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EDITORAS GENERALES

Mgter. Rosa Inés Cúneo

Mgter. Aída Alejandra Díaz

Mgter. Marisel María Bollati

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Palabras de las editoras

[...] over [the] years I've had a chance to look at education reform from a lot of perspectives. Some of those reforms have been good. Some of them have been not so good. And we know why kids drop out. We know why kids don't learn. It's either poverty, low attendance, negative peer influences. We know why. But one of the things that we never discuss or we rarely discuss is the value and importance of human connection, relationships.
Rita Pearson (2013)

En estas primeras décadas del siglo XXI se continúa hablando de reformas educativas, de la necesidad de adaptar los métodos, los contenidos, los materiales utilizados en la enseñanza de distintas disciplinas en distintos niveles del sistema educativo. Algunos factores siguen atravesando cada una de las prácticas docentes más allá de toda reforma de tipo disciplinar o metodológica. Uno de esos factores es la conexión que se entabla entre docentes, alumnos, directivos e instituciones. Como explica Rita Person, son estos los factores que a veces quedan sin debatir.

En la actualidad, gracias a las políticas inclusivas que han dado cada vez mayor lugar a la participación de estudiantes con distintos tipos de discapacidad, la importancia de las conexiones humanas adquiere una nueva dimensión. Algunos trabajos de la presente publicación abordan esta temática destacando el crecimiento que estas nuevas conexiones significan para nuestra sociedad.

La importancia de las conexiones humanas también se hace evidente en la interdisciplinariedad que ha ganado gran terreno en estas últimas décadas y que ha implicado la reunión de docentes de distintas áreas conectándose tras un fin común superador y encontrando un lenguaje compartido.

Estas nuevas conexiones han llevado a las comunidades educativas a salir de su zona de confort para intentar ver las realidades que nos rodean con nuevos 'lentes' –como también se menciona en algunos de los trabajos de la presente edición.

Todas estas experiencias destacan el valor del componente humano, de la necesidad de seguir haciendo esfuerzos por entendernos desde distintas disciplinas, distintos intereses, distintas capacidades, pero con un mismo propósito: mejorar la educación que pretendemos dar a los estudiantes.

Fortaleciendo las conexiones institucionales que se han tejido entre el Departamento de Lengua y Literatura Inglesa, el Gabinete de Estudios en Lenguas Extranjeras (GELE) de la Facultad Filosofía, Humanidades y Artes de la Universidad Nacional de San Juan y la Asociación San Juan de Profesores de Inglés (ASJPI), la presente publicación reúne los aportes de docentes e investigadores que abordan críticamente su propia práctica y están dispuestos a compartir sus trabajos.

Asimismo, fortaleciendo las conexiones entre instituciones, docentes y alumnos, la publicación nuevamente incluye los valiosos aportes de estudiantes de las carreras de grado de nuestro departamento, de quienes seguramente continuaremos aprendiendo en el futuro, ya que ellos son y serán nuestros verdaderos maestros.

Rosa Inés Cúneo
Aída Alejandra Díaz
Marisel María Bollati

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BIODATA

Guest Lecturers

Charlie López holds an MA in Teaching English as a Foreign Language from the University of Reading-UK. He is the director of *Big Ben* Institute-Buenos Aires. He has taught *Discourse Analysis* at the Master's degree program in Translation and Interpretation of the University of Buenos Aires. He has written on language and educational issues for the Buenos Aires Herald and other important newspapers and magazines. Mr. López is the producer and presenter of *YeS* TV program and the author of several publications in different formats. He has also lectured for British and American publishers in Argentina and abroad.

Patricia Almendro is an English Teacher graduated from CONSUDEC in Capital Federal . She has completed postgraduate courses in England and in Universidad Católica de Salta. She has worked in many state and private schools in CABA and in Misiones teaching young learners, teens and adults . For the last 12 years she's been an Advisor for Pearson and now she works as an Academic Consultant for Pearson Argentina and Uruguay.

Silvina Bisio holds both, a Research and a Teaching degree from Universidad Siglo 21. She has a Diploma in Team Management and Coaching from Universidad de Barcelona, Spain. Currently, she works at Academia Argüello and is the Secretary of ACPI, *Asociación Cordobesa de Profesores de Inglés*.

Trinidad Gavier graduated as a Teacher of English at the Universidad Nacional de Córdoba. She is working on her Final Project Course to get a Research degree in Educational Institutions Management from Universidad Blas Pascal. At present, she works at Academia Argüello and Universidad *Blas Pascal*. She is the President of ACPI, *Asociación Cordobesa de Profesores de Inglés*.

Aída Alejandra Díaz is a teacher of English from the National University of San Juan and holds a Master's degree in TEFL from the University of Jaén, Spain. She has been teaching English for over twenty years in varied educational environments. At present she is a member of the *Professional Practicum* teaching team and also teaches *Cultural Studies* at the English Department of the School of Philosophy, Humanities and the Arts of the National University of San Juan.

Alicia Virginia Martín holds a PHD in Epistemology and Social Sciences (Universidad de Chile) and a Specialist in Didactics Degree (UBA). She is a researcher in the area of Language and Literature Teaching. She holds the chairs of *Epistemología de las Ciencias de la Educación* and *Didáctica y Curriculum* in the FFHA- UNSJ and the Profesorado en Francés at the INES. She participated as a Generalist in the Jurisdictional Designs of Teacher Training Higher Level Education in 2008 and Secondary education in 2015 and 2016.

Ana María Laciari holds a Higher Education Specialization Degree as well as a Teaching Degree in EFL and a Master's Degree in Linguistics from National University of San Juan. She has taught EFL, including TOEFL courses, at university level for over 20 years. She is a member of a research team working on the linguistic realization of values in language teaching.

Claudia G. Castañeda is a National Public Translator and a Teacher of English, graduated from the School of Languages of the National University of Córdoba, and holds a Master's Degree in Linguistics at the National University of San Juan. She works as Assistant Professor in *English Syntax and Semantics* and in *Spanish, Linguistic Theories* and *Sociolinguistics* in the Department of English Language and Literature of our school. She is also a member of a research team in our school and has been a Cambridge examiner since 2005.

Eliana Martínez is a teacher of English by the National University of San Juan, and has a Master's degree in Applied Linguistics by the UNED at Madrid, Spain. She works at the National University of San Juan, Universidad Católica de Cuyo and *Colegio Inglés Bilingüe* de San Juan.

Eliana Pizarro de la Vega is a Teacher of English from the Universidad Nacional de San Juan (UNSJ) and she is currently pursuing a Master's degree in TEFL at Universidad Europea del Atlántico (Spain). She teaches English in *Asociación de Cultura Saint John's* and in public schools in San Juan.

Graciela Mónica Galli is a Teacher of English from the School of Philosophy, Humanities and the Arts of the National University of San Juan. She holds a Master's Degree in Linguistics at the National University of San Juan. She is currently at the head of the *English Language I and II* courses in the Department of English Language and Literature of our school. She is also a member of a research team in this department.

Graciela Viviana Albiñana is a Teacher of English for Secondary and University levels from the National University of San Juan. She holds a Master's Degree in Applied Linguistics with a Language Teaching Orientation from the National University of Cuyo in Mendoza. Graciela is the Head Professor of *Contrastive Studies of English and Spanish* and also teaches *Pragmatics and Discourse*. She is also Adjunct Professor of *English Syntax and Semantics* in the Department of English Language and Literature of our school. She co-directs a research project on Anglicisms in San Juan under way also at our School. She has worked as a Lead Coordinator at *Saint John's Asociación de Cultura* for several years now.

Jorge Luis Yunes is a high school and university teacher of English. He currently works at *Mons. Dr. Audino Rodríguez y Olmos* Secondary School, Universidad Católica de Cuyo. He also provides training courses in a number of local and international companies, and is carrying out doctoral studies in education.

Liliana Martínez is a Specialist in Educational Management, Management and Technological Engagement, in Education and ICT, in Pedagogy and in Educational Research (Universidad FASTA). Ms Martínez also holds a Master's Degree in Educación Psicoinformática and a Doctoral Degree in Philosophy (Universidad de Chile). Dr. Martínez is a researcher at the UNSJ where she is the Coordinator of the Disability Committee.

Marcos Alberto Torres is a Teacher of English graduated from this school. He is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Linguistics at the National University of San Juan. He has participated in research projects on Applied Linguistics at our school and has completed apprenticeships in *Phonetics and Phonology* Courses.

