of Internet-based education back in 1840 with distance education. The authors state that two decades later and because of the creation of the Internet and the incorporation of computers into schools, evolution of distance education has been notorious and the number of institutions offering Internet-based courses, and degrees has increased greatly (p.23). This fast growth toward a more technological education involves great responsibility from educational institutions that need to plan strategies to respond to the new demands that these tendencies bring.

There are unique traits that make the Internet different from other media and particularly influential for the language teaching field. One of its most remarkable characteristics has been simply regarded as “many to many” because of its interactive nature being an open medium that allows participation of different actors. Servon (2002) states that “unlike other media used to deliver information, television and newspaper for example, the Internet allows users both to respond to what exists and to produce their own material relatively inexpensively *if* they possess the skills and access necessary to do so” (p. 3). In teaching and learning environments the virtues previously mentioned propitiate the necessary conditions for the enhancement of self-confidence, self-training and continuous education.

Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is one of the most significant areas of innovation in language education technology. Ever since it was introduced in the 1960s, it

has changed along with the way teachers view language teaching. One clear definition to help understand the term is given by Egbert and Petrie (2008) who present it as “learners learning language in any context with, through, and around computer technologies” (p.4). CALL should be understood as a process and, as such, it involves different variables. Learners, context, language tools, activities as well as teachers and peers have a role to play in the success of this process.

2.2. Web Based Instruction (WBI) and Second or Foreign Language Learning

The concept of Web-Based Instruction is perhaps one of the most significant ones in this research because it encloses the kind of instruction mediating while using Internet-based tools. Ritchie and Hoffman (as cited in Khan, 1997, p. 6) define Web Based Instruction as “...a hypermedia-based instructional program which utilizes the attributes and resources of the World Wide Web (WWW) to create a meaningful learning environment where learning is fostered and supported.” Teaching and learning through WBI is not as different from classroom instruction in that their main purpose is to acquire knowledge and be able to use it. They do differ, however, in the vast alternatives for instruction found in the web which facilitate the learning process and make it more meaningful.

WBI is founded on some fundamental characteristics, being interactivity one of the most important ones. Jalobeanu et al. (2003) state that students not only interact with each other and their tutors but also with the Web itself (p. 39). This interaction facilitates the use of different teaching methods and approaches such as Community Language Learning (CLL). The basic premise in this method is that “Learners become members of a community ~their fellow learners and the teacher~ and learn through interacting with the community. Learning is not viewed as an individual accomplishment but as something that is achieved collaboratively” (Richards and Rodgers, 2001, p.94). The environments created through the use of Web-Based activities promote learners’ cooperative skills and group learning in the classroom and outside of it.

Other theories of second language acquisition support the use of web-based tools for instruction. On his part, Ellis (1997) refers to the role of interaction in second language acquisition as a means for the participants to engage in what he calls negotiation of meaning. He states that Learners involved in this interaction can soon be correcting their own errors (p.46). Interaction is a very important part of web-based instruction, too. It occurs in different moments and ways (i.e. with the computer, with the web, with peers and with instructors). This interactivity helps learners acquire the language in ways that they may not have in the common classroom.

There are different benefits derived from this interaction. Some experts have summarized these benefits into “opportunities for negotiating meaning, obtaining enhanced input and directing attention to linguistic form” (Egbert and Petrie, 2005, p.55). The learner benefits from his or her own experiences but also with the experiences of others with whom he or she interrelates in the Web-based environment which helps them improve their language in a dynamic way.

2.3. Teachers' Use of Internet

It is not easy to define or established well grounded statistics on the quantity and quality of Internet integration in teacher's methodology and instruction. As Teeler and Gray (2000) portray it, telling how many teachers use the Internet for teaching purposes or how many use it for language teaching is, in fact, a very difficult task. What can be said, however, is that the Internet is used for a very extensive list of purposes in English Language Teaching (ELT) "development, updating language skills, finding materials, learning about computer applications, keeping in touch with friends and colleagues, teaching, working on class projects and activities, and just having fun" (p.5). The Internet is definitely being used and this use increases as computers become more frequent in schools around the world.

The growing use of this tool has a series of implications for teachers, particularly those who are not digital natives. It offers teachers new and rapidly changing possibilities for their instruction, but the effectiveness of computer technology and the Internet does not depend only on the medium but on the way people use it. Some obstacles in this regard are presented by Kuo (2008):

However, developing a technology proficient teacher is not an easy task. It involves many complex works, such as striving for funding to purchase technology equipment and software, establishing school technology support system, designing appropriate technology assisted curricula, and recruiting professional technology educators. (p.5)

As can be seen, factors affecting the use of technology are of all kinds: from administrative matters to curricular incompatibilities.

2.4. Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

To help explain and better understand the reasons why some people use technology a model called TAM or Technology Acceptance Model was developed in 1989. The creators believed that two variables: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of technology directly influence the people's attitudes towards a computer technology and the behavioral intentions to use it. Nevertheless, the TAM did not remain unchanged since first proposed more than twenty years ago. Figure 1 shows its evolution.

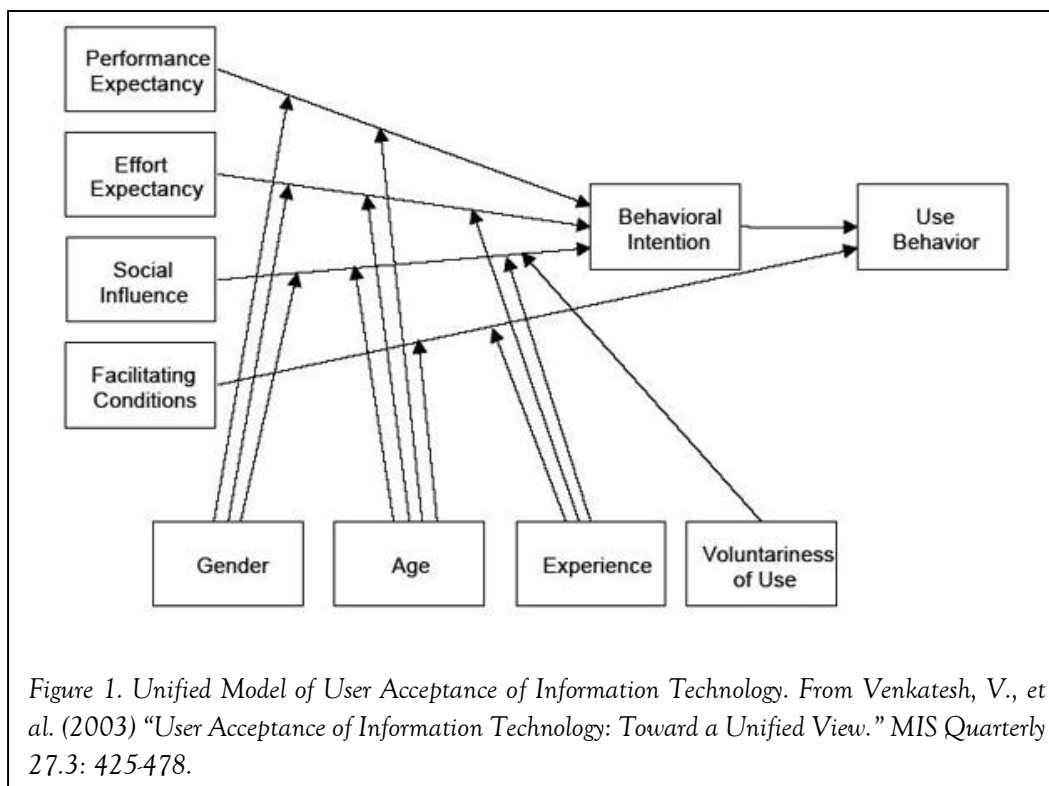


Figure 1. Unified Model of User Acceptance of Information Technology. From Venkatesh, V., et al. (2003) "User Acceptance of Information Technology: Toward a Unified View." *MIS Quarterly* 27.3: 425-478.

The model proposed in 2003 tries to integrate preexisting models to explain the acceptance process. Venkatesh et al. (2003) state that three constructs are linked to behavioral intentions to use technology: performance expectancy (the degree to which an individual believes that using the system will help him or her to attain gains in job performance), effort expectancy (the degree of ease associated with the use of the system), social influence (the degree to which an individual perceives that important others believe he or she should use the new system). The fourth construct is facilitating conditions (the degree to which an individual believes that an organizational and technical infrastructure exists to support use of the system). This one is not linked directly to behavioral intention but to the use behavior (pp 445-454). In addition, the authors also detailed the role of some key moderators and the relation that they have with each of the constructs. These moderator variables are gender, age, experience and voluntariness or the extent to which potential adopters perceive the adoption decision to be non-mandatory.

2.5. Teachers' Attitudes towards Technology

Another crucial aspect that has been referred to when explaining technology integration in education is teachers' attitudes. Categorizations for attitudes have been largely studied and discussed. For instance, Ramanair and Sagat (2007) categorize them into cognitive, the behavioural and the affective. The first one represents the "users' thinking," that is, the opinions of what they consider positive or negative about using technology. The second one is the affective category which deals with feelings and emotions experienced using technology; and the last one, the behavioural category, deals with actions (par. 9). At

different levels teachers' attitudes are linked to their integration of technology in their instruction and the identification of those attitudes is very important before conducting research on educational technology.

The simple addition of a technological device to an educational context does not guarantee by any means that the learning process will change to be more successful. On the contrary, it might get in the way if not used properly. Levin and Wadmany (2011) affirm that “teachers have the most impact on the quality of technology use in schools and therefore, factor relating to teachers are more frequently cited as influencing technology use in schools” (p. 237). Consequently, any effort made to explain phenomena related to the integration of any technology in education might not be separated from understanding the roles played by the teachers.

There are reports on different studies that show that teachers have a very crucial role in relation to ICT and its effect on pedagogy. For example, the work of Moseley and Higgins concluded that successful use of ICT is linked to teachers' attitudes “teachers who have positive attitudes towards ICT itself will be positively disposed towards using it in the classroom” (as cited in Mumtaz, 2000, p. 328). Knowing this, it is evident that promoting a good disposition towards technology is a factor that contributes to successful results in teaching experiences. Here lies the importance of incentivising positive practices concerning WBI for example.

Professors' attitudes towards technology might be influenced by several aspects and circumstances. Holden and Rada (2011) establish that teachers' personal factors such as subject matter, gender and teaching experience are very linked to classroom technology usage. They also declare that higher levels of technology acceptance are related to a higher willingness to change their teaching practices to use technology (p. 348). The analysis of these personal factors becomes crucial when trying to understand why some tools such as the ones offered by UNA Virtual are rejected or accepted.

2.6. Teachers' Perceived Relevance of Technology for EFL Teaching

There have been concerns in relation to the real impact that technology has in the acquisition of knowledge. In an study conducted with university professors in Illinois, Butler and Sellbon (2002) concluded that some of them question the impact of technology in learning because “Very few journals summarize the results of well-run experiments on the impact of technology, and little useful scientific information is available in the web” (p. 26). Many skeptical facilitators are not easily convinced that using technology and Internet will have much greater benefits than traditional instruction. Considering this, it is very important that universities encourage assessment to verify the value that technological tools can bring to the teaching and learning process.

It is important, hence, that universities set specific incentives for teachers to know exactly how to use ICTs. In this regard, Afshari et al. (2009) suggest that institutions must develop a vision that guides the integration of these tools:

Users of technology must have a fundamental belief in the value of innovation or the innovation is doomed to failure. Teachers must have opportunities to study, observe, reflect, and discuss their practice, including their use of ICT, in order to develop a sound pedagogy that incorporates technology. (pp. 83-84)

Evidently, setting clear purposive visions of benefits and beliefs behind ICT integration in the school will facilitate the adoption of those tools.