María Lourdes Nafá is a Sworn Public Translator (UNC, Argentina) and holds a PhD in translation and interpreting (UGR, Spain). She specialises in English and Spanish phonology, especially in discourse analysis of intonation. She has thorough experience as translator, interpreter and translation project management. She is also writer and editor of printed material at the Ministry of Tourism and Culture of the Province of San Juan.

María Victoria Sergo is a teacher of English from the National university of San Juan. At present she teaches English in secondary schools in San Juan and in *Asociación de Cultura Saint John's*. She is a member of the research team working on the *"Transmedia literacy skills in students at secondary schools in San Juan"* at the English Department, Facultad de Filosofía Humanidades y Artes (UNSJ).

Mariela Coll is a teacher of English by the National University of San Juan, and is working towards a Master's degree in Applied Linguistics. She works at the National University of San Juan, Escuela de Comercio "*Libertador Gral San Martín*" and Colegio San Pablo.

Mariela Hualpa is a Teacher of English from the National University of San Juan and she currently teaches *History of the English Language* in the Research Program at the English Department of our school. She is also a member of a research team at the National University of San Juan and a teacher of English at Nuestra Señora de Luján High School in our city.

Marcela Inés Martín is a Teacher of English and Education (UNSJ) and an ICT Specialist (MEdRA). She holds the chair of *Didáctica y Currículum* and is an Assistant Professor of *Introducción a la Pronunciación* and *Fonética y Fonología Inglesa I* at the FFHA-UNSJ. She is a researcher at UNSJ. Her areas of interest are General Didactics and ICT in Education. She is a member of the Departmental Council and of the Advisory Board of the Language Lab of the English Department, FFHA-UNSJ.

Marisel Bollati holds a Master's Degree in Linguistics, a Higher Education Specialization Degree from the National University of San Juan as well as a Translation and a Teaching degree from the National University of Córdoba. She currently holds a teaching and research position in the English Department of the School of Philosophy, Humanities and the Arts of the National University of San Juan. She teaches post-graduate courses all over the country. Her field of expertise is Systemic-Functional Linguistics.

Pamela Femenía is a teacher of English, graduated at the National University of San Juan. She is also a Specialist in ICT and Education by the National Ministry of Education. Ms Femenia is currently working towards a PhD degree in Education at the School of Education, Catholic University of Cuyo, with a grant from the CONICET and the UNSJ. She teaches English at Fray Mamerto Esquiú School, secondary education.

Patricia Alejandra Muñoz has a Teaching and a Research degree from the National University of San Juan and holds a Master's Degree in TEFL from the University of Jaén in Spain and a PHD degree in Education from the National University of Cuyo. She co-chairs *Aprendizaje y Adquisición de Lenguas*, *Lingüística Aplicada a la Enseñanza de Lenguas* and *Práctica Profesional* at the English Department of our school. Ms. Muñoz is also a researcher at the National University of San Juan and a Coordinator of English at a private EFL school in San Juan.

Rosa Inés Cúneo obtained a Teaching Degree in EFL from the National University of San Juan and a Master's Degree in TEFL from the University of Jaén in Spain. She holds the chair of *English Language IV* at the English Department of this school and has worked in research areas focused on the relationship between language and culture. She is at present the Deputy Director of the English Department at the School of Philosophy, Humanities and the Arts of the National University of San Juan.

Rosario Fabrini is an English Language Teacher for Secondary and Higher Education (FFHA-UNSJ) and holds a Diploma in Education and ICTs by the FCEFYN (UNSJ). She is currently pursuing a M.A in Linguistics at the FFHA (UNSJ) and a M.A in TEFL at the Universidad Europea del Atlántico (Spain). Miss Fabrini teaches English to adolescents and children in private and public schools in San Juan. She wrote "*Cuentos y poemas de la Argentina*" which was presented at the *Feria de la Cultura Popular y el Libro de Rawson*, San Juan.

Rossana Bartol is a Specialist in Management of Tertiary Education by the Red Andina de Universidades, RADU, and has a Degree in Psychology by the Universidad Católica de Cuyo. At present she is working towards a PHD degree in Education at the UCCuyo. Ms. Bartol teaches "School Integration" and "Institutional Practice" at the Therapeutic Companionship Tertiary Education Programme at the Philosophy and Humanities School, UCCuyo. "Disability and Work

Environments” and “Field Work” of the Inclusive Education Research Programme of the School of Education, UCCuyo. Ms Bartol is a researcher at the UCCuyo and a member of the interdisciplinary technical team of the “Aleluya” Special Education School in San Juan.

Rubén Darío Masciadri has a teaching degree in English from the FFHA - UNSJ. He is carrying out a postgraduate course in neuro-learning at Instituto de Formación Docente Santa Teresa de Jesús. He is at present working at different secondary schools in San Juan as well as in Asociación de Cultura Saint John's.

FFHA - UNSJ STUDENTS

Aldo Fabián Prado Álvarez is a fifth-year-student of the Language Teaching Program FFHA - UNSJ. He teaches young learners, teenagers and adults at private educational institutions in San Juan. Currently, he is a student assistant in the *English Language IV* course (DLYLI – FFHA) and he is working on a research project which explores potential pedagogical applications of Systemic Functional Linguistics.

Fernando Pereyra is a 5th year student of the English Teaching Programme at the FFHA - UNSJ. He teaches English to young teens and is currently a student aid in the *English Grammar I* course at the teaching and research programmes of the FFHA - UNSJ.

Gabriela Martín is a 5th year student of the English Teaching Programme at FFHA, UNSJ. She is a beneficiary of the “Estímulo a las Vocaciones Científicas 2017” scholarship and is conducting her research work within the project “*La Lingüística Sistemico-Funcional: Posibles aplicaciones pedagógicas*”.

María Sold Gardiol is a fifth-year-student of the Language Teaching Program of the Facultad de Filosofía, Humanidades y Artes at UNSJ (Universidad Nacional de San Juan). She teaches young learners and teenagers at private educational institutions in San Juan and is currently working on a research project which explores the socio-historical cultural dimensions, as well as, pedagogical implications of Systemic Functional Linguistics.

PLENARIES

UNWINDING *BE*

Marisel M. Bollati
mmbollati@gmail.com
Aída A. Díaz
adguell@gmail.com
Mariela I. Hualpa
maihualpa@gmail.com
DLYLI-FFHA, UNSJ

Abstract

It is well known that all languages change in many different ways over time. These changes affect different aspects of language, such as its morphology, syntax, pronunciation, and even pragmatic and discursive features. The verb 'to be' has not been exempt from such changes. Since it was born, it has evolved in significant ways, with historical events shaping it quite drastically to the forms we know today. Given its double status as a main verb and an auxiliary verb, it is one of the most widely used verbs in the language. However, its complexity –partly resulting from its unchallenged position as the most irregular verb in the English language- is often minimized in the classroom. In this presentation, we invite teachers and language professionals to embark on a journey to revisit the verb 'to be' and unravel some of its mysteries.

Key words: language change - complexity of "be" - classroom implications

Introduction

The verb 'to be' is regarded as a starting point in most EFL courses. Serving basic functions, it allows us to identify ourselves (1); to say what we do (2); where we come from (3) and what we are doing at the time of speaking (4); to signal a permanent feature (5), to signal a temporary condition (6), among many other purposes:

1. I'm Steven
2. I'm a truck operator
3. I'm from Chile
4. I'm studying English
5. I'm tall
6. I'm tired

The verb *be* is clearly one of the most widely used verbs in the language, but in spite of its ubiquity -or perhaps because of it- this verb represents a challenge for most learners during elementary as well as more advanced stages in the learning process. Not only does *be* serve a dual function as a main verb and an auxiliary verb, but it also differs significantly from practically all other verbs in English when it comes to its present and past interrogative and negative forms.

To a large extent, the complexity of the verb *to be* can be understood by looking at its evolution in the history of English. It is well known that all languages change in many different ways over time. These changes affect different aspects of language, such as its

morphology, syntax, pronunciation, and even pragmatic and discursive features. 'Be' has not been exempt from such changes. Since it was born, it has evolved in significant ways, with historical events shaping it quite drastically to the forms we know today and giving it its unique, unchallenged status as the most irregular verb in the language.

We believe that an exploration of the evolution of *be* can shed some light on the intrinsic complexity of this verb and can help teachers unravel some of its mysteries. We propose an exploration guided by principles of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), a theory of language which argues that language study can be approached from various dimensions, one of them being based on 'change through time' (See *Semogenesis as a starting point*).

We also believe that some teaching practices could be revisited on the basis of a renewed, historically-informed understanding of the complexities of *be*, so that students may be more effectively guided in their journey learning to use this ubiquitous verb.

Semogenesis as a starting point

Research into the evolution of languages has been under way for decades now (Nowak and Krakauer, 8028). SFL, as a social semiotic theory of language, embraces the study of language change (along with a number of other dimensions of study) and proposes its exploration through the dimension of Semogenesis, which views language change in terms of three different 'depths of time' (Halliday and Matthiessen, qtd. in MacCallum 17), namely:

- the unfolding of meaning over the course of a text – logogenesis;
- the development of language over a person's lifetime - ontogenesis
- the evolution of language over the history of a culture - phylogenesis

Considering the importance that SFL assigns to context, MacCallum explains that these three levels are closely related to three changing contexts, with logogenesis reflecting shifts in the context of situation; ontogenesis involving learning and physical developments in the speaker; and phylogenesis, describing changes in the context of culture.

In line with this dynamic view of language, we explore the evolution of *be* over the history of the English culture, as it accounts for the way the verb is used today.

The evolution of language

With a focus on the phylogenetic lens, we endorse the notion that languages are dynamic. As we human beings evolve, so do languages. Some languages change drastically over time and others are more stable. The evolution of the English language has been characterized by significant changes.

A first step to exploring language evolution is to seek answers to the questions of why and how languages change. One answer might be obvious: languages change to keep up with human evolution in its various cultures. If people invent something new, they need words for it. In the field of technology, for instance, words such as *blogging*, *twittering*, *googled* have been coined by speakers all around the globe to cope with never-ending advances.

This evolutionary perspective is thoroughly explained by Halliday when he says that certain stages in the evolution of language evoke the evolution of the meaning potential of the system. These stages represent how different speech fellowships developed from nomadic groups to adopting an agricultural lifestyle. In turn, these groups turned into industrial ones and then entered the post-industrial, digital-electronic era. Halliday metaphorically refers to this evolution going 'from forest to farming, then to factory'. He then introduced the term 'fantasy land' to account for the current stage of evolution we are living in. These stages represent the ways in which language has developed from speech to writing, from writing to printing and from printing to blogging or twittering (21:50-26:04). Not only technology causes language to develop, but other human activities as well, such as politics, science, art, among others.

Language evolves not only because new terms are coined but also because some terms fall into disuse. Who would nowadays speak of a *carbon copy*? People no longer *dial* or *hang up* the phone. Telegrams have also become rare in many cultures.

'Why' and 'how' languages change go hand in hand. Schendl (67), in his book *Historical Linguistics*, presents three aspects that cause language to change: functional, psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic factors. The functional explanation refers to change mainly as *therapeutic* based on the idea that languages are always seeking balance in their own system. An example from Old English can illustrate this. At the dawn of the Middle English period, some allophones gained phonemic status in order to address the asymmetry of the phonological subsystem of the time. A number of factors prompted the phonemicization of voiced fricatives: French loanwords, dialectal variation, loss of final unstressed syllables. These changes -the incorporation of phonemes- served the therapeutic purpose of making the language more symmetrical.

The psycholinguistic explanation of change focuses on how children acquire their language. In relation to this, Halliday argues that languages evolve in the same way children's language develops. At first, there's a referential stage that is followed by generalization; this, in turn, will lead to metaphorical reference through abstraction in adulthood. All languages undergo these stages in their evolution.

Regarding the sociolinguistic explanation for language change, Schendl explains that “there’s an area of fuzziness in which judgements about, say, grammaticality are not as clear-cut as grammarians would like them to be” (72). In other words, the idealization of the system cannot account for the way in which language is used in society. The language of popular songs or conversation, for instance, will most likely contain expressions which violate some grammatical rules. It is not uncommon to hear native speakers of English using double negatives or producing a synthetic comparison when an analytic form would be expected: “*It’s more quiet in here*”. Areas of fuzziness like this also cause languages to evolve.

Another indicator of change at the sociolinguistic level is *variation*, which to a large extent explains that the same thing can be said in different ways:

1a. We be having left-overs /

1b. We have left-overs all the time (Gee 10).

The linguist who systematized this kind of social dimension in language change with his study on the “r” variables in New York was William Labov. Hazen explains that in the NYC study, Labov attended both to the speech community and to individuals whose linguistic behaviour departed from that of the group (32). Expanding on this idea of variation and referring to **the principle of language and society**, Gee says that “language both unites us and divides us at one and the same time” (9).

It should also be noted that certain aspects of language change more easily than others and certain language changes are perceived more strongly than others. David Crystal explains that

It’s not just the words. Grammar changes. Pronunciation changes. The way we talk to each other changes. Even spelling and punctuation change. But not everything changes at the same rate. (*On language change* par. 9)

Whenever a word starts being used on the Internet, millions of people may be using it within a few hours. However, changes in other areas of language may take much longer. Crystal illustrates this by suggesting that we should go back in time to the nineteenth century when - in the early 1800s- novelist Jane Austen wrote the following in one of her letters: *Jenny and James are walked to Charmouth this afternoon*. This would not be acceptable in present day English. Many years had to go by for that form to be replaced by today’s accepted version *Jenny and James walked to Charmouth this afternoon*. In brief, every single aspect of language changes through time (*On language change* par. 11).

The evolution of BE

Based on this brief account of general language change, we will now focus on the specific way in which *be* has unfolded through time. *Be* is often taken for granted in EFL classes, partly because it is one of the commonest verbs in the language. However, we contend that it is the most complex. David Crystal, in his book “*The Story of Be*”, posits that “thanks to its remarkable history, *be* has developed a greater range of meanings and uses, and a wider range of variant forms than any other English word” (viii). EFL professionals rarely stop to think why this is so and what has happened to the verb *be* along the centuries.

As has been said before, *be* is no exception to language change. To make a long story short, in the beginning, there were three verbs that intruded into the life of English at different points in history from different Indo-European languages. These different roots merged in the Old English verbs **beon** (be, exist, grow) and **wesan** (remain). True to its varied origins, the verb *be* has kept many of its forms, while some others have been inevitably lost in the process, as the chart below illustrates:

	North	West-Midland	East-Midland	South	Kentish
Pres.Ind. Sg.1	am, be	am	am	am, aem, em	em
Sg.2	ert, es, bes	art	art	art, best	
Sg.3	es, bes	is, ys, beop, bup	is, ys	is, beop, bep	byep
Pl.	ar(e), er(e), es, bes	am	ar(e)n, beop beyn, ben, ben (sinden)	beop, bep, bup	byep
Subj. Sg.	be	be	be (si)	beo, bo (sie)	by
Pl.	be	ben	ben	beon, bon (sien)	
Imp. Sg.2	be	be	be	beo, bo	
Pl.2	bes	bep	bep	beop	
Infinitive	be	ben	ben, be	beon, bon, bo	bi, bie(n)
Participle	beande(e)		being		
PreLind. Sg.1	was, wes	was	was	was	wes
Sg.2	was, wes	worc	werc, wast	wecore	
Sg.3	was, wes	was	was	was	

Table 1. Forms of the verb ‘to be(n)’ in Middle English. Adapted from Mosse (84)

This chart shows that the forms of *be* used nowadays come from the dialect spoken in the East Midlands in the 14th and the 15th centuries; that is to say, the English spoken at the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Renaissance. This may come as a surprise to modern day speakers, since it is often believed that the English dialect spoken in London

has always enjoyed more prestige than other dialects. A closer look at history will reveal that the East Midlands (the region comprising modern-day Lincolnshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Rutland, Leicestershire and Northumberlandshire) produced more works of literature -largely through the translation of works in Latin and French- than any other region in England (McArthur 473). In addition, it is worth pointing out that between the 14th and the 15th centuries, the East Midlands region was the most populated area in England (Crystal, *Stories* 243-244), after the Black Death had reduced the country's population by about a third. Not only was it the most populated area but it was the most prosperous as well. Gradually, as the 15th century went by, the area around London became particularly attractive to immigrants from the East Midlands (Morgan 190), who spread their dialect in that area. It should not come as a surprise that the East Midlands dialect became a major contributor of Standard English which developed in London, as Crystal (*Encyclopedia* 54-55) points out.