2.7. The UNA Virtual Program

Fundamental for this research is the understanding of the UNA Virtual program and the philosophical and methodological foundations that ground it. Castro (2010) places the origins of the program in the year 2002 when the Program for the Development and Applications of New Technologies in the Academic Processes (PRODAPA for its initials in Spanish) is instituted. It represents the first step for the university's strategy in this area. In 2004, the program changes its structure and is called NOVUS from the Latin word new. Finally, in 2005, NOVUS becomes UNA Virtual and its first goal is the establishment of policies for the incorporation of ICTs in the academy (p. 4). This changes show the evolution of the program and the efforts made by the university in order to stimulate the use of technology.

The program is founded upon UNA's principles and Pedagogical Model (Modelo Pedagógico). Castro (2010) refers to three moments in which the connection of the program to the principles previously mentioned are reflected:

- The function of technologies as a means to facilitate interaction among professors, students and learning contents.
- At UNA teaching presumes the existence of alternative learning environments supported with new technologies.
- Technologies of information and communication become a changing agent that influences the pedagogical work and the relationships between pupil-educator and educator-pupil. (p. 7)

Clearly, UNA Virtual is a vital instrument for the university to reach its goals of adopting technologies for the implementation of innovating teaching and learning practices in the institution.

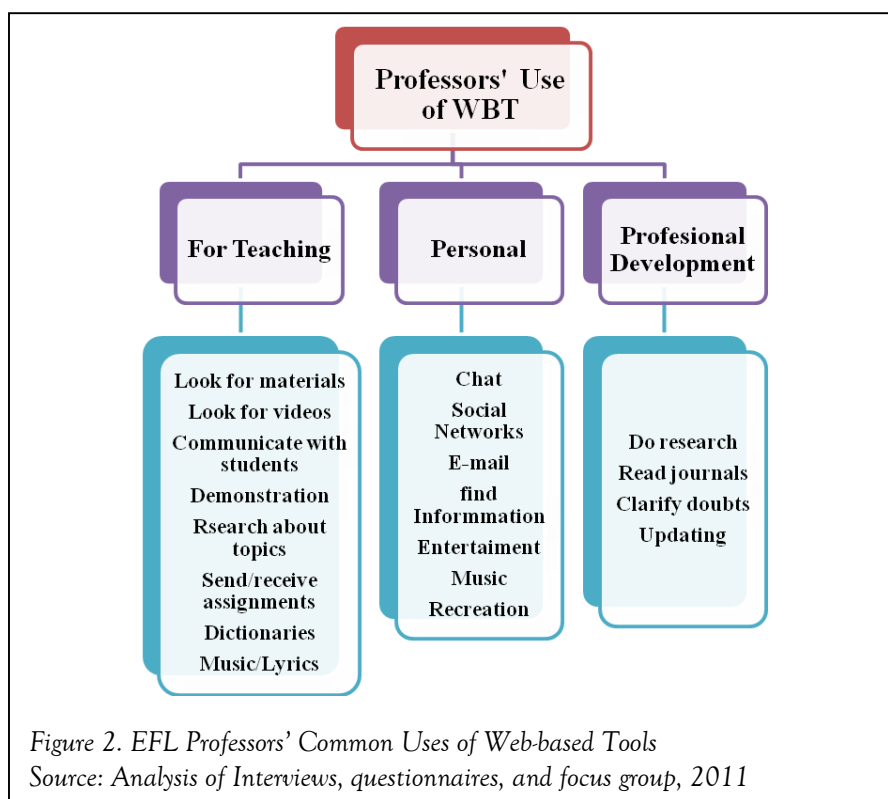


3. Results

3.1. EFL Professors' Perceptions about Web-based tools (WBT)

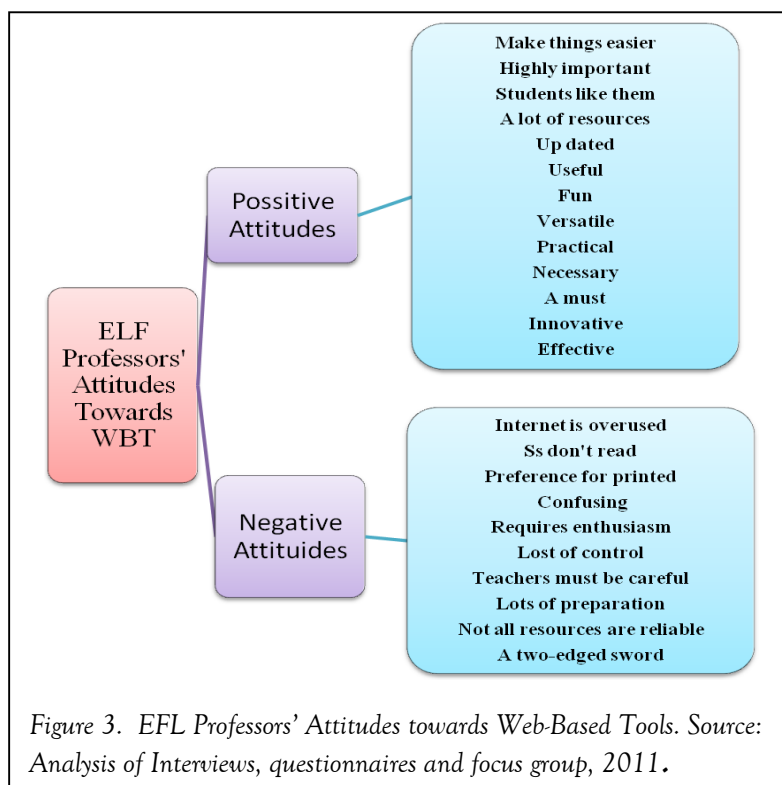
3.1.1. *Perceived Usefulness*

The instructional (Internet for teaching) and the personal dimensions have the most weight. Participants invest a significant part of their time searching for materials for their classes, videos to introduce, illustrate, exemplify or contextualize class topics and also music or lyrics. Another common use, though not all do it, is the e-mail or social networks (i.e. Facebook) to communicate with students. Sending and receiving assignments and class materials is also common. The personal dimension shows that professors do not differ from regular users of Internet which use it for communication and enjoyment purposes. The third dimension shows how technology contributes to professors' independent professional development, too. Figure 2 shows examples to illustrate this category.



Attitudes towards the use of Web-Based tools were also identified in the analysis. Clearly, positive attitudes towards WBT were predominant over negative ones. Different comments given by the participants evidenced how professors perceive these tools as necessary. For example, Clare stated: “*Us without technology? I can’t imagine, Right? Our future teachers without technology?...We need to take advantage of all these tools in the classroom, so I would say that it’s something that is necessary*” (personal interview, 2011).

Nevertheless, there were also some negative attitudes, though they were not generalized. For example, comments made by four participants highlighted the need for professors to be careful when using the Internet and all tools based on this means. Liza commented that *[Internet-based tools] it's a two-edge sword. Teachers who use them must be really prepared or careful, so it is like it has benefits but it also has... it can cause problems*” (focus group, 2011). In the same line of thought, some remarks were made for the need to scrutinize the resources in order to guarantee reliability (Yale, personal interview, 2011). Ming and Sidney also manifested that the wide spectrum of options and resources available in the Internet might make users to get confused and overwhelmed (focus group and questionnaire, 2011). Figure 3 shows the constructs that evidenced the attitudes towards the use of Web-based tools.



3.1.2. Perceived Ease of Use of WBT

This category represents the perceived ease of use of WBT expressed by professors. In the questionnaire professors were given a series of statements they had to mark according to their level of agreement SD (strongly disagree), D (disagree), PA (partially agree), A (agree), SA (strongly agree). The items intended to measure professors' perceived ease of use of technology (in this case web-based tools) showed very balanced results. WBT are considered neither very difficult nor very easy to use. When given the statement "Internet-Based tools are easy to use and understand," five of the professors responded positively, three remained neutral, and only three disagreed manifesting that they are a not easy (see table 1).

Table 1.
Professors' Perceived Ease of Use of WBT

	SD ↓	D	PA	A	SA ↓
The Internet-based tools are easy to understand and use.	0(0%)	3(27%)	3(27%)	4(37%)	1(9%)
My job provides opportunities for me to learn about the Internet.	0(0%)	1(10%)	4(36%)	2(18%)	4(36%)
My job provides opportunities for me to teach about the Internet.	1(9%)	0(0%)	6(55%)	3(27%)	1(9%)
A large number of my colleagues currently use Internet-based tools.	0(0%)	1(9%)	1(9%)	3(27%)	5(45%)
EFL teachers should be trained/ educated to use the Internet-based tools in instruction.	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	2(18%)	9(82%)
Using Internet-based tools saves time and effort.	0(0%)	0(0%)	4(36%)	1(9%)	6(55%)
Class time is not enough to include Internet-based tools.	2(19%)	3(27%)	3(27%)	3(27%)	0(0%)
I am competent to use Internet-based tools in the classroom.	0(0%)	1(9%)	5(46%)	3(27%)	2(18%)
I know how to integrate Internet-based tools into classroom curricula.	0(0%)	0(0%)	7(64%)	3(27%)	1(9%)
I need training to improve my internet literacy skills.	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	4(36%)	7(64%)

Source: Questionnaire for teachers, September 2011.

Teachers also perceived that their jobs offer some opportunities for them to learn about the Internet, when presented with this statement, most of them partially agreed, agreed or strongly agreed. Results changed a little when asked if their jobs provide opportunities to teach about the Internet, but even then results inclined to the positive side. Most of the professors also considered that a large number of their colleagues are currently using Internet-based tools.

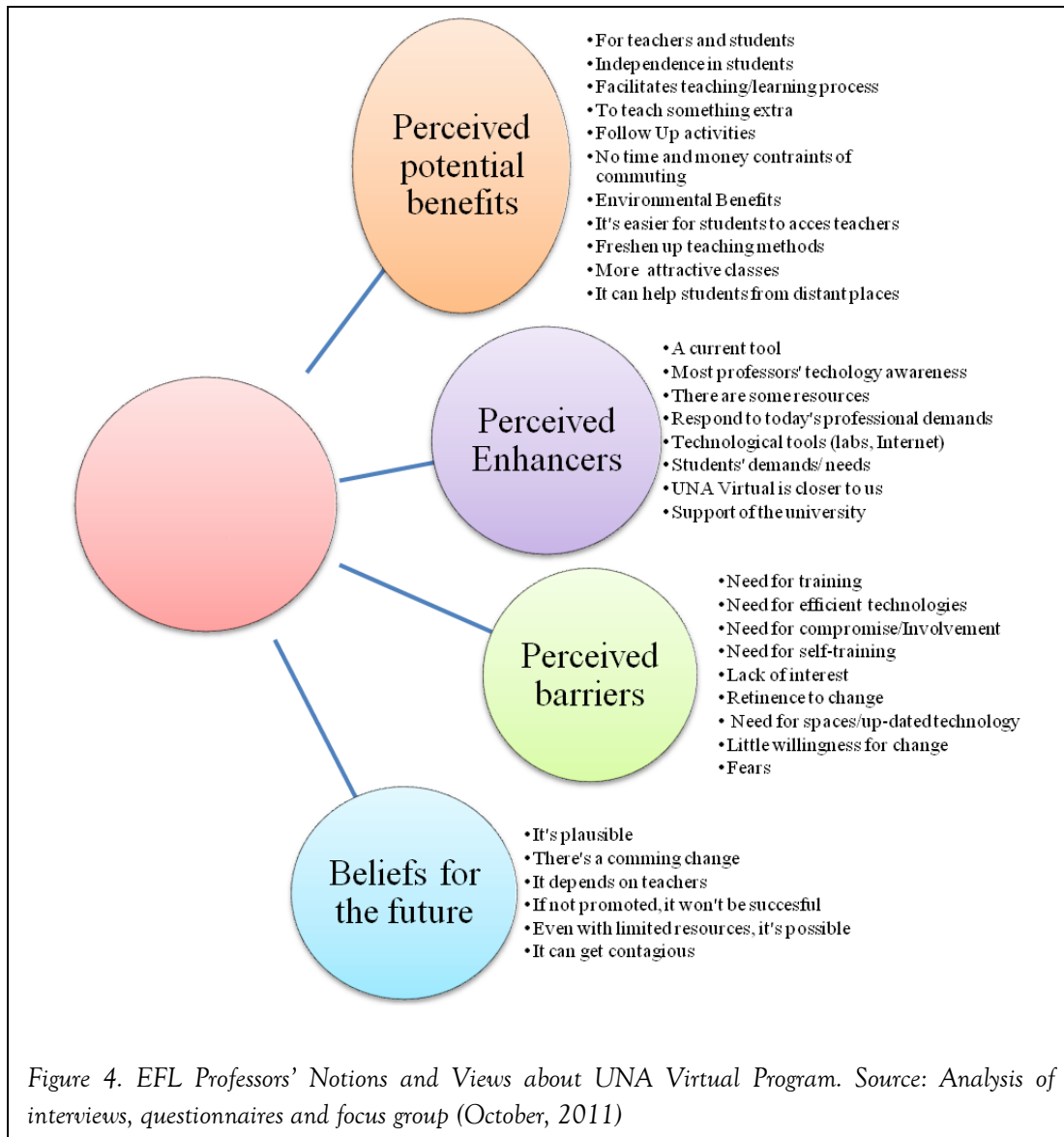
3.2. UNA Virtual Program

The second general topic to be discussed in this section is the UNA Virtual Program and the potential implementation of their tools. Even though there is a generalized low level of knowledge or certainty about what UNA Virtual really is and the possibilities it offers, professors at Brunca campus showed their expectations, their notions, their beliefs, their thoughts and even their fears in regards to this program.

3.2.1. EFL Professors' Views about the UNA Virtual Program

At the beginning of this study, during the questionnaire, 6 of the 11 participants responded to have none or little knowledge about the existence of the UNA Virtual program and what it was about, which was reconfirmed during the interviews. Actually, only two of the eleven professors said that they had attended some workshops, but none of them have used any of

the tools after this. Nevertheless, all of the participants without exception manifested, at some point or another, willingness to learn about the tools. In general terms there are positive expectations in regards to the potential implementation of the program and the benefits it might bring. Only a couple of professors seemed more skeptical or less enthusiastic. Figure 4 shows the main categories emerged in this topic.



3.2.2. Perceived Potential Benefits of the UNA Virtual Program

Among the potential benefits that participants constantly mentioned perhaps the most popular was the idea that it can be beneficial for the learning process. Teachers as well as students will be benefited with the integration of virtual tools in instruction according to them. In addition, the tools might be used for different purposes such as follow up activities, extra class and warm up activities or before the class activities. One example is given by Miley

a participant who expresses that students can have more possibilities to access teachers out of the class through the use of virtual communication (personal interview, 2011). Other significant benefits are the formation of more independent students and the contribution to the environment since by of web-based tools many students would be able to work and learn at home with no need to commute to a learning center.

3.2.3. Perceived Enhancers

This category encloses the aspects that professors believe encourage them or might facilitate or allow their integration of the tools from UNA Virtual in their teaching praxis. One aspect to remark is that most of them believe that the tools from the program respond to today's professional demands. Likewise, they think UNA Virtual is a current tool and that it can fulfill students' present needs and demands. In addition, professors expressed that one aspect that may contribute to a possible integration of the tools is the availability or existence of some equipment in the branch such as wireless Internet and laboratories.

One more enhancing factor is that UNA Virtual is closer to professors. In other words, UNA Virtual is part of the university and has its support; hence, it is not just any other tool. In addition, one of the most important aspects mentioned is the belief that the EFL professors at Brunca branch are showing more technology awareness. Some said that this positive attitude shows that many professors want to learn how to use technology more in their instruction.

3.2.4. Perceived Barriers

Even when there are mostly positive hopes for the program, possible barriers are also present. The number one barrier mentioned by all the participants is the need for training. It is not very likely that the tools be used by this group of professors without prior better training. A second perceived need is that of more efficient technologies. Even though the professors believe that there are some technologies available in the branch, they also believe that more and better devices must be provided. Better spaces and infrastructure were some other aspects mentioned.

When consulted about the preceding issues the Brunca branch' dean Mr. Geovanni Jimenez said that there have been some trainings for UNA Virtual, but the impact of the program has been slow. He thinks one reason is the current generational process among professors. Many of them have not faced the ICTs revolution yet which might create some resistance to them. Another reason is that there has not been a clear need to use Virtual tools in the branch. On the other hand, even when he thinks accessibility to technology may be a barrier, he thinks it is not justifiable because most people in the university have access to wireless Internet. However, he does believe that time is a constraint. Professors must find the moments to access and learn about the resources because UNA Virtual is a very varied platform.

The coordinator from the UNA Virtual program also referred to the existing barriers. According to him the impact of the program in the different branch campuses of UNA has

been relatively low. He thinks there have been some important but not permanent experiences and one of the main reasons is the distance from the branches. There is a lack of presence of the program that affects its integration into the different majors and courses (Castro: e-mail interview 2011).

Other barriers that were identified cannot be considered merely physical or technical. They are more related to the teachers themselves. For example, five of the teachers considered that in order to integrate tools like the ones offered by UNA Virtual, professors must get involved and be committed and motivated to invest the necessary time to get informed about the opportunities available. The lack of interest or reticence to change current teaching practices can represent an obstacle, too.

This last aspect was supported by the dean and the coordinator from UNA Virtual program. Mr. Willy Castro from UNA Virtual believes resistance and fear might be obstructing a better integration of the program not only in the branch campuses but in the university in general (e-mail interview, 2011). Likewise, Brunca branch's dean expressed that one latent threat present in the campus is the lack of interest from the academic staff on trying to use the different tools (personal interview, 2011).

Finally, some fears regarding the use of virtual teaching were identified. For instance, one participant expressed her concern for the idea that one day virtual teaching might replace class instruction. Hence, only one professor might be needed to do the work two or three professors used to do. Yale said that students might become very dependent on Internet and they will read less magazines or newspapers or other sources. Liza expressed that some teachers are afraid of losing the control of the class. In the case of Sook In, she is more concerned with the effect of Web-Based Instruction in personal contact "*but what I don't like it is that it is like... I don't know how to say this...like separating people more. You know? Like it is not personal contact: face-to-face contact and it is very important for me*" (personal interview, 2011).

3.2.5. Beliefs for the Future

Along the research the participants' predictions or thoughts about the future of the UNA Virtual program in the Brunca campus were notorious. It is possible to say that all professors perceive the future of Internet-Mediated English Teaching as very plausible. Some believe there have been some changes in the past years that foresee a positive future for this type of instruction. For example, Dan commented: "*teaching is evolving and language teaching is evolving faster and I think that in a few years we're gonna be using those tools here*" (personal interview, 2011).

Java believes that, in spite of the limited resources available at the moment, it is possible to integrate the tools and Jim said that if the tools start being used, it can get contagious. In other words, professors will start spreading the word and sharing experiences so that others can get interested. Other comments were more related to the students:

Clare: “Students are waiting for this renovation on teaching practices right away, so I anticipate very good responses from the students and teachers at UNASRB” (questionnaire, 2011).

Liza: “We have to approach students and technology is the best way to approach them, to talk their language and their language is one of technology, so hopefully we’re gonna use technology more” (personal interview, 2011).

4. Conclusions

4.1. What are the EFL professors’ perceptions about the usefulness and ease of use of Web-based tools in their teaching praxis?

In regard to perceived usefulness, it is possible to affirm that in a generalized way the population under study found Web-based tools to be highly important in their jobs. There are many areas of the professors’ lives that are directly influenced by the use of the Internet and tools based on this means. Nonetheless, the professional part is perhaps the most dependent in this kind of tools. From simple basic uses of the Internet as an information source to more complex applications of it, the data demonstrated that Web-based tools are believed to be very useful and greatly valued. This is a reliable predictor of a possible success of the integration of new web-based tools such as the ones offered by the UNA virtual program.

Regarding the perceived ease of use of Web-based tools, it does not seem to be a strong predictor of success as is the perceived usefulness. Professors were not inclined to affirm that Web-based tools were difficult to use, but they did not affirm that the tools are very easy either. Though opinions were divided in this regards, the results did show a tendency towards a positive perception. Mostly, the data revealed that integrating this kind of technology is feasible and most teachers are willing, even eager, to learn how to use it.

4.2. What are the EFL professors’ perceptions and intentions in regards to the potential integration of the tools from UNA Virtual program?

As to the UNA Virtual program, the major obstacle for its integration at the moment has been the relatively scarce information professors have of it. Due to factors such as the little promotion of the tools or a low need for virtual teaching in the Brunca branch, the program and its components or possibilities are not well known among the participants. Nonetheless, the professors do have some expectations and intentions in regards to the potential implementation of the program in their teaching praxis.

Most participants perceived the tools as a good option that might respond to the present needs and demands of students and teachers. There are several potential benefits for the teaching and learning process. Most professors showed enthusiasm and good expectations in regards to the latent advantages of UNA Virtual. This forecasts a positive future for the program in the Brunca branch if it is well promoted by the coordinators of the

program and by the branch's authorities as well. This could be done through the implementation of a more aggressive strategy that could help promote more awareness about the potential benefits of the program and built more confidence among the professors who might be interested in implementing it.

The future success of the UNA Virtual program in the Brunca campus depends on teachers and on a better support of it. The study revealed that in general terms the participants showed interest to learn about the program and the possibilities it offers. Encouraging factors such as the support of the university, and the positive attitudes shown by most of the professors are good predictors. There is a belief that the program will be used and implemented more in coming times especially because most professors are becoming more aware of the importance of educational technology.

4.3. What factors are affecting the EFL professors' potential integration of the tools offered by the UNA Virtual program in their teaching praxis at UNA Brunca Branch Campus?

4.3.1. Teacher-level Barriers

Integrating ICTs into teaching and learning might turn into a complex process that may encounter a number of difficulties or barriers. Such is the case of the UNA Virtual program in the Brunca branch. The latent barriers found in the study were located in two main levels. The first one is the teacher-level barriers or those related to the teachers themselves. Obstacles at this level include the teachers' resistance to change current teaching practices and negative attitudes. This happens mainly when a teacher is used to certain teaching approaches that they have used for many years and it originates some level of rejection to new ones. Shifting from classical approaches to more technology oriented ones is not easy for professors.

A second barrier is the lack of interest of some professors which is related to the previous one. Nevertheless, the lack of interest does not imply a rejection of technology-based teaching practices but simply an indifferent stand towards them. The third barrier acknowledged was the lack of teacher competence. It may include technology competence in general or just lack of competence in the use of UNA Virtual tools.

One more aspect is the need for self-training practices among teachers. Some participants believe that in order to improve technology skills teachers need to look for their own ways to learn. Professionals need to show curiosity about technology, commitment and involvement. Nevertheless, becoming familiar with new technologies requires time and effort. And many times busy teachers do not have the time even when they might have the interest.

4.3.2. School-level Barriers

School-level barriers identified in the study included as the first and most relevant one the lack of effective training on the tools offered by UNA Virtual. In order to be able to decide whether the UNA Virtual tools are useful for their teaching purposes, professors must

know first what they are about and how they work. Without pertinent prior training, professors will not be able to see any advantage of the tools.

A second school factor limiting the use of UNA Virtual and other WBT in general is the reduced accessibility to up-dated and trustworthy technological resources in the branch and the need for technical support. To guarantee a higher success of the program in the branch the institution should make efforts to guarantee the optimal resources. It does not mean that technology does not exist. There are technologies available that serve as a good start but they should be constantly up-graded to respond to the fast changes of today's world. Also the access should be guaranteed for all EFL students and teachers.