The complexity of *be* in the classroom

The fact that *be*, as a result of its evolution, has come to have eight forms, some of them quite dissimilar to the bare infinitive, makes this verb quite challenging to students. The challenge becomes greater for students whose mother tongue is Spanish, as is the case of our local context. In the first place, the two main meanings attached to *be* are expressed by means of two different verbs in Spanish: *ser* and *estar*. Another aspect to be considered is the fact that *be* has three forms in its simple present tense (*am, is, are*), none of which resembles its infinitive form. Equally puzzling are its two simple past tense forms (*was-were*), which set *be* apart from the single form which characterizes all other English verbs in the past. The dissimilarity among these various forms may lead students to perceive them as different verbs, which in turn may be a possible reason behind a number of students' mistakes, for example:

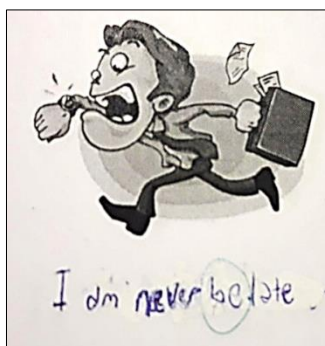


Fig. 1. Common mistakes students make (1)

The fact that *be* is used as a main verb and as an auxiliary verb may well be another source of confusion among Spanish-speaking students, since the function of auxiliary verbs in English is very different from the wide range of functions of auxiliary verbs in Spanish

(Jaraba Castilla). This may account for the wrong use of the verb in the example below, which shows a student's effort to correct him/herself:

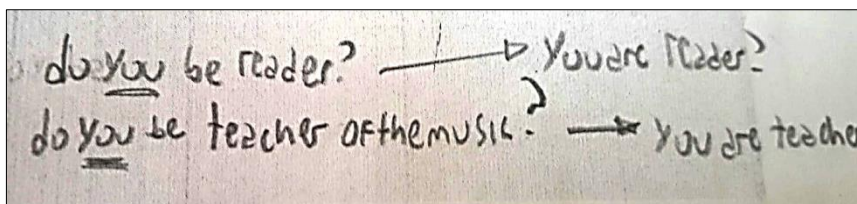


Fig. 2. Common mistakes students make (2)

Some mistakes might be the result of over-teaching. So much time and effort is given to the teaching of “I’m”/ “she’s”/“he’s” forms that sometimes students may find it hard to separate the verb from the pronoun and they often end up producing language forms as in the message below:



Fig. 3. Common mistakes students make (3)

These examples illustrate some of the complexity behind the apparently simple verb *be*. Evidence seems to confirm that such simplicity is simply an illusion, which poses a challenge to EFL teachers.

Some pedagogical implications

The relationship between culture and language has received special attention over the last two decades, with language scholars now paying closer attention to evolutionary and socio-cultural matters (Aitchison 1978, 1981, 1987, 1996; Crystal 2005, 2007, 2010, 2017; Gee 2011, 2012, 2015, 2017). Throughout this paper we have sought to illustrate how relevant an understanding of some cultural and historical aspects of the development of the English language is to EFL teachers. Focusing on the evolution of the verb *be* from its early to its current forms, we have tried to explain some possible reasons why EFL students often encounter difficulties in using the verb *be* accurately in all its forms and in a socially acceptable manner. We believe that an understanding of these factors can assist teachers in their approach to the teaching of this omnipresent verb.

Based on the research we have conducted on the evolutionary and socio-cultural aspects of *be*, we believe that certain myths about it should be debunked:

- the verb *be* is easy to teach
- the verb *be* is easy to learn
- the verb *to be* is similar to Spanish
- comparing *be* with the Spanish *ser/estar* is not a useful classroom activity
- once a form of *be* has been taught, it does not need to be reinforced
- knowing the various forms of *be* leads to proper use

We believe that an exploration of these aspects of the verb *be* are a worthwhile and meaningful endeavour for EFL teachers.

Conclusion

We, teachers, have an unrenounceable duty to continue studying and exploring features of the language we teach, including pedagogical as well as socio-cultural historical aspects. No matter how simple any aspect or feature of a language may seem at first sight -as might be the case of the 'simple' verb *be* in English- a thorough, conscientious exploration on the part of the teacher may lead to a deeper understanding of such feature, which will undoubtedly be positively reflected in the classroom.

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DLYLI - FFHA - UNSJ

What's in a Text?

Marisel Bollati
mmbollati@gmail.com
Rosa Inés Cúneo
rosacuneo@gmail.com
Ana María Laciari
ani.laciari@gmail.com
DLYLI-FFHA, UNSJ

Abstract

Many of the activities that are part of our lessons are based on texts with a number of different characteristics in terms of length, topic, degree of formality, attitude, etc. According to various functional views of language, all texts are multidimensional units with several layers of meaning, each of which deserves to be explored in its own right and also in relation to its contribution to the text's overall meaning. Our aim is to illustrate some of the different layers that run through texts and propose the use of a variety of lenses to help students explore and discover the full meaning potential of every text.

Key words: texts – multidimensionality – multiple lenses

1. Introduction

Research on the nature of language and communication has made it quite clear that all texts –be they written or spoken- are complex artifacts. Because of that, any classroom work intended to lead either to the comprehension or to the creation of texts will necessarily be complex. Such complexity is increased in the case of second or foreign language (L2) classes -in our particular context, English as Foreign Language (EFL) instruction. This puts special pressure on EFL teachers, who have to deal with texts on an everyday basis in their classes.

This paper presents some considerations regarding the nature of texts from the perspective of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), with special emphasis on the texts' social dimension. It has been developed within the framework of a research project entitled *Socio-historical and cultural dimensions of SFL and pedagogical implications in the EFL class*. We will here focus on text exploration, but we believe that many of the considerations raised are valid also for text creation. We contend that the full potential of texts can be brought to life in the EFL class through the deployment of a multiplicity of 'lenses'.

2. The Nature of Texts and Meaning

Many definitions have been offered for the word 'text' in the course of the last century. In SFL, the notion of text is separated from structural considerations such as a text's length. Halliday and Hasan refer to text as "any passage, spoken or written, of whatever length, that does form a unified whole" (qtd. in Eggins 24). In the 2004 edition of *An Introduction to*

Functional Grammar, Halliday and Matthiessen explain that “the term ‘text’ refers to any instance of language, in any medium, that makes sense to someone who knows the language” (3).

From this definition, it becomes very clear that SFL views text as a semantic notion, based on actual instances of language use. In SFL, texts are always regarded as social practices, immersed in specific contexts of situation and broader contexts of culture. From this perspective, all texts belong to one ‘genre’, with genres defined as “staged, goal-oriented social processes in which speakers engage as members of a culture” (Martin and Rose 6).

Within this social perspective, texts serve three purposes at the same time: they represent our experience of the world and our inner worlds; they construe our social relationships; and they provide the resources to organize messages in a coherent and effective manner. SFL equates these purposes to different types of meaning: ideational, interpersonal and textual respectively, known as the SFL *metafunctions*. Unlike other linguistic schools that associate meaning only with conceptual (ideational) elements, SFL views ‘meaning’ as a three-dimensional concept. This tripartite view of texts and meaning enhances the process of text analysis and forces the language professional to deploy a number of analytical resources to unveil the full semantic power of even the simplest text.

3. Texts as Multilayered – Multidimensional Objects

To embark on the sort of exploration proposed, we will refer to the multiplicity of meanings in texts as *dimensions* or *layers* of meaning. It should be noted that the idea of texts involving a multiplicity of dimensions or layers has been proposed by some authors such as Watson, who introduces the notion of ‘*multilayered texts*’ and interestingly extends it to the idea of *multilayered readers*’ claiming that “each reader reads a different story” (15). This subjective perspective is beyond the scope of this paper (though it is indirectly addressed in the Personal Dimension discussed below); however, it goes to illustrate –in line with SFL claims– the richness of the notion of meaning.

Our own suggestion involves, on the one hand, an understanding of the multiple dimensions of texts and, on the other hand, an invitation to bring multiple lenses to the process of text exploration in order to make the most of each dimension and thus discover the world of meanings created.

Two of the most common dimensions of a text which are traditionally recognized and exploited in the EFL class are the Content and the Grammar/Vocabulary dimensions, sometimes referred to in general terms in the literature as *meaning* and *form*.

CONTENT DIMENSION: This layer -apparently the most obvious to teachers and students- basically involves what the text is about, who is involved, what events take place, where they occur, what the outcome is, whether there is a conflict and if so, how it is resolved. This dimension would correspond to what SFL views as ideational meaning.

GRAMMAR/VOCABULARY DIMENSION – This dimension receives utmost attention in most L2 classes, so much so that a given grammatical feature of a text is often the reason for its selection over another potential text, even gaining priority over content. Quite often, the ‘value’ of a text in an EFL class is measured by how many times a certain grammatical form is used in the text, or by the number of new words related to the topic of the unit being discussed at a given time in the school year.

However, several other dimensions exist in each text whose exploration would clearly enhance the learning process. By way of illustration, we can mention the following:

ORGANIZATIONAL DIMENSION: Each text follows some kind of organization which is most often aligned to the genre it belongs to. This organization in the SFL tradition is not simply a structural notion but it is actually essential to the construal of a text’s meaning. However, the organizational dimension often goes unnoticed in the EFL class.

CULTURAL DIMENSION: Again within the Hallidayan conception, culture is inseparable from texts. Each text construes a social practice and serves a social purpose. When L2 texts are used in the EFL class, this dimension provides a window into various aspects of the target language culture. Sadly, in many EFL classes, the cultural components of texts take a back seat with respect to the more dominant Content and Grammar/Vocabulary dimensions.

EVALUATIVE DIMENSION: All texts entail some sort of positioning with respect to the subject matter being construed or with respect to the reader, even when such position is one of detachment. Such stance-building component is construed through linguistic choices, such as adjectivation, modality, prosody, etc. Awareness of this aspect of text is essential, especially if the EFL class seeks to develop critical thinking skills in students.

PERSONAL DIMENSION: Texts ‘mean’ differently to different individuals. We respond differently to texts based on who we are, our life experiences, our affiliations, our past and present life stories. With this in mind, a text can be very close to or quite remote from a student’s world. Although this personal dimension cannot be said to be intrinsic to a text, it is brought to life -conscious or unconsciously- in each text-reader encounter.

MULTIMODAL DIMENSION: It has been recognized for some time now that all texts are complex semiotic products composed of a variety of modes, of which verbal language is only

one. Written texts, for instance, are created through some form of graphic expression with its own specific features (font, color, size, capitalization, underlining, etc.). In the SFL approach to language, these graphic choices contribute to meaning in their own specific and powerful way. In addition, in the last few decades, it has become more and more common for most written texts to be accompanied by some other mode of expression, such as images, tables, graphs, charts and the like. Spoken texts, in turn, are inseparable from body language, tone, pitch, speed of delivery, etc. All these features have semiotic force, intensifying or downplaying meaning.

These non-verbal aspects of language are effectively described by multimodal approaches to language, such as that proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996-2006).

4. Lenses for Text Exploration

For each dimension proposed, a specific lens can be brought to the EFL class to enhance meaning exploration and exploitation. It should be made clear that we speak of a *dimension* as a text-based notion, intrinsic to a text, and we refer to a *lens* as a teacher-based notion, associated to the deployment of teaching strategies intended to bring to light the text dimensions described above.

Below is a list of some proposed lenses, the first two of them being the most commonly used, with the other dimensions taking a back seat in the class.

- A CONTENT LENS

A content-based lens is generally expected to help bring out the meaning of a text. However, in many classrooms, it becomes relegated to second place when content is seen only as an illustration of form. Thus, for instance, a text dealing with the historical aspects of a city is often valued for the past tense forms it contains rather than for the semantic and socio-cultural value of the text as such.

Given that every linguistic form is used in a text to create meaning, failing to use a content lens would mean separating linguistic forms from their intended use, and this would run counter to the purpose of any L2 course. It should be pointed out that using a content lens does not mean leaving form aside, but rather nurturing students' genuine interest in the subject matter of the text, the story being read or the argument raised –whatever the text's rhetorical purpose might be.

- A GRAMMAR-VOCABULARY LENS

This lens has traditionally dominated most EFL classrooms receiving more attention than content, as discussed above. Though it is true that the Grammar/Vocabulary lens should

have a central role in any language class, we believe it should by no means be exploited to the detriment of the other lenses.

In many instances, a text format is used to design exercises (word formation, cloze, etc.) and the pedagogical goal is built entirely around the activity itself (filling in with the missing word, using the right affix, etc.) to the detriment of the text as a unit of meaning in its own right. In other words, vocabulary and structures are often taught in a rather mechanical way, instead of being seen in terms of their contribution to meaning creation.

- AN ORGANIZATIONAL LENS

Text organizational patterns are closely connected to the notion of genre, a concept that may be unknown to students but is familiar to language instructors today. Because of this, the organization of a text is more visible to the experienced eye of the teacher. However, it is not that obvious to most students. A strategically deployed organizational lens can help students understand the role of elements that provide a scaffold to the text. Simple activities such as identifying and labeling different sections of a text (introduction, development and closing) or providing some form of graphic representation to recast the information contained in the text can raise awareness of the importance of text organization and can go a long way to making content clearer to the student.

- A CULTURAL LENS

It is generally assumed that in order to deal with culture-related matters, specific *culture-rich* texts should be selected for discussion. So strong is this belief that quite often, a special section is included in each unit of a course-book, with labels such as 'culture corner', 'culture focus' or the like. This would imply that only *some* texts have a cultural component. We believe that every single text can be seen from a cultural perspective, and it is the teacher's duty to deploy this lens even if the course-book does not make reference to cultural aspects of a given text.

A simple text about the routine of a teenager in the USA or the UK, for instance, can be used to discuss similarities and differences between the local and the foreign culture (time at which school starts, number of hours spent at school, types of subjects, after school activities, etc.).

We argue that the cultural lens should be inseparable from the content lens, and should be present in any activity involving texts to reinforce the notion of the strong link between language and culture.

- A PERSONAL LENS

As Watson argues through his notion of *multilayered readers*, “each reader reads a different story” (15). This means that each text may trigger very different associations and reactions in each reader. If teachers fail to recognize this, valuable opportunities may be lost to bring the language closer to the students’ world. In order to encourage students to apply a personal lens to a text, teachers can resort to simple questions such as: *Can you also do this?; Do you also feel this way about this problem?; How would you react in such situation?; Is this typical in your town?* This does not mean that every student will or should feel identified with every text discussed in the class. In fact, the opposite may be true, but even so, the journey of comparing other people’s experiences with our own is worth exploring. In this respect, every text can provide a good opportunity for teachers to promote empathy as a human value.

- AN EVALUATION LENS

The evaluative element of every text is another aspect that may go unnoticed if it is not purposefully focused on. This component can be brought to students’ attention through simple activities that can be used even with students of low proficiency levels. As Ortega and Torres (4) point out, the use of simple graphic forms, such as a smiley face or a sad face.

Depending on the level of complexity of the texts being used (which will naturally be related to the level of proficiency of the students), evaluative elements can take many grammatical, lexical and graphic forms (the use of passive/active voice, the choice of words, the use of pictures/photographs, etc.). The deployment of an evaluation lens can help to bring these elements to the forefront, and it is extremely important because awareness of a text’s evaluative elements is central to developing a critical attitude in students. Again, simple activities such as asking students to distinguish *fact* from *opinion* in any given text can be an invitation to reflect on evaluation and stance. In the case of more advanced students, reflection can also be encouraged on aspects such as the source, target, intensity, explicitness and/or purpose of the evaluation.

- A MULTIMODAL LENS

Today’s world is characterized by a myriad of semiotic resources involving various combinations of images, sounds, movement, gesture and verbal language. Multimodality is here to stay. This being so, the use of a multimodal lens is not optional in the EFL class. Students should be trained to find the meanings portrayed through these graphic choices, and to discover the relationships between verbal and non-verbal modes of expression. This awareness can be promoted in a reading lesson through simple discussion of such elements or through questions about the role of colors, shapes, frames, size of print/image/icon, etc.

Students may also be invited to transfer verbal information to graphic form and may thus be encouraged to make use of their creative potential.

5. Closing Remarks

A multi-dimensional view of texts reveals a number of layers of meaning which are worth exploring, no matter how challenging the task may seem to be. In Halliday and Matthiessen's terms, "a text is a rich, many-faceted phenomenon that 'means' in many different ways [and] can be explored from many different points of view" (our emphasis) (3). The underlined words in this definition respectively imply the existence of a text's *dimensions* (meaning) and the potential deployment of *lenses* (exploration), as we have argued in this paper.

As language teachers, we should be aware of the richness of texts and of the many pedagogical tools that can be deployed to guide students in their encounters with texts, thus leading them to become independent language users.

Note: This paper provides the theoretical foundations of a presentation made during the 'VIII Jornadas de Actualización de la Enseñanza del Inglés'. During the presentation, some material was presented for illustrations purposes which cannot be reproduced here for copyright reasons.