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Sesiones plenarias

An Exploration of the Teacher Training Model Proposed by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, ACTFL

Dr. José G. Ricardo-Osorio
Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania, USA
jgrica@ship.edu

Resumen

El entrenamiento del profesor es crucial para su desempeño en la sala de clases. Con este fin, los estudiantes de educación deben estar equipados para emprender el proceso enseñanza-aprendizaje de la forma más efectiva. Un entrenamiento ideal debe consistir de teorías y prácticas estructuradas que desarrollen el conocimiento base, las destrezas y las actitudes de los candidatos para profesores. Siguiendo estos parámetros, en el 2002, el Consejo Americano para la Enseñanza de Lenguas Extranjeras (ACTFL por sus siglas en inglés) diseñó estándares específicos para el entrenamiento de profesores de lenguas extranjeras. Dichos estándares, que fueron actualizados en el 2013, están enmarcados dentro de seis estándares globales llamados comúnmente ACTFL Program Standards for the Preparation of Foreign Language Teachers (ACTFL, 2013). En el presente, los programas de lenguas extranjeras en los Estados Unidos que deseen ser reconocidos nacionalmente deben aplicar los estándares y mostrar evidencias de que han sido logrados.

Palabras clave: entrenamiento para profesores de EFL, Entrenamiento para profesores basado en estándares, Desarrollo profesional para profesores de EFL.

Abstract

Teacher training is central to teachers' performance in the classroom. To this end, pre-service teachers must be equipped to undertake the teaching-learning process in the most effective way. The ideal training should consist of structured theories and practices that develop pre-service teachers' knowledge-base, skills and dispositions. With this in mind, in 2002, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) issued specific guidelines for foreign language teacher education. These guidelines, revised in 2013, are encapsulated within six overarching standards commonly known as the ACTFL Program Standards for the Preparation of Foreign Language Teachers (ACTFL, 2013). Presently, foreign language training programs in the USA seeking national recognition must follow the standards and provide evidence of attainment. This paper intends to explain how the ACTFL standards inform the curriculum of teacher training programs in the USA. In addition, it will also set the stage for further discussion on the applicability of the program standards to the Costa Rican (EFL) training area in light of the ongoing government's efforts to enhance English proficiency and pedagogy of EFL teachers across the country (Cordero, 2008; Quesada-Pacheco, 2013).

Keywords: EFL teacher training, standards-based teacher training, professional development for EFL teachers



Preface

Why a Model Based on the ACTFL Standards and not on the TESOL Standards?

Although Costa Rican English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers may be more familiar with TESOL and its guidelines for the profession, this paper will use ACTFL as a framework for the following reasons: 1) The TESOL program standards were conceived to prepare candidates to teach English language learners (ELLs) in the U.S schools. Therefore, TESOL program standards will not apply to candidates teaching elsewhere (where English is not the main language of communication). 2) Though the TESOL program standards make reference to the use of standards-based assessments, such assessments have a different purpose than assessments used to measure proficiency in a foreign language (TESOL, 2010). In other words, the TESOL program standards were not designed to train teachers on how to teach a foreign language (FL). On the contrary, the ACTFL program standards are aimed to prepare teachers of foreign languages. 3) Currently, TESOL has only issued a manual on how to develop EFL teacher preparation standards (See Kuhlman & Knezevic, 2014). It is fair to note that TESOL does have EFL teacher training standards. However, these standards are for short-term teacher preparation programs (i.e., TEFL Certificates).

This paper intends to explain how the ACTFL standards inform the curriculum of teacher training programs in the USA. In addition, it will also set the stage for further discussion on the applicability of a comprehensive standards-based model to Costa Rican EFL teacher training programs in light of the ongoing government's efforts to enhance English proficiency and pedagogy of EFL teachers across the country (Cordero, 2008; Quesada-Pacheco, 2013)

The ACTFL Standards and the Curriculum of Training Programs

Teacher training is central to teachers' performance in the classroom. To this end, pre-service teachers must be equipped to undertake the teaching-learning process in the most effective way. The ideal training should consist of structured theories and practices that develop pre-service teachers' knowledge-base, skills and dispositions. With this in mind, in 2002, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) issued specific guidelines for foreign language teacher education. These guidelines, revised in 2013, are encapsulated within six overarching standards commonly known as the ACTFL Program Standards for the Preparation of Foreign Language Teachers (ACTFL, 2013). Presently, foreign language training programs in the USA seeking national recognition must follow the standards and provide evidence of attainment.

In order to bring the FL teaching profession in agreement with current accreditation standards for other teacher preparation programs, ACTFL charged a



group of FL teaching experts with devising program standards that would inform curriculum for FL education (ACTFL 2002, 2013). After considerable revisions and feedback from the profession, the standards were approved and integrated to the accreditation standards of the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP)⁴. Thus, the standards became the official benchmarks of ACTFL as a specialized professional association (SPA) (Huhn, 2012). It is worth clarifying that CAEP accredits units (i.e., Colleges of Education) and ACTFL as a SPA grants national recognition to FL teacher preparation programs (Glisan, 2013).

Teacher candidates from FL education programs that seek an ACTFL national recognition must meet the following standards upon completion of their studies:

Standard 1. Language Proficiency: Interpersonal, Interpretive, and Presentational.

Standard 2. Cultures, Linguistics, Literature, and Concepts from other Disciplines.

Standard 3. Language Acquisition Theories and Knowledge of Students and their Needs.

Standard 4. Integration of the World Readiness Standards in Planning, Classroom Practice, and Use of Instructional Resources.

Standard 5. Assessment of Language and Cultures- Impact on Student Learning.

Standard 6. Professional Development, Advocacy, and Ethics. (ACTFL, 2013)

Through specially-designed assessments, training programs must collect standards data from teacher candidates (Huhn, 2012). These data are gathered from key courses such as methods, capstones, upper language, upper literature, and student teaching practicum (McAlpine & Dhonau, 2008). Teacher candidates' performance on these assessments must be analyzed and the results must be used to improve the program (Hammadou-Sullivan, 2006; Kiely, 2006; Morris, 2006). Ongoing program assessment is at the heart of effective teacher training and the ACTFL program standards provide the context for it. For instance, Standard 1 requires that at least 80% of teacher candidates reach an Advanced-Low level minimum⁵ on the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) (ACTFL, 2002). If a training program finds that only 30% of its teacher candidates are at the Advanced-Low level, the program must implement the necessary mechanisms to increase the attainment of this standard. It is a common pursuit within the profession that pre-service and in-

⁴ Formerly known as National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).

⁵ B2 in the Common European Framework of Reference.



service teachers be able to speak the target language (TL) at the Advanced-Low level minimum, so they can carry out classroom activities in the TL and can promote negotiation of meaning among the learners (Chamblers, 2012; Fraga-Cañadas, 2010; Glisan, 2013; Kissau, 2014). In addition, Huhn (2012) stated that an effective language teacher is described as a professional capable of providing language instruction that is contextualized and communicative in nature. Few would argue that FL learning cannot be contextualized and communicative, if the teacher is unable to communicate fluently in the language that he/she is teaching.

Since the implementation of the ACTFL program standards, colleges and universities across the USA have been compelled to review their curricula to address all of the standards and to provide teacher candidates with the necessary clinical experiences suggested by ACTFL. As a result, foreign language departments have had to establish ongoing conversations with education departments to streamline student learning outcomes assessments and data collection. Often times, these conversations have uncovered a huge disconnect among the language, the literature and the education curricula (Tedick, 2009) prompting faculty to work together to create a cohesive curriculum (McAlpine & Dhonau, 2008).

Producing high quality teacher candidates is a gargantuan task that must be shared by all faculty members involved in a teacher training program. Recent studies by Huhn (2012) and Brooks & Darhower (2014) suggested that programs may produce quality candidates if all faculty members embrace the ACTFL standards and work together to offer teacher candidates opportunities to practice the language in a variety of contexts including study abroad experiences and faculty-student collaborations. These findings are in line with some recommendations of success that ACTFL issued to help training programs attain the standards.

According to the recommendations, foreign language preparation programs should offer upper level courses taught in the TL, candidates' oral proficiency should be assessed and monitored systematically and feedback should be provided. In addition, a methods course focused on methodology, second language acquisition (SLA) and assessment should be taught by a qualified instructor with FL teaching expertise. Teacher candidates should be encouraged to do study abroad in a TL speaking country. They should also do field experiences in a FL classroom prior to student teaching. Last but not least, the training program should integrate the use of technology into instruction and should familiarize teacher candidates with the use of technology in the FL classroom (ACTFL 2013; Huhn, 2012).

Following these recommendations does not guarantee that all teacher candidates will be excellent teachers. However, it does provide an equal opportunity for success to all candidates and it equips them with the tools to be effective teachers.



A Standards-Based Model for EFL Training Programs in Costa Rica

The following scenario is not meant to imply that Costa Rica does not currently have a standards-based model to train EFL teachers. It probably does. FL departments from public and private universities may already have specific benchmarks that their teacher candidates must reach. However, the perusal of some FL departments' websites, the MEP's website, ACPI-TESOL's website and even SINAES' website did not yield any evidence of such standards. This said, evidence of program accreditation requirements was found on the SINAES' website. These requirements pertain to macro level standards of program quality (i.e., preparation and experience of faculty, infrastructure, etc.), but not specifically to the knowledge, skills and dispositions that EFL teachers must demonstrate upon completion of a major in FL education. For this reason, the following scenario was designed to describe how an ACTFL standards-based training model would look like in the Costa Rica context.

María A. and Juan B. are two students in their last year of an EFL program at a public university. This university has adopted a standards-based model. The curriculum contains courses in English and American literature, English and American culture, English linguistics (grammar and semiotics), Methods of FL Teaching, Multiculturalism, Special Needs and a variety of English language courses that target the three modes of communication (Interpretive, Interpersonal and Presentational). The courses are taught using technology when applicable. This way María and Juan experience the application of multimedia in their own learning.

As all the courses in the curriculum are standards-based, they include at least an assessment that requires María and Juan to demonstrate what they have learned (performance-based assessment). That is they must apply theory, create materials and develop lesson plans on how to teach English to Costa Rican K-12 students (De pre-escolar a bachillerato).

From the moment María and Juan started the program, they were explained the competences that they had to attain and demonstrate. A year before doing student teaching, María was afforded some resources to go to the United States to study for a semester. Juan was given the opportunity to go to the United Kingdom for the same length of time. While abroad, they lived with a host family and attended college where they took advanced culture and language courses.

Upon their return to Costa Rica, both María and Juan took an oral and a written proficiency test and were rated at the Advanced-Low level (B1 in the Common European Framework of Reference). The EFL program was very satisfied with these results because prior to their trips, they were given similar tests and rated at the Intermediate-Low (A2). Having an Advanced-Low level means that they should be able to teach their lessons in English (at least 90% of the time) and they should be able



to engage their students in meaningful interactions that involve negotiation of meaning.

For student teaching, María was placed in an urban school and Juan was assigned to a rural one. In the methods course they took before student teaching, they designed a theme-based instructional unit plan (IUP) that focuses on standards for FL learning. Their IUP also contains authentic materials that they brought from their study abroad trips. An integrated performance assessment (IPA) plan is also part of their IUP.

During their last semester, María and Juan did student teaching and had the opportunity to implement their IUPs. They made some adaptations to their plans with the help of the cooperating teacher (the teacher in the classroom) and the university supervisor (the one overseeing their student teaching). With the guidance of the cooperating teacher and the university supervisor, María and Juan would collect data on their students' progress. On two occasions, they had meetings with their students' parents to show them how learning was taking place and how the parents could help their kids at home. As a final class project, María and Juan's students created mini-books about Costa Rican tourist landmarks. The mini-books were accompanied by short videos created by the students as well.

During a typical day of classes, María and Juan would start their lessons with a lesson-related game to pique their students' interests. They would only use the textbook as a resource because they would create their own activities using authentic materials (i.e., videos, posters, menus, artifacts, music) that they brought from their study abroad. Grammar would be taught in context and for communicative purposes. Multiple choice and fill-in the blank activities were minimally assigned and when done, it was for homework.

The students would get engaged in content-based activities that targeted the three modes of communication (Interpretive, Interpersonal and Presentational). Since María and Juan were trained on how to teach large classes, they would have their students work in pairs, small groups and as a whole class. María and Juan would speak in English most of the time. The use of Spanish would only be devoted to clarify some grammar concepts or assessment tasks. Since their schools had technology, María and Juan would have their whole class skype with one of their American and British friends once a week. This activity would allow the students to practice their English in a communicative way.

While at the university, both María and Juan were members of a national EFL organization and in their spare time, they would participate in advocacy events to promote the tenets of Costa Rica Multilingüe. Upon graduation, they also joined an international organization and started to present sessions based on research done in their own classrooms (Action Research).



Because the FL program of the state university had concrete evidence of how their teacher candidates performed, they would use this evidence for program improvement to continue graduating teachers of María and Juan's caliber.

Although the described scenario is not real and some may consider it utopian, it is totally feasible. It does depict the knowledge, skills and dispositions that may only be attainable when a standards-based model is implemented and assessed. In summary, the ideal FL teacher education program should offer courses and clinical practices that address the following: Development of language proficiency; linguistic, cultural, and literature knowledge, a methods course dedicated to FL teaching; field experiences; applications of technology; and opportunities for study abroad (Huhn, 2012, p. s167).

The FL profession in the USA started the standards journey 13 years ago and although the road has been bumpy at times, some successful cases have been identified (Huhn, 2012; Glisan, 2013; Brooks & Darhower, 2014). In addition, large-scale evaluations of assessment reports have demonstrated an increase of programs gaining national recognition (Huhn, 2012). Meanwhile, the journey continues.

Costa Rica seems to be on the right track with government's initiatives such as Costa Rica Multilingüe (Blanco, 2009), CRUSA and the Plan Nacional de Inglés (Quesada-Pacheco, 2013). Notwithstanding, since teachers' preparation in oral proficiency and pedagogy may be weak (Blanco, 2008; Cordero, 2008; Quesada-Pacheco, 2013), it is high time that a comprehensive, nation-wide standards-based EFL teacher training plan were designed and implemented. This endeavor should be spearheaded by public and private higher education institutions in conjunction with ACPI-TESOL with the sponsorship of the MEP and the SINAES.

Conclusions

Teacher training is at the heart of teacher quality in any discipline, especially foreign language teaching. Colleges and universities charged with the mission to educate and train future English teachers must deploy a comprehensive plan that addresses specific knowledge, skills and dispositions that pre-service teachers must attain, demonstrate and apply in their classrooms. Thirteen years ago, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) initiated a journey towards the professionalization and national recognition of foreign language teacher education. At present, training programs rely on a concrete set of standards that inform curriculum and assessment. As a result, many programs are nationally recognized by the profession because of the quality education they offer. Since Costa Rica is seeking to strengthen the preparation of its English teachers, a standards-based model similar to ACTFL's may provide a framework to start the discussion and explore the possibility of creating national standards for the preparation of teachers. The model is to be especially devised to meet the needs of the Costa Rican EFL profession.

Ideally, the model should also contain a longitudinal research component to assess the impact of the standards in terms of English proficiency gains of the K-16 students (Desde estudiantes de pre-escolar hasta universitarios).

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Emergent Technologies and Pedagogical Approaches in the XXI Century: Contextualization and Adoption

Jorge Aguilar-Sánchez
University of Dayton, U.S.A.
jaguilarsanchez1@udayton.edu

Resumen

Este trabajo se desprende de tres avances sobre el uso y adopción de la tecnología y la necesidad de un acercamiento sistemático para la adopción de tecnologías emergentes para la enseñanza de lenguas. En él discuto la pregunta sobre cómo contextualizar, desde el punto de vista pedagógico, los avances tecnológicos en la clase de lenguas. Abordo las incógnitas de qué características se encuentran en las tecnologías emergentes que ayudan a los aprendices a continuar el aprendizaje dentro y fuera del aula; qué tipos de tecnología prefieren los aprendices para abordar su aprendizaje fuera del aula y como se asocian al enfoque pedagógico; y su implementación para facilitar la adquisición de una segunda lengua en el aula.

Palabras clave: contextualización pedagógica, tecnologías emergentes, enfoques pedagógicos, adquisición de segundas lenguas

Abstract

The present paper stems from three findings on the use and adoption of technology and the need for a systematic approach to the adoption of emergent technologies for the teaching of world languages. I address the question of how to contextualize, from a pedagogical standpoint, technological advances in the language classroom. I address the issues of what characteristics are present in emergent technologies that allow students to be engaged in, in and outside of the classroom; the question of the types of technologies that learners prefer to be engaged in outside of the classroom and how they match our pedagogical approach; and their implementation for the facilitation of instructed second language acquisition.

Key words: pedagogical contextualization, emergent technologies, pedagogical approaches, second language acquisition

1. Introduction

In Aguilar-Sanchez and Donar (2014), we argue that one of the struggles we face in an era of technological innovation is the fact that younger generations of students are tech savvy and demand access to information in real time. Furthermore, researchers have found that emergent technologies such as iPads increase student engagement and collaboration within the classroom by acting as a facilitator rather than a clunky barrier like some of the current technology that is used in classrooms (Rice, 2011), that technology can be used to engage students in reflection regarding their study habits and innovations such as online games have

served to reveal to students the inadequacy of their study habits or the incompleteness of their content knowledge and that these games have helped them reevaluate their study methods to better prepare themselves for exams (Paul, Messina, & Hollis, 2006); and that computers will not replace instructors any time soon; they are not better than instructors at delivering grammar instruction when using processing instruction, and that some grammar instruction could be removed from the classroom and placed on the computer (Aguilar-Sánchez, McNulty, & Lee, 2007).

The present paper stems from three findings on the use and adoption of technology, and the need for a systematic approach to the adoption of emergent technologies for the teaching of world languages. I address the questions of how to contextualize, from a pedagogical standpoint, technological advances in the language classroom, and whether they match our pedagogical approach. Finally, I conclude with general guidelines for points to take into consideration in the implementation of these technologies in the classroom and their use to facilitate instructed second language acquisition.

2. Previous Studies on Emergent Technologies

Studies on the role of technology in the classroom have centered on particular technological advances (i.e. emergent technologies). Very few of them have investigated the role of the pedagogical approach in the selection and implementation of such technologies in the classroom. So, the studies presented here serve as exemplary work for the contextualization of emergent technologies in the classroom. There are four major areas in which studies can be categorized: specific technology, interactivity, learning management systems, and pedagogical approaches and student engagement.

2.1. Specific Technologies

iPads

In the past four years or so, iPads have become very popular in classrooms around the United States. Rice (2011) makes a summary of what some colleges have learned through their experimentation with iPads. She mentions that some studies show that iPads increase student engagement and collaboration within the classroom, saying that they acted as facilitators rather than clunky barriers like some laptops in a group setting. She noted that observers to the classes that use iPads reported that students with iPads seemed to be more engaged in classroom activities. Others, she reports, see the value on the ability to transport the iPads as a tool onto field trips and in other group settings.

Rice (2011) also presents people's perceptions of problems with the iPad. Some students, she reports, said they preferred pen and paper to the iPad and that it was a hindrance for taking detailed notes and drafting papers. No actual data from the research presented by Rice (2011) was provided; however, the pros and cons of using iPads are visible and informative for the purposes of the present work.

Work (2014) works with the selection of iPad apps that work for a proficiency based lesson. She cautions us that it is crucial to understand that technology in general, and iPads and apps more specifically, should not merely be used for technology's sake, but that they need to support the course or lesson objectives. She continues by stating three points to take in to account. The first one is that any work done with the iPad should be carefully integrated into existing lessons and curricula. The second one is that it should fulfill a clear pedagogical objective. She continues by stating that teachers need to test and evaluate apps for appropriateness in terms of content and student age and be familiar with how to use the app and its features in order to be able to explain it to their students. She concludes that one of the most important goals in foreign language education is to encourage our students to learn to use language for real-life communication and that utilizing apps and iPads in and outside of the classroom can serve a variety of objectives. These include the use language for a real purpose; practice a variety of skills, get learners ready for the 21st century, foster creativity and individuality, and encourage higher-level problem-solving and critical thinking skills.

2.2. Interactivity

One characteristic of interest in the present work is the interactive nature of emergent technologies and this characteristic can be used to enhance student learning.

Paul, Messina & Hollis (2006) assessed the effectiveness of a game they created called PsychOUT!, which was used as a study tool. They wanted to see whether it raised students' exam scores and changed their study habits as well as to survey the students' perceived effectiveness of the game. The professor had the students play the game during the class meeting before the exam. They analyzed exam performances during two semesters in four classrooms. Three were undergraduate general psychology classes and one was an upper level social psychology course. Students in the spring semester played the game before the first exam and students in the fall semester played the game before the second exam. For student evaluation of PsychOUT!, they gave the students a survey on the last day of class that included nine Likert-scale questions and six open ended questions. They were able to assess the degree to which students believed the game worked. Students could also give suggestions for improvement. Survey data was collected from 189 students. Researchers did not require all students to participate in the game day, but offered extra credit to those who did and used those who did not as a control group. 123 students played the game, and the other 66 students did not. To analyze the exam scores a 2 (game presentation) × 2 (participation) × 4 (exam) mixed factor ANOVA test was performed. They reported a significant main effect for participation, in which students who participated in PsychOUT! averaged higher exam scores ($M = 72.7$, $SD = 15.9$) than students who did not participate ($M=61.9$, $SD= 14.5$). They conclude that the surveys strongly indicated that the interaction with the game revealed to students the inadequacy of their study habits. In other words, it allowed students to determine deficiencies in their content knowledge. As a result, students reported reevaluation of their study methods to better prepare themselves for exams. Despite the design limitations in their study (i.e. lack of a real control group), Paul et al. (2006) represents an example of how by changing the pedagogical approach to a more student-centered one influences student success in learning and as a result in testing.

Bonds-Raacke & Raacke (2008) studied students' expectations of the use of Tablet PCs within the classroom, students' attitudes toward using Tablet PCs, and the resulting environment from the use of various technologies. They used two different questionnaires to evaluate students' expectations and attitudes towards the Tablet PCs and other technologies used (Blackboard and PowerPoint). There were two different experiments performed. In experiment 1, there were 122 participants from two sections of Statistics and two sections of Intro to Psychology. No background data were collected. In experiment 2 there were 101 participants from the same classes, 28 men and 73 women. The mean age of all the students was 20.85 years. The demographics of the second experiment are as follows: 41.6% Caucasian, 29.7% African-American, 17.8% Native American, 5.9% multi-racial, 3.0% Hispanic and 2.0% Hawaiian / Pacific Islander.

Participants for experiment 1 in all four classes received a questionnaire the first day of class immediately upon arrival. In experiment 2, participants received a two-part questionnaire at the end of the semester. The first part examined students' attitudes toward the use of technologies, just like the questionnaire from experiment one. The second part asked participants to respond to six statements about the class environment in general, resulting from the use of technologies. The results from the first experiment show that most students had a positive attitude towards using multiple technologies in the classroom. Eight out of the nine questions show this result. In the second experiment, all nine questions that students answered resulted in a positive attitude towards the use of technologies, even more positive than experiment 1. Students reported that it improved the interactive classroom environment and helped them become more engaged in learning the material. The authors concluded that results indicated that students' use of technology not only enhanced the classroom experience, but that they benefited from using it.