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Desafíos que presenta la inclusión de alumnos con discapacidad en la escuela

Patricia Alejandra Muñoz
munozalejandra9@gmail.com

Claudia Castañeda
claugabcast@gmail.com

DLYLI-FFHA, UNSJ

Liliana Martínez
lilibemartinez@gmail.com

DFYCE-FFHA, UNSJ

Rossana Bartol
rossanabartol@gmail.com

UCCuyo

Resumen

El objetivo de esta sesión plenaria es crear conciencia sobre los desafíos que plantea la inclusión de estudiantes con discapacidad en la escuela común. Como profesores de inglés, enfrentamos el desafío de cómo responder a los estudiantes con diferentes discapacidades presentes en nuestras clases. Muchas veces fracasamos al dar una respuesta adecuada a esta situación, es por ello que en esta presentación abordaremos las preguntas que comúnmente nos hacemos respecto a este tema, y trataremos de concientizar sobre estos desafíos siguiendo la actual concepción social de discapacidad y las leyes que se derivan de ella. Esta presentación es parte del proyecto de investigación *“Desafíos en la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de inglés como lengua extranjera de alumnos incluidos en escuela secundaria en vistas a su inclusión en el nivel superior”*, llevado a cabo en el Departamento de Lengua y Literatura Inglesa de la FFHA, UNSJ (aprobado por CICITCA, Convocatoria 2018-2019-CS. Res. 011/18-FFHA).

Palabras clave: desafíos - inclusión - escuela - inglés

Introducción

Esta comunicación tiene por objetivo crear conciencia acerca de los desafíos que plantea la inclusión de estudiantes con discapacidad en la escuela común, en particular en el espacio curricular inglés. Esta presentación es parte del proyecto de investigación *“Desafíos en la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de inglés como lengua extranjera de alumnos incluidos en escuela secundaria en vistas a su inclusión en el nivel superior”*, llevado a cabo en el Departamento de Lengua y Literatura Inglesa de la FFHA, UNSJ (aprobado por CICITCA, Convocatoria 2018-2019-CS. Res. 011/18-FFHA). Nos enmarcamos en la actual concepción social de discapacidad y las leyes que se derivan de ella, detallaremos acciones y procedimientos para acompañar a alumnos con discapacidad llevados a cabo por la Comisión de Discapacidad en la Universidad Nacional de San Juan, así como la evolución de la educación inclusiva. Asimismo, nos referiremos a los principios fundamentales del diseño universal del aprendizaje (DUA), finalizando con algunas sugerencias metodológicas desde este diseño.

Acciones de la Comisión de Discapacidad de la UNSJ

Desde hace varias décadas se ha evidenciado un proceso de creciente masificación que ha abierto el ingreso a diversas franjas de nuestra sociedad que estaban excluidas, entre ellas, las personas con alguna discapacidad. Es por ello que el rol de la Comisión de Discapacidad se hace cada vez más necesario. Esta comisión está encargada de garantizar la accesibilidad académica, física y comunicacional del alumnado, y hace conocer su tarea en espacios radiales y televisivos e intercambios académicos. Entre sus labores se encuentran:

- Organización de jornadas de sensibilización y concientización acerca de la inclusión educativa y social de alumnos en el Nivel Superior Universitario.
- Recepción de las demandas de alumnos y personal de la Universidad y direccionamiento hacia el área a la que corresponda la solución del problema.
- Adecuación de las instalaciones de las diferentes unidades académicas.
- Dictado y organización de cursos de capacitación a docentes y alumnos.
- Elaboración de proyectos sobre bibliotecas accesibles.

Procedimiento para acompañar a un alumno con discapacidad

La Comisión sigue un protocolo para recibir a sus alumnos y atender a la diversidad, a saber:

- entrevista al alumno en Conserjería Estudiantil;
- diagnóstico de necesidades en relación a accesibilidad física, académica y comunicacional;
- coordinación con Secretario de Asuntos Estudiantiles, Bienestar Universitario, Coordinadores de Ingreso, autoridades del Departamento al que pertenezca la carrera;
- acuerdos institucionales con jefes de departamento y con los docentes;
- preparación del material didáctico accesible con el docente y tutor del alumno;
- evaluación continua de la experiencia; y
- reuniones mensuales, curso de preparación de materiales didácticos accesibles (Resol. 1223/11- R- UNSJ / Ord. 0001/13 R- UNSJ).

Evolución de la educación inclusiva

La educación inclusiva no constituye un capricho de unos pocos sino que emana gracias a la inquietud de dar respuesta a situaciones de discriminación que venían sufriendo las personas con discapacidad desde hace muchos años.

En el año 1990 en la Conferencia Mundial sobre Educación para Todos, se dio el puntapié inicial hacia un enfoque inclusivo, ya que es en ella donde surge la preocupación sobre la exclusión de los estudiantes con discapacidad de los sistemas de enseñanza.

La Declaración de Salamanca firmada por 92 gobiernos en 1994 solicitó que las Escuelas convencionales ofrecieran una educación de calidad para todos los estudiantes, aún aquellos que necesitaran algún apoyo debido a su situación de discapacidad.

El Foro Mundial sobre Educación para Todos celebrado en Dakar, Senegal (2000), propuso la implementación de sistemas educativos inclusivos y flexibles.

En 2005 las Directrices de la UNESCO para la inclusión ponen el énfasis en la educación inclusiva como derecho humano a la educación. Por su parte, la Convención de los Derechos de las Personas con Discapacidad (2006) sostiene que el derecho a la educación es el derecho a una educación *inclusiva*. Dicha convención sostiene en su artículo 24.1:

Los Estados Partes reconocen el derecho de las personas con discapacidad a la educación. Con miras a hacer efectivo este derecho sin discriminación y sobre la base de la igualdad de oportunidades, los Estados Partes asegurarán un sistema de educación inclusivo a todos los niveles así como la enseñanza a lo largo de la vida [...] (18).

La educación inclusiva ha sido reconocida como la modalidad más adecuada para que los Estados garanticen la universalidad y la no discriminación en el derecho a la educación. La UNESCO (2008) define la educación inclusiva como

[...] una estrategia dinámica para responder en forma proactiva a la diversidad de los estudiantes y concebir las diferencias individuales no como problema sino como oportunidades para enriquecer el aprendizaje (11).

La educación inclusiva, entonces, implica:

- ✓ transformar la cultura, la organización y las prácticas de las escuelas para atender a la diversidad de todo el alumnado, incluidos los alumnos con discapacidad;
- ✓ adaptar la enseñanza a los alumnos y no obligar ni esperar que los alumnos se adapten a la enseñanza; y
- ✓ eliminar o minimizar las barreras físicas, personales o institucionales que limitan las oportunidades de aprendizaje, el pleno acceso y la participación de todos los estudiantes en las actividades educativas.

El tratamiento de la discapacidad ha sido abordado a lo largo de la historia desde diferentes miradas, una de ellas lo constituye el *Modelo de Prescindencia*, que sostiene que la discapacidad es causada por motivos religiosos, considerando que las personas con discapacidad son innecesarias por diferentes razones, por lo tanto, la sociedad puede prescindir de ellas.

El otro modelo, denominado *Médico o Rehabilitador*, se sustenta en la creencia de que el origen de la discapacidad es científico, por lo tanto, la persona con discapacidad ya no se considera inútil, sino que, en la medida en que sea rehabilitada podrá insertarse en la sociedad.

En tercer lugar, encontramos el *Modelo Social*, que sustenta que las causas que originan la discapacidad no son ni religiosas, ni científicas, sino sociales. Para este modelo la deficiencia es

[...] esa característica de la persona consistente en un órgano, una función o un mecanismo del cuerpo o de la mente que no funciona, o que no funciona de igual manera que en la mayoría de las personas y que la discapacidad surge por los factores sociales que restringen, limitan o impiden a las personas con diversidad funcional, vivir una vida en sociedad (Palacio 123).

En consonancia, la Convención de los Derechos de las Personas con Discapacidad, caracteriza a estas personas como

[...] aquellas que tengan deficiencias físicas, mentales, intelectuales o sensoriales a largo plazo que, al interactuar con diversas barreras, pueden impedir su participación plena y efectiva en la sociedad, en igualdad de condiciones con los demás (Art.1, párrafo 2).

La escuela tradicional integradora se caracteriza por sustentarse en el modelo médico, posicionando su mirada en las necesidades educativas especiales; los docentes diseñan una currícula paralela para los alumnos incluidos, el docente auxiliar integrado (DAI) trabaja sólo con el alumno incluido - que es quien debe adaptarse a la escuela. Por su lado la escuela inclusiva asume como paradigma el modelo social, considerando las potencialidades de las personas con discapacidad, el currículo se ajusta a la diversidad del alumnado y es la escuela quien se adapta al alumno generando los apoyos necesarios para sostener una educación en igualdad de condiciones para todos. El docente de apoyo trabaja conjuntamente con quien está a cargo del aula constituyendo una pareja pedagógica.