In a similar study, Enriquez (2010) studied how tablet PCs and wireless technology can be used during classroom instruction to create an Interactive Learning Network (ILN) that is designed to enhance the instructor's ability to receive active participation from all students during lectures, to conduct immediate and meaningful assessment of student learning, and to provide needed real-time feedback and assistance to maximize student learning. There were two different case studies in higher education campuses in the western United States. The author used a diagnostic test at the beginning of the experiment to see if there was a difference in prior student knowledge between the universities but there were none found. To study the impact of the ILN instruction model, there were two studies done. Study 1 compared two circuit courses at university one in the spring of 2006, which used the ILN model; and the spring of 2005, which was a traditional instructor centered classroom. The second study compared two circuit courses from the two institutions in the Spring 2006 semester, a class that used the ILN model, and a class that used the traditional model. The same instructor taught all four courses. In study 1 there were 41 students in the ILN section and 28 in the other. In study 2 there were 16 students from the ILN section and 46 in the comparison group. The demographics in study 1 were as follows: 36 male and 5 female in ILN section, 26.8% Asian, 22.0% Caucasian, 4.9% Filipino, 34.1% Hispanic, and 12.2% other; 21 male and 7 female in non ILN, 25% Asian, 35.7% Caucasian, 3.6% Filipino, 28.6% Hispanic, 7.1% other. In study 2 participants were 14 male and 2 female in ILN

section, 12.5% Asian, 25% Caucasian, 37.5% Hispanic, 25% Other; 38 female and 8 male in non ILN section, 4.3% African-American, 28.3% Asian, 17.4% Caucasian, 26.1% Filipino, 13% Hispanic, 10.9% other.

For each case study data were collected and compared through scores of students on 15 homework sets, four quizzes, four tests, and a final examination. A two-part attitudinal survey about the use of tablet PCs was administered at the end of class from the two experimental groups. Independent student t-tests were used to evaluate the statistical significance of the results. Each student in the two classes using the ILN model was given a tablet PC to use during lectures. Students interacted with the professor during lecture delivery by using NetSupport's Instant Survey and electronic whiteboard features that allow participation from all students. Enriquez reports that students were given exercises to solve using the tablet PCs while the instructor observed and guided their progress and provided individual assistance through the NetSupport School software.

In the comparison groups, no tablet PCs were used. PowerPoint, blackboard and chalk were the main media used, making the class less interactive. He reports statistically significant changes in some categories, but not all. There is a significant difference between the 2006 and 2005 results in homework average and quiz average. The average of the four tests together from the two groups has no statistical difference, but there was a significant difference between the averages of Test 3 and 4. There is also no statistical difference for the final exam, but he notes that the corresponding average letter grade for the final exam was a "B" for the 2006 class who used the ILN, and a "C" for the 2005 traditional class. Results from the survey showed that students viewed the tablet PCs as helpful in improving student performance and the instructor's teaching efficiency, as well as creating a better learning environment. The author also mentions that students responded to the open-ended questions with comments indicating that there was increased attentiveness and focus during lectures, real-time assessment of their knowledge through polling, immediate feedback on their work, increased one-on-one time with the instructor, ease of communication with instructor, and quick assistance when needed.

For the second study there were significant statistical differences in all categories except one. Students from the ILN class had higher quiz scores, overall test average, and final exam average. There was no statistical difference for the homework assignments. Enriquez summarizes that the interactive learning environment resulted in improvements in the student performance compared with the traditional instructor-centered learning environment. This can be attributed to the enhanced two-way student to instructor interaction, individualized and real-time assessment and feedback on student performance, increased student engagement, and enhanced and more efficient delivery of content. Enriquez (2010) is a very important study for the present investigation because without looking for key pedagogical factors that influence the use of technology, he discovered that by inadvertently changing his pedagogical approach with the aid of technology, his students were able to perform better in traditional tests.

2.3. Learning Management Systems

Nelson, Arthur, Jensen & Van Horn (2011) investigated ways to make students become more engaged with subject topics, how information could be presented in multiple ways, and how to collect information from students in various forms. They started with the idea that no textbook series met all of their criteria, so they decided to use digital resources instead. In order to achieve their goal, they created a virtual environment. The first stage was a storage and sharing platform where teachers could place their lesson plans, study guides, rubrics, PowerPoint presentations and any other necessary class information and/or materials called Curriculum Loft. The creation and use of such a virtual environment, they state, makes it clear to students and parents what is expected of students and explains how students are able to gain information and express their knowledge throughout the course.

The second stage was to find a reliable source for digital information. They opted for NetTrekker from Thinkronize, Inc. NetTrekker is a database of peer-reviewed digital resources that teachers can use. Teachers are able to search by age group and subject. The program also organized the information so they could see who evaluated each resource, the readability of the resource, the rating of the resource, teacher-recommended resources, student-recommended resources, or titles. They linked NetTrekker to the Curriculum Loft. Nelson et al. (2011) collected data through surveys given to students in middle and high school as well as teachers. Teachers reported that students were more likely to read or skim the articles while students reported higher interest in their subjects that used this method. Students' responses indicated that they thought their courses were more relevant because they were applying more 21st century skills, such as problem solving and working collaboratively with others. Their answers also included their perception that because information was presented in a variety of ways, it allowed them to demonstrate their knowledge in a variety of ways.

Nelson et al. (2011) concluded that because students live in a digital world, they access information for personal use and move through a tremendous amount of data to find what they are looking for. The digital platform and database show how students can successfully use technology and provide flexibility for the teachers when it comes to planning and delivering information to the students. Currently, these types of platforms are called Learning Managing Systems or LMS. Among these platforms we find Moodle, D2L, Blackboard, Oncourse, and others.

2.4. Emergent Technologies and Student Engagement

Aguilar-Sánchez and Donar (2014) searched for characteristics, from a pedagogical point of view, present in emergent technologies that allow students to be engaged in their studies inside and outside of the classroom, and students' preferences in regard to emergent technologies to be engaged in outside of the classroom. They studied data from students who completed an advanced Spanish grammar course (n= 63) at a Midwestern University in the United States. Data were collected over the course of six semesters. The authors stated that demographics were not collected due to the nature of their study.

They used an eclectic teaching approach called the PEER approach to the facilitation of second language acquisition (Aguilar-Sánchez, in progress). Four technological advances (iPads, SmartBoard, SmartPen, and Concept Maps through Prezi) were selected to create materials to engage students inside and outside of the classroom. Activities were created according to the characteristics of each of the emergent technologies that were selected. In their study, iPads were used as means to search information and sometimes to create materials in groups (e.g. picture story-telling, response to questions via Socrative, among other apps). They report that students were encouraged to use the iPads to study or to summarize the material for future reference. They also report that SmartBoard activities were created to present content in class and that these activities allowed students to interact with the content that was presented to them in the classroom, but not outside of it. Such presentations, they explain, included vocabulary games and jigsaw puzzles, among others. SmartPens, which are pens that allow for the recording of audio and the visual recording of your handwriting, were used as lecture-capture devices. A third technology included the capturing of lectures. They explain that lectures were captured with a SmartPen and were converted into what are called PenCasts. PenCasts are PDF documents with audio and interactive visuals of the user's handwriting. Aguilar-Sanchez and Donar (2014) later uploaded recorded lectures into the Learning Management System called Desire 2 Learn (D2L) for students to use them for review or preparation for class. The last technology they used was Prezi, a presentation web-based program; and it was used to engage students in deep reading. Students were required to use Prezi to prepare presentations in groups of selected readings every week as they describe in their paper.

Data were collected via a preference survey in which the researchers asked students for the frequency in which they used, during the course, the technologies at hand and the usefulness, to the student, of such technologies. Their results show that students prefer technologies that allow for interactivity and immediate feedback for classroom work, and for engagement outside of the classroom they split between time spent on an activity and the availability of non-interactive activities. They present the following advantages and disadvantages of each emergent technology.

For PenCasts, they note that not only do they capture the explanation of the professor; they also capture the writing that is undertaken to explain it. They explain that this tool proves to be very powerful to help students revisit the lectures while also allowing them to revisit explanations. In addition, they state that PenCasts also serve as a source of audio to develop listening skills. All PenCasts were done in the target language. SmartBoard activities, as they point out, were interactive inside of the classroom, but non-interactive outside of it. However, they explain that students were able to view the material that was presented to them with all the annotations that were made in class and argue that students prefer this type of material because it triggers recall of the explanation or activity done in class. For Prezies, they describe that because they were done in groups; the negotiation of what went on in each Prezi and the value of the explanation for reading gained seems to be one of the reasons why students regarded them as useful. iPads, they discovered, were the least useful technologies due to the limitations they present. They argue that Instructors are tied to applications that sometimes cost money, and iPads also seem to be regarded as personal items

and not learning tools. They suggest that future research should focus on the comparison of particular Apps and their pedagogical usefulness rather than the use of the iPad itself.

Aguilar-Sanchez and Donar (2014) conclude that while some students prefer interactive activities, others prefer the static material due to a preconception of the worth of time spent in the class, and that because each of the activities and the technology to deliver them were selected following a sound pedagogical approach, tied to a student-learning outcome, and to how it was going to benefit language acquisition; the pedagogical approach is still at the forefront of any decision-making regarding teaching. They explain that these technologies seem to have been selected because they were the ones, from a teacher perspective, that best matched the needs of the students. They suggest that to select any emergent technology, teachers must have a clear understanding of how such technology will aid the learner in the acquisition process, and not just as the means of instruction. Their suggestion is the basis for what follows in this paper.

Aguilar-Sanchez and Donar (2014) and Work (2014) share a characteristic of importance for this paper. They both call for the use of technology as an aid to fulfill our learning goal in the proficiency oriented language classroom and call to avoid the use of technology for technology sake.

3. Contextualization and Adoption of Emergent Technologies

Following the findings of recent research on the advantages and disadvantages of emergent technologies cited above, I present here a series of steps for the contextualization and adoption of emergent technologies to facilitate second language acquisition in the classroom. I provide examples from my own experience as a second language acquisition facilitator.

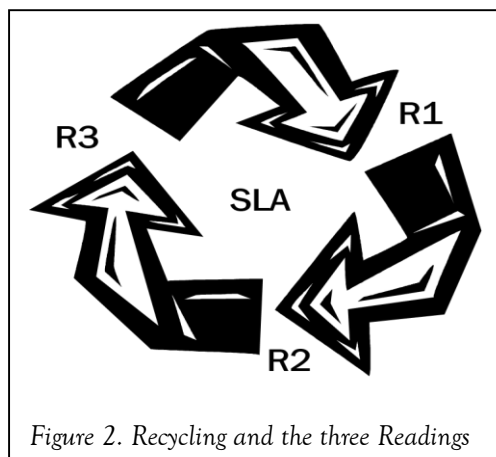
3.1.1. Step 1: Know your pedagogical approach well

For the purposes of this paper, I only present the reader with a summary of the eclectic pedagogical approach called P-E-E-R Approach for the Facilitation of Second Language Acquisition (Aguilar-Sánchez, in progress).

This approach is founded in the philosophy of education proposed by Piaget, Constructivism; the Communicative Approach proposed by Savignon (1972, 1976, 1997); Processing Instruction (Lee & VanPatten, 2003); and a sound and deep knowledge of assessment and measurement.

The word P-E-E-R stands for Preparation, Exposure, Enforcement, and Review. Learners are encouraged to be and must be prepared for specific class-content at home. What this means is that they must browse, look for familiar words, familiar structures, find new items, among other activities that will allow them to actively participate in the class. Learners must be exposed to the content as much as possible during the class period and outside of it. Facilitators must ensure that contact time includes enough exposure to the language and that time is managed to avoid gratuitous group work (Lee & VanPatten, 2003). Facilitators

must ensure that the target language is used at all times. At this point, I want to point out that it is not the facilitator's use of the language that this piece of advice refers to, but the learner's use of the language. The more learners use it, the faster the acquisition happens. We move away from the Atlas Complex (Lee & VanPatten, 2003) to a facilitator's role in the classroom. This role also encourages collaboration and communication in the classroom rather than a passive/receptive role on the part of the learner. As facilitators, we must enforce language use and content review at all times. We must create meaningful activities and not mechanical drills. Homework assignment must be linked to the objectives of the class (i.e., meaning-bearing activities) at all times. The classroom must be transformed from a teacher-centered/podium-centered classroom to a collaborative environment where language acquisition takes place. Activities must require the use of the target language outside of the classroom as well. Finally, learners must review and use old content during and after their first exposure (i.e. recycling). Recycling does not mean repeating content or explanations. It means the presence of old structures in new content carefully designed by the facilitator to promote the use of old structures and allow re-accommodation with the new one in learner language. Homework assignments must always have items that make use of previous content to provide an indirect review. In other words, there must be a sequence or path that will lead the learner to a clear goal, language proficiency.



The P-E-E-R approach relies heavily in three readings of content. These are not readings in the literal sense, but rather review and exposure to the content. The first reading happens during the preparation stage, the second during class time, and the third one happens during homework assignments. All three readings create a learning environment that facilitates second language acquisition (See Figure 1).

3.1.2. Have Clear Proficiency-based Student Learning Outcomes

Over the years, the term Lesson Objective has morph into different terms to represent the philosophy of education behind it. For the purposes of this paper, the term I use is Student Learning Outcome (SLO) to refer to the goals we set for learner's performance at the end of each course. Some might know them as objectives, as learning outcomes, targets, or goals.

In short, SLOs must contain the *When*, the *What*, and the *How* of a learning lesson. They must be observable and measurable. Some researchers recommend the use of Bloom’s Taxonomy (Bloom, 1956) to find the different domains of higher-level thinking. My suggestion is to think of how observable the behavior is and ask yourself how you are going to gather the data to determine whether the outcomes are being performed. If it is difficult to observe, it is difficult to measure.

Student Learning Outcomes must be designed with the acquisition process in mind. We have moved from a Behaviorist approach to learning to a Constructivist approach to acquisition. Therefore, memorization of terms should not be one of our goals. Performance and proficiency-based goals should be the norm in our classrooms. The American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages provides a set of guidelines of performance/proficiency-based description by levels. The European Common Frame of Reference also provides a set of performance/proficiency guidelines. Whichever you choose to follow, use them as your guide to the language acquisition stages and, when possible, as your base for establishing good SLOs.

3.1.2.1. *The When*

SLOs can be set for a particular lesson, for a unit, or for a semester. The higher the level, the more generic they become. Ideally, we would have General Outcomes per level and a more specific one for each course or lesson. Therefore, the time framework is very important because it tells us when we want to assess learning.

Examples of the *When* in SLOs are:

Time Frame	SLO Type
a. At/by the end of the 40 minute period,	Lesson SLO
b. At/by the end of the unit,	Unit SLO
c. At/by the end of the course	Course SLO
d. At/by the end of the Level/Sequence of Courses	Level SLO

The *When* is particularly important when creating Proficiency-based curricula because it provides the proficiency-levels, and it is not content-based. It also helps with the articulation of courses in a particular curriculum. In Content-based curriculum design, it helps to have the language SLOs clearly stated to articulate how the content of each course helps the language acquisition process. In other words, it helps with the sequencing and offering of content courses.

3.1.2.2. *The What*

The *What* is determined by the proficiency level we want to achieve. It can be content-based (e.g. grammar, reading, writing, etc.), or it can be performance level (e.g. critical thinking, discourse strategies, sociolinguistic competence, etc.). This is the point at which Bloom’s Taxonomy (Bloom, 1956) comes in handy.

The *What* is determined by the verb we choose; furthermore, not only is the *What* determined by this verb, but the *How* is linked to this verb. Verbs represent the observable and measurable behaviors we want from our learners. So, we have to choose them accordingly. If we choose a verb like “understand”, we will face the challenge of determining how a learner shows understanding (i.e., the observable behavior). But, if we choose a verb such as “pick”; we can easily picture and measure the behavior.

Any verb can be used as long as we have a clear construct of what the behavior is to be measured. For example, the verb “understand” can be used in conjunction with other observable behavioral verbs that show understanding in a phrase like “understand the importance of ... by making a list of advantages and disadvantages of ...” In this case, learners will show understanding by making a list (i.e. an observable and measurable behavior).

3.1.2.3. *The How*

The *How* is oftentimes neglected because of the belief that content trumps process. In the P-E-E-R approach, as can be seen in the description, content does not trump process. On the contrary, the process through which we reach our goals is as important as the content we use. The reason why the *How* is as important as the *What* stems from the necessity to collect data to determine progress in the acquisition process. When data are collected systematically, facilitators are able to make informed decisions with regards to the class, the sequence of events, and the curriculum as a whole. Data-driven decision-making is key to the implementation of this approach. Therefore, a good understanding of measurement and assessment is necessary to complete the cycle of learning.

At this stage, as teachers, we brainstorm as to what tools will help us facilitate learning and how we go about measuring progress. In the past, testing, sometimes disguised as assessment, has been the only tool language teachers use to measure achievement. However, the focus has been solely on achievement and not on the process of acquisition. This is where we, as teachers, have not been able to move from a Behaviorist approach to a Constructivist approach to second language acquisition. We over-rely on testing and tend to forget that assessment is the use of the data collected to help learners achieve goals by modifying our practice to meet their learning/acquisition needs. It is not just assigning a grade and moving on without regard to the learning process.

Emergent technologies play a key role at this stage because, as described in the literature review, by trying new technologies in the classroom, teachers tend to change the way they teach (Aguilar-Sánchez & Donar, 2014), which results in a new approach to collaboration in the classroom, where the teacher or the technology becomes a facilitator. This new role allows teachers to become aware of their learners’ needs by stepping aside and seeing the process of learning take shape in front of them or by being participants in a new learning experience with their students as peers. As an example, we go back to Enriquez (2010) because without looking for key pedagogical factors that influence the use of technology, he discovered that by changing his approach with the aid of technology, his students were able to perform better in traditional tests (i.e. learn). Shouldn’t we all make

that discovery in the XXI Century? We have now closed the loop of learning, and in our case, acquisition and moved on to the *Where*.

3.1.2.4. *The Where*

Context is very important for the implementation of the *How* because as it can provide great opportunities, it can also pose great limitations, especially when we talk about the adoption of technology.

As we think about adopting a tool, and I call it a tool on purpose, to help us facilitate second language acquisition in the classroom; we must ask the following questions:

- a. Will the tool allow us to include all learners?
- b. Will the tool encourage engagement?
- c. Will the tool be learner and learning-centered?
- d. Will the tool function well in the classroom? What do we need to do so?
- e. Will the tool engage students outside the classroom?
- f. Is the tool able to cater to all learning styles?
- g. Can data be collected on the use of the tool?
- h. Can the tool help us measure learning (i.e. assess)?
- i. Do we have enough working understanding of the technology itself? If not, how or where can we get trained?

4. Conclusion

Selecting the technology to deliver activities must follow a sound pedagogical approach. Each activity must be tied to a student-learning outcome and how it is going to benefit language acquisition. The pedagogical approach is, and will remain, at the forefront of any decision-making regarding teaching. In our case, I would like to call it facilitating acquisition. Technologies must be selected because they are the ones, from a teacher perspective, that best enhance the acquisition process and not the delivery of content. They also must be selected because they provide us with data that informs our assessment of the acquisition/assessment process to close the learning loop, which is, unfortunately, oftentimes left open due to poor planning or lack of knowledge on our behalf.

In conclusion, contextualizing and adopting emergent technologies should not be a foreign part of our lesson planning; on the contrary, it should be at the core as long as our goal remains the learner's success and language acquisition.

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Authors' Biographical Information

Elian Acuña Aguilar holds a Bachelor's degree in English Teaching from Universidad Nacional in Costa Rica and Licentiate's Degree in Teaching with Emphasis in English from Universidad Metropolitana Castro Carazo and is currently obtaining a Licentiate's Degree in Applied Linguistic in English at Universidad Nacional in Costa Rica. He has worked for Universidad Nacional in CIUNA Project, Ministry of Public Education, Universidad de Costa Rica, Instituto Nacional de Aprendizaje, teaching English as foreign language. He also has experience teaching Spanish in the United States where he worked for a year at Boiling Springs High School in South Carolina. He is currently working at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension, Campus Coto.

Jorge Aguilar Sánchez is an Assistant Professor of Spanish at the University of Dayton, Ohio. He has published several articles in research design, sociolinguistics and teaching methodology. His publications appear in the Journal of World Englishes, The Journal of Research Design, and Statistics for Linguistics and Communication Studies, in Selected Proceedings of the Hispanic Linguistics Symposium, the book *Delivering Processing Instruction in Classrooms and Virtual Contexts: Research and Practice*, and other publication venues. More info @ <https://www.udayton.edu/directory/artsscience/languages/aguilar-sanchez-jorge.php>

Jorge Altamirano Alvarado holds a Bachelor's degree in English Teaching, a Licentiate's degree in Applied Linguistics in English, and a Master's Degree in Applied Linguistics in English, all of them from Universidad Nacional, Heredia, Costa Rica. He has worked at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension, for 17 years in the different programs offered by the institution. He has also been a thesis director and coordinator of the English Department. Besides, he was also part of the nationwide project Costa Rica Multilingüe as a trainer of in-service teachers for the Ministry of Public Education. His research has been related to the teaching of the different language skills, sociolinguistics, and language and culture.

Lena Barrantes Elizondo holds a master's degree in Second Languages and Culture and one in Education Management and Leadership from Universidad Nacional. During her sixteen years of teaching experience, she has taught for the Ministry of Public Education as a primary school teacher, and a teachers' trainer. 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.

Kevin Armando Brand Fonseca holds a Bachelor's Degree in English Teaching and a Licentiate's Degree in Applied Linguistics with an Emphasis on English from UNA, Brunca Extension. He has worked as an English professor at UNA, Campus Coto and Campus Pérez Zeledón, for about two years. Professor Brand has presented four different research papers related to the field of applied linguistics at different congresses in Costa Rica.

Veronica Brenes Sánchez holds a bachelor's degree in English Teaching from Universidad Nacional, and she is finishing her graduation project for the Licentiate's degree in Applied Linguistics at the same university. She has worked for Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension and CI-UNA. She is currently working in the program CI-UNA English Access Micro-scholarship. Besides this, she works as an English instructor for Universidad Estatal a Distancia (UNED) in a special program for senior citizens. She presented some research at CONLAUNA 2013 and in the Forth International Congress at UCR.

Edson Enrique Calderón Rodríguez holds a Bachelor's Degree in English Teaching and has recently finished a Licentiate's Degree in Applied Linguistics with an Emphasis on English from UNA, Brunca Extension. He is currently working on the graduation project and is also enrolled in a Licentiate program in Teaching at Universidad San Marcos. Last year, he worked for CI-UNA in Pérez Zeledón. He is at present working at Universidad Nacional (UNA), Brunca Extension, Campus Coto.

Rodrigo Ignacio Campos Araya holds a Bachelor 's and Licentiate's degree in Primary Education Science with an Emphasis in English Teaching from Universidad Estatal a Distancia in Costa Rica. He also holds a Licentiate's and Master 's Degree in Law from Universidad Latina in Costa Rica. He has worked for Universidad Nacional and Ministerio de Educación Pública teaching English as foreign language and Social Sciences. He is currently working at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension, Campus Coto.

Adrián Carmona Miranda holds a Bachelor's and a Licentiate's degree in English for Primary Education from UNED. He also has a Master of Sciences degree in Education with emphasis on TEFL from Universidad Latina de Costa Rica. His teaching experience comprises 20 years at the Ministry of Public Education, 8 years at Universidad Nacional, Sarapiquí Campus, Colegio Universitario, Limon, Universidad Latina, the project CONARE-MEP-UCR, the National Learning Institute (Instituto Nacional de Aprendizaje) and National Bank of Costa Rica as an English instructor. Additionally, he has been a presenter in several international congresses of applied linguistics, pedagogy and English literature.

Ronny Carmona Miranda holds a Bachelor's and a Licentiate's degree in English for Primary Education from USJ. He also has a Master of Sciences degree in Education with emphasis on teaching from Universidad Americana de Costa Rica. His teaching experience comprises 17 years at the Ministry of Public Education, 5 years at UNA Sarapiquí-Campus, CUN - Limon, Universidad Latina, San Jose University. Additionally, he has been a presenter in several international congresses of applied linguistics, pedagogy and English literature.