Por tanto, el principio de integración educativa promueve la escolarización de niños con discapacidad en las escuelas comunes, siempre que estén en condiciones de adaptarse a sus métodos de enseñanzas y organización educativa. Mientras que el principio de inclusión educativa promueve la reestructuración del sistema de educación común a fin de lograr que las escuelas estén en condiciones de recibir a todos los alumnos en sus aulas.

Llevar a cabo el proceso inclusivo no es tarea fácil ya que durante el mismo coexisten barreras al aprendizaje y la participación, que surgen de la interacción entre las personas con discapacidad y sus contextos, y es a través de los ajustes razonables y/o configuraciones de apoyos que pueden ser minimizadas.

Se considera que los ajustes razonables consisten

[...] en las modificaciones y adaptaciones necesarias y adecuadas que no impongan una carga desproporcionada o indebida, cuando se requieran en un caso particular, para garantizar a una persona determinada su participación, en igualdad de condiciones con las demás (Convención sobre los Derechos de las Personas con Discapacidad Art. 2).

El término *apoyo* antes citado alude a todas aquellas modificaciones que las escuelas producen en pos de asegurar la plena participación y aprendizaje del alumnado con discapacidad. Los apoyos suponen las estrategias de enseñanza, organización del espacio y la gestión escolar, los recursos humanos y materiales, que todas las escuelas deben tener a disposición para poder asegurar aprendizajes significativos en todo su alumnado, incluidas las personas con discapacidad.

En nuestro país, la Resolución N° 311/16-CFE (Consejo Federal de Educación), en consonancia con la Convención, promueve la “promoción, acreditación, certificación y titulación de los estudiantes con discapacidad” (Art. 2°), así como se encarga de

[...] propiciar condiciones para la inclusión al interior del sistema educativo argentino para el acompañamiento de las trayectorias escolares de los/as estudiantes con discapacidad. (Anexo I, Art. 2°)

La Ley Nacional N° 27306/16, que realiza un Abordaje Integral a las Dificultades Específicas del Aprendizaje (Dislexia, Disgrafía y Discalculia), también significa un avance en inclusión educativa en Argentina. Esta Ley establece como objetivo prioritario garantizar el derecho a la educación de los niños, niñas, adolescentes y adultos que presentan estas dificultades específicas del aprendizaje (Art. 1°).

Guía de orientación para la aplicación de la Res. N° 311/16-CFE

Los conceptos clave para la implementación de esta Resolución en el sistema educativo son:

- Corresponsabilidad entre niveles y modalidades.
- Proyecto Educativo Institucional (P.E.I.) que debe incluir una mirada escolar inclusiva, asista o no al establecimiento una persona con discapacidad.

- Proyecto Pedagógico Individual (P.P.I.) que se elaborará para la inclusión de estudiantes con discapacidad, teniendo en cuenta el particular modo de aprender de ese estudiante, sus potencialidades y limitaciones, intereses y expectativas, y los progresos evaluativos. Este proyecto deberá ser revisado sistemáticamente para realizar los ajustes necesarios.
- Evaluación de saberes adquiridos, participación del grupo de pares, propuesta de enseñanza, barreras institucionales, culturales y didácticas, apoyos y estilos de aprendizajes.
- Promoción de un tramo a otro.

De acuerdo a esta Resolución, primero deberemos observar el estudiante en el contexto, analizar y evaluar las barreras de acceso a la comunicación, la participación y el aprendizaje, poniendo en práctica los apoyos necesarios, con propuestas específicas de enseñanza, diseño de configuraciones de apoyo y apoyos específicos. A continuación, se diseñará un P.P.I. que se elaborará teniendo en cuenta las necesidades de los estudiantes, para favorecer su inclusión social y educativa. La planificación y el desarrollo del P.P.I. será responsabilidad de la escuela común y equipos intervinientes (Anexo II, Ítems 11-19).

Diseño Universal para el Aprendizaje

La meta de la educación en el siglo XXI no es simplemente el dominio del conocimiento, sino el dominio del aprendizaje.

La diversidad es la norma, no la excepción, en cualquier lugar donde hay individuos reunidos, incluyendo las escuelas. Cuando los currículos están diseñados para alcanzar las necesidades de la media general -excluyendo las de aquellos con diferentes habilidades, estilos de aprendizaje, formación, e incluso preferencias-, fracasan en proporcionar a todos los individuos oportunidades de aprender justas e iguales. La homogeneidad en las aulas actúa como barrera evitando que los niños aprendan y participen plenamente (Meyer, Rose y Gordon 3).

Meyer, Rose y Gordon afirman que el Diseño Universal para el Aprendizaje (DUA) ayuda a estar a la altura del reto de la diversidad sugiriendo materiales de instrucción flexibles, técnicas y estrategias que den poder a los educadores para atender y reconocer estas múltiples necesidades. Un currículo diseñado universalmente está diseñado desde el principio para tratar de satisfacer las necesidades educativas del mayor número de usuarios, haciendo innecesario el costoso proceso de introducir cambios una vez diseñado *para algunos* (3-4).

Asimismo, el DUA es una estrategia metodológica de enseñanza que pretende remover las barreras y los obstáculos para aprender y dar a los estudiantes las mismas posibilidades. No se centra solo en los niños con dificultades de aprendizaje y de atención, sino que también trata de desarrollar una flexibilidad que pueda ser adaptada a las necesidades y aptitudes de cada estudiante. Esta flexibilidad se da en los siguientes aspectos:

- en presentar el conocimiento de distintas maneras (visual, auditiva e interactiva);
- en usar diferentes métodos para que los estudiantes demuestren lo que saben;
- en fomentar a los docentes a utilizar distintos métodos de evaluación (presentaciones orales y en grupos); y, por último,
- en buscar motivar de distintas maneras a los estudiantes.

El DUA es un marco de apoyo para convertir los desafíos y la diversidad de algunos en oportunidades para maximizar el aprendizaje de cada estudiante ya que proporciona un plan para la creación de objetivos de enseñanza métodos, materiales y evaluaciones que funcionen para todos.

Principios del DUA

El DUA establece principios basados en la investigación neurocientífica:

- *Principio I:* Proporcionar múltiples medios de representación, permite que el alumno acceda a la información y reforzar su comprensión para los distintos estilos de aprendizaje. Los alumnos difieren en el modo en el que perciben y comprenden la información que se les presenta.
- *Principio II:* Proporcionar múltiples medios de acción y expresión, permite al alumno que aprenda a expresarse de la forma más adecuada para él. Los alumnos difieren en el modo en que pueden “navegar en medio del aprendizaje” y expresar lo que saben. Algunos serán capaces de expresarse correctamente por escrito pero no oralmente, y viceversa.
- *Principio III:* Proporcionar múltiples medios de compromiso, formas de implicación o motivación, es importante para que se sienta participe de lo que está aprendiendo y lo encuentre significativo. Los alumnos difieren marcadamente en la forma en que pueden sentirse implicados y motivados para aprender (Meyer, Rose y Gordon 3-4).

Así, se formarán aprendices expertos, con recursos y conocimientos estratégicos dirigidos a objetivos, decididos y motivados.

Situaciones escolares que pueden convertirse en barreras

- Falta de motivación en clase.
- Frecuentes interrupciones.
- Excesiva consigna verbal sin apoyo visual.

- Escasez de material (cantidad o variedad).
- Falta de organización de la clase.
- Falta de preparación del material necesario.
- Improvisación de actividades, sin un objetivo específico.
- Falta de anticipación del material.
- Demasiado tiempo libre.
- Escasez de mediación en la realización de las actividades.
- Priorización el control de la disciplina en la sala, por sobre otros aspectos.
- Emisión de consignas sin detenerse a constatar qué se está internalizando.

Sugerencias metodológicas desde un diseño universal del aprendizaje

- Actuar con flexibilidad adaptando la metodología al momento del alumno.
- Secuenciar los objetivos y contenidos en orden creciente de dificultad, descomponiendo las tareas en pasos intermedios adaptados a sus posibilidades.
- Dejar a los alumnos tiempo suficiente para finalizar actividades y poco a poco ir pidiéndoles mayor velocidad.
- Aplicar lo que se enseña y dejar que se realice una práctica repetida.
- Realizar el seguimiento individual del alumno.
- Establecer momentos en la clase en que se realicen ayudas mutuas entre los pares.
- Incluir actividades de refuerzo en la planificación buscando nuevas estrategias para llegar a los mismos aprendizajes atendiendo a la diversidad de los estudiantes.
- Planificar actividades variadas para el mismo objetivo, utilizando materiales y soportes de trabajo distintos.
- Adecuarse al ritmo de aprendizaje del alumno, sin perder como referencia el ritmo de la clase.
- Ayudar desde una organización externa a una organización interna del niño.
- Reducir el nivel de abstracción del contenido.
- Reducir la complejidad de la información y la cantidad de estímulos.
- Comenzar por una consigna a la vez.
- Ser optimista en las expectativas (Meyer, Rose y Gordon 13-36).