Johanna Chaves Agüero holds a Licentiate's degree in Applied Linguistics with emphasis in English from Universidad Nacional in Costa Rica. She also completed her B.A. in English Teaching at Universidad Nacional. She has taught for 14 years in primary schools in Perez

Zeledón for the Costa Rican Ministry of Education. She has done research in pedagogy, and English teaching.

Mauricio Espinoza Fernández holds a Bachelor's degree in English teaching from Universidad Nacional. He is currently completing the Applied Linguistics Licentiate's degree program at Universidad Nacional. He has worked for Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension, several private institutes, for the Ministry of Public Education, and he has also worked for CI-UNA Project at Universidad Nacional.

Viviana Fallas Gabuardi holds a Bachelor's Degree in English Teaching from Universidad Nacional in Costa Rica. Also, she has a Master's degree in Second Languages and Cultures at the same university. She also worked at Escuela Científica, Universidad Nacional for one year. Now she is working at Universidad de Costa Rica, Recinto de Golfito and Universidad Nacional, Coto Branch. In previous years, she taught English courses in private language institutions.

Karla Fonseca Sánchez holds a Bachelor's degree in English Teaching from Universidad Nacional in Costa Rica. Currently, she is a student of the Master's program in Second Languages and Cultures at the same university. She has worked for several private language institutes as an English instructor. She also worked at Escuela Científica, Universidad Nacional for three years. At present, she is working at Universidad Nacional, Coto Branch.

Roy Gamboa Mena is a professor of English at the Universidad de Costa Rica. He holds a Bachelor's degree in English and a Master's degree in the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language from Universidad de Costa Rica. His research has been presented in many national and international conferences, and he has published academic articles at the Instituto de Investigación en Educación (INIE-UCR), the Hawaii International Conference on Education, the Congreso Internacional de Lingüística Aplicada (CILAP-UNA), and the Congreso Internacional de Lingüística Aplicada (CONLA-UNA). He is currently conducting research on issues pertaining to the field of Applied Linguistics, such as learner autonomy, reflective learning, and ELT materials evaluation.

Beatriz Gamboa Sánchez holds a Master's degree in Educational Administration from Universidad Nacional in Costa Rica. She also completed a Licentiate program in Applied Linguistics with emphasis in English and another in Pedagogy also at Universidad Nacional. She has taught for 14 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.

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.

Barbara Jean Hall holds an M.A. in English from Wake Forest University in North Carolina and an M.S. in Applied Linguistics from Georgetown University in Washington, DC. She is a tenured associate professor of English and English as a Second Language at Georgia Perimeter College/Georgia State University in Atlanta, Georgia. Her textbook co-authored with colleague Stephanie Coffin, *Writing Workshop: A Manual for College ESL Writers*, has been used in ESL college writing classes for ten years. Spanish is her second language, and she has held Fulbright Scholar Awards in TEFL in Montevideo, Uruguay in 2008 and San Isidro, Costa Rica in 2015.

Patricia López Estrada holds an Education Doctorate from University of Florida, a Master's in Second Languages and Cultures in English as a Foreign Language and a Licentiate in Applied Linguistics to Second Language Teaching from Universidad Nacional, a Bachelor's in English Teaching, and a Bachelor's in English Translation from Universidad Latinoamericana de Ciencias y Tecnología. Her most recent publications and conference presentations focus on effective pedagogical practices in bilingual education and empowerment pedagogy practices in higher education.

Juan Manuel Méndez Valverde holds a Bachelor's Degree in English Teaching from Universidad Nacional. He also has a Master's degree in Second Languages and Cultures with emphasis in English from Universidad Nacional. He has been an English teacher for seven years, and has worked with primary and secondary learners. He has also trained college students at the Universidad Nacional, Brunca Branch Campus. He has also worked for other private institutes. Currently, he is working as an English teacher at the Universidad Nacional, Brunca Branch Campus in the English Teaching and Tourism Majors, in the Associate's Program in English, and at the Colegio Científico in Pérez Zeledón. His research has been focused on the teaching of grammar and pronunciation, materials and activities design, needs analysis, and the teaching of English as a foreign language in Central America.

Joe Montenegro Bonilla has a Master's degree in English Literature from University of Costa Rica and a Master's degree in Educational Management and Leadership from Universidad Nacional. He has worked as a literature teacher for ten years and has collaborated for both Universidad Nacional and Universidad de Costa Rica for over seven years. His main areas of research are literature and its relationship with cinema, masculine representations in American literature and film, and the Gothic.

Cinthya Olivares Garita holds a Licentiate's degree in Applied Linguistics in English, a Master's degree in Second Languages and Culture and a Master's degree in Educational Management and Leadership from Universidad Nacional of Costa Rica. She is currently working at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension in the English teaching major. 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 chair of the Foreign Languages Department at UNA.

Johanna Quirós Cordero holds a Bachelor's degree in English Teaching from Universidad Nacional in Costa Rica and a Licentiate's degree in Teaching with Emphasis in English from Universidad Metropolitana Castro Carazo and is currently obtaining a Licentiate's Degree in Applied Linguistic in English at Universidad Nacional in Costa Rica. She has worked for Universidad Nacional in CI-UNA Project, Ministerio de Educación Pública and other private institutes teaching English for conversation. She has also taught in the English Teaching and Associate's Program in English at Universidad Nacional. She is currently working at Ministerio de Educación Pública.

José G. Ricardo Osorio is Department Chair and Associate Professor of Foreign Language Education and Spanish at Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania. He is a member of the Modern Languages Association (MLA), the Pennsylvania State Modern Languages Association (PSMLA), the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP), the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and PennTesol East. He is also on the Northeast Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (NECTFL) Board. His research interests include student learning outcomes assessment, teacher training, and foreign language methodology. He enjoys teaching cultural topics such as traditional American and Latin American dances and music. He is currently conducting phase I of a research about students' perspectives on the assessment of their learning.

Safiro Rivera Mena holds a Bachelor's degree in English Teaching from Universidad Nacional. She is currently working on her graduation project to obtain a Licentiate's degree in Applied Linguistics with an emphasis on English from the same university and is at the moment enrolled in a Licentiate program in Teaching at Universidad San Marcos. She works as a professor of English at Universidad Nacional, Campus Coto and has worked for the Centro de Idiomas Universidad Nacional in Pérez Zeledón.

Teresita Rivera Rodríguez holds a Bachelor's degree in English teaching from Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension, Pérez Zeledón Campus. This same university granted her an exchange scholarship at East Carolina University, North Carolina, USA, in 2011. She is also a student of the Licentiate program in Applied Linguistics with an Emphasis on English at Universidad Nacional. She has worked for private institutions, and she is currently working for the CI-UNA project, teaching conversational English courses.

Marianela Sandí Cruz holds a Bachelor's degree in English Teaching from Universidad Nacional. She also has a Licentiate's degree in Applied Linguistics in English and a Master's degree in Second Languages and Cultures with emphasis in English from Universidad Nacional. In her eleven years of teaching experience, she has worked with primary learners for the Ministry of Public Education (MEP) and college students for the Universidad Nacional. She has also worked for institutions like the Escuela Científica and other private institutes, and has been a trainer for in-service MEP teachers. At present, she is working at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension in the English Teaching major and Associate's Program in English. Her research work has been based on the teaching of grammar and

pronunciation, materials and activities design, needs analysis, and the teaching of English as a foreign language in Central America.

Roger Segura Arias holds a Bachelor's degree in English teaching from the Universidad Nacional in addition to a Licentiate's degree in English teaching from the Universidad Latina de Costa Rica. He is currently completing the Applied Linguistics Licentiate program at the Universidad Nacional. He has worked for the Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension and several private institutions. He currently works for the Universidad Latina de Costa Rica, Perez Zeledon and for CI-UNA, Perez Zeledon.

Henry Sevilla Morales is a professor of English at Universidad Nacional and Universidad de Costa Rica. He holds a Bachelor's degree in English Teaching from Universidad de Costa Rica, a Licentiate's degree in English Teaching from Universidad Latina, and a Master's degree in Second Languages and Cultures from Universidad Nacional. His research has been presented in many national and international conferences and he has published academic articles at the Instituto de Investigación en Educación (INIE-UCR), Revista Pensamiento Actual (UCR), the Hawaii International Conference on Education, the Congreso Internacional de Lingüística Aplicada (CILAP-UNA), and the Congreso Internacional de Lingüística Aplicada (CONLA-UNA). In addition, he has published short stories in Revista de Artes y Letras of Universidad de Costa Rica (Kañina) and he has won two national poetry awards. He is currently conducting research on issues pertaining to the field of Applied Linguistics, such as learner autonomy, reflective learning, and ELT materials evaluation.

Federico Soto Peralta holds a Bachelor's degree in English Teaching from Universidad Nacional in Costa Rica. Currently, he is a student of the Master's program in Second Languages and Cultures at the same university. He has worked for several private language institutes. He also worked for the Ministry of Public Education of Costa Rica for almost a year and Universidad de Costa Rica for six months. At the moment, he is working at Universidad Nacional, Coto Branch as a professor of the Foreign Language Department.

Gabriela Tosso Ramírez holds a Bachelor's degree in English teaching from Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension, Pérez Zeledón Campus. She was granted an award of excellence in 2010 for her academic performance in the English teaching major. She is also a student of the Licentiate program in Applied Linguistics with an Emphasis on English at Universidad Nacional. She has worked for private institutions and has taught Spanish as a second language. She is currently working for the CI-UNA project, teaching conversational English courses.

Evelyn Gabriela Valverde Marín holds a Bachelor's degree in English Teaching from Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension. She is currently carrying out her final research paper, which is a requirement to finish the Licentiate program in Applied Linguistics at the same university. She has worked at Universidad Nacional as a professor. She is teaching at CI-UNA English Access Micro-scholarship Program. In addition, she presented the findings of some of her studies in the First International Congress of Applied Linguistics at UNA, Brunca Extension and in the Forth International Congress at UCR.

Austin M. Vander Wel, a language instructor and learner himself, graduated from Whitworth University with bachelor's degrees in Cross-Cultural Studies, International Relations, and Spanish Language & Literature. He is currently an English teaching assistant at the Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica, SRB, through a U.S. Department of State Fulbright scholarship. He hopes to further his studies by pursuing a master's degree in Applied Linguistics soon after this commitment in Costa Rica.

Cristina Melissa Vargas Barboza holds an Associate's degree in English from Universidad Nacional in Costa Rica. She also holds a Bachelor's degree in English Teaching from Universidad Nacional in Costa Rica. This year, she finished her studies in Applied Linguistics and is currently working on the thesis to obtain a Licentiate's degree. She has worked for the English program CI-UNA from Universidad Nacional since January 2014.

Jairo Eduardo Viales Angulo holds a Bachelor's degree in Teaching English for Primary Education from Universidad de Costa Rica (UCR) and a Master's degree in Second Languages and Cultures with a Major in English Teaching from Universidad Nacional (UNA). He has had a tenured position as a teacher at the Ministry of Public Education since 2005. He also teaches at UCR Guápiles Campus, and at UNA Sarapiquí Campus. He was a presenter in the IV International Conference of Applied Linguistic at UNA, and in the Second International Conference of Pedagogy, Language and English Literature at UCR.

Joselyn Zúñiga Garro holds a bachelor's degree in English teaching from Universidad Nacional. She is currently completing the Applied Linguistics Licentiate program at the Universidad Nacional. She has worked for some private institutions and presently works for CI-UNA, Perez Zeledon.

Lesly Zúñiga Vargas 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 in Costa Rica. She also has two Licentiate degrees one in Teaching and another in School Administration. During her eleven years of teaching experience, she has taught primary, secondary and university students. She has also taught courses at other private and public institutions and has been a trainer of several courses for in-service MEP teachers. She is currently working at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Branch Campus in the English Teaching and the English associate's degree.

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Richmond



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Además, extendemos nuestro agradecimiento al Consejo Académico de la Sede Regional de la Universidad Nacional. Sin su apoyo, tanto económico como en la prestación de otros servicios, este segundo congreso CONLAUNA 2015 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 plasmada 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 futuros congresos.