Palabras finales

En esta presentación intentamos concientizar acerca de los desafíos que plantea la inclusión de estudiantes con discapacidad en la escuela común, en particular en el espacio curricular “Inglés”. Nos enmarcamos en la actual concepción social de discapacidad y las leyes que se derivan de ella, y proporcionamos una orientación para su aplicación. Además, detallamos

acciones y procedimientos para acompañar a alumnos con discapacidad llevados a cabo por la Comisión de Discapacidad en la Universidad Nacional de San Juan; también hicimos referencia a la evolución de la educación inclusiva. Asimismo, reseñamos los principios fundamentales del diseño universal del aprendizaje (DUA), para concluir con algunas sugerencias metodológicas desde este diseño.

Podemos decir que llevar a cabo el proceso inclusivo no es tarea fácil, ya que durante el mismo coexisten barreras al aprendizaje y la participación, que surgen de la interacción entre las personas con discapacidad y sus contextos, y es a través de la atención a la diversidad desde una mirada social de la discapacidad que pueden ser minimizadas.

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DYLI - FFHA - UNSJ

Las competencias y la enseñanza de las lenguas extranjeras

Marcela Martín
marcelamartincastro@gmail.com
Alicia Martín
aliciavmartin@yahoo.com.ar
FFHA - UNSJ

Abstract

El enfoque por competencias en educación ha ido ganando terreno en los últimos años, en los distintos ámbitos y niveles escolares. Parece necesario comenzar por comprender y definir qué se entiende por competencia. Para algunos es una propuesta pragmática de corte eficientista para dar respuesta a un aparato económico-productivo ante situaciones socio-económicas altamente competitivas. Otros autores destacan que el Enfoque por Competencias pretende alejarse de los aprendizajes academicistas y enciclopedistas tradicionales. Parece ser un avance en educación para algunos autores, pero no dejan de mencionar sus limitaciones y riesgos.

En el campo de la enseñanza de las lenguas extranjeras cabe entonces preguntarse qué entendemos por Enfoque por Competencias. Vemos la necesidad de plantearnos algunas ideas e hipótesis con la pretensión de encender el debate de ideas, en el plano de lo posible en nuestro contexto socio-cultural, acerca de cómo visualizamos la enseñanza por Competencias en el curriculum de lenguas extranjeras.

Palabras clave: competencias-enseñanza-lenguas extranjeras

Introducción

El enfoque por competencias en educación ha ido ganando terreno en los últimos años, en los distintos ámbitos y niveles escolares sin que, como lo sostienen algunos didactas, se hayan abierto foros de discusión acerca de las corrientes de pensamiento que lo sustentan y que permitan darle significación a esta propuesta. Parece necesario comenzar por preguntarse sobre sus orígenes, es decir desde cuándo hablamos de las Competencias en Educación, quién o quiénes promueven este Enfoque y cómo llega a nuestros ámbitos escolares hoy. Es indudable su asociación con el ámbito laboral, pero ¿cómo o por qué llega al escenario educativo?

En nuestro país se planteó la formulación de contenidos a partir de competencias cuando se implementa la ley Federal de Educación en la década de los '90. Podríamos mencionar una vinculación con la inclusión de los conocimientos conceptuales, procedimentales y actitudinales, propuestos por César Coll, con el desarrollo de competencias (*saber, saber hacer y saber ser*) (82).

Por otro lado, las dos propuestas más importantes en el mundo que enarbolan la educación por competencias surgen en Europa: primeramente el Proyecto Tuning, impulsado por la Unión Europea y posteriormente el Proyecto DeSeCo (Definición y Selección de Competencias 2000, 2005) que promueve la Organización para la Cooperación y el

Desarrollo Económicos (OCDE)¹. La OCDE viene desarrollando líneas de trabajo e investigación centradas en la evaluación externa de los sistemas educativos de sus países Miembros mediante la evaluación de competencias. (Gimeno Sacristán 154-155) Y si bien Argentina no es uno de los países miembros, se la incluye a partir de 2016 dentro del Centro de Desarrollo de la OCDE junto con otros países latinoamericanos a los que van destinadas las políticas del Organismo. A partir del lanzamiento del Proyecto DeSeCo antes mencionado, destacados especialistas en educación, en particular pertenecientes a los países Miembros de la OCDE realizan importantes producciones relacionadas con las competencias en educación.

Para algunos de estos académicos, como Gimeno Sacristán, es una propuesta pragmática de corte eficientista para dar respuesta a un aparato económico-productivo ante situaciones socio-económicas altamente competitivas. Otros destacan que el Enfoque por Competencias pretende alejarse de los aprendizajes academicistas y enciclopedistas tradicionales. Parece ser un avance en educación para algunos autores, pero no dejan de mencionar sus limitaciones y riesgos.

¿Qué es una competencia?

El proyecto DeSeCo, considerado como el trabajo de investigación más relevante realizado en el marco de la OCDE, define la competencia como

la capacidad de responder a demandas complejas y llevar a cabo tareas diversas de forma adecuada. Supone una combinación de habilidades prácticas, conocimientos, motivación, valores, actitudes, emociones y otros componentes sociales y de comportamiento que se movilizan conjuntamente para lograr una acción eficaz (77-78).

Pérez Gómez sostiene que una competencia es más que conocimientos y habilidades, y alude a la capacidad de afrontar demandas complejas en un contexto particular. Es un “saber hacer” complejo y adaptativo, es decir que no se aplica de forma mecánica sino reflexiva. Una competencia es resultado de un proceso de integración, movilización_y

¹ La OCDE (Organización para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo Económicos) fue fundada en 1961 con la “misión es promover políticas que mejoren el bienestar económico y social de las personas alrededor del mundo”. Agrupa a 34 países Miembros de América del Norte, Europa y Australia principalmente. De América Latina sólo Chile y México son países Miembros, Colombia y Costa Rica cuentan con Adhesión. En enero de 2016, los países miembros de la OCDE decidieron fortalecer la cooperación con la región a través de la creación de un Programa regional de la OCDE para América Latina y El Caribe que fue lanzado en junio de ese año. Argentina (que no es país Miembro) se encuentra como uno de los países **Miembros del Centro de Desarrollo de la OCDE**, que incluye a Argentina, Brasil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, México, Panamá, Perú, República Dominicana y Uruguay (<http://www.oecd.org/centrodemexico/laocde/actividades-en-america-latina.htm>)

adecuación de capacidades, conocimientos, actitudes, valores, que deben ser utilizados eficazmente en situaciones reales, según afirma el autor (cit. en Moreno Olivos 292).

Perrenoud, en su obra *Construir competencias desde la escuela*, define al concepto de competencia como la capacidad de actuar de manera eficaz en una cierta situación (6). Dicha capacidad se apoya en conocimientos, pero no se reduce a ellos. Ser competente significa poder actuar en una situación determinada de acuerdo con ciertas habilidades y en donde se ponen en juego ciertos conocimientos.

César Coll, por su parte, remarca como aspectos esenciales en los enfoques basados en competencias, la necesaria integración de distintos tipos de conocimientos, y destaca entre los conocimientos a habilidades prácticas y cognitivas, conocimientos prácticos y factuales, motivación, valores, actitudes, emociones, etc. (37)

Muchos estudiosos del tema resaltan la falta de consenso con respecto a su definición clara. Algunos consideran que se trata de un “asunto espinoso, polémico y complejo, en torno al cual reina la confusión más que la certidumbre” (Moreno Olivos 290).

Díaz Barriga señala que ninguna propuesta educativa ha despertado tanto desconcierto no sólo porque su origen se encuentra en el ámbito laboral, sino por la cantidad de imprecisiones, tanto conceptuales como técnicas, “que han llevado a impulsar bajo la denominación de ‘competencias’ una serie de comportamientos fragmentados y segmentados que recuerdan el debate educativo de los años setenta” (44). Y más adelante agrega,

a la determinación de una competencia genérica se añade la técnica del análisis de tareas empleada para la determinación de una especie infinita de subcompetencias, cada vez más desagregadas, en las cuales es necesario establecer una serie de ‘indicadores’ de desempeño....Si bien la lógica que subyace en la propuesta parece racionalmente impecable, no responde a los intrincados senderos que tiene el proceso de aprendizaje, y mucho menos al de formación intelectual y humana (44-45).

Por otro lado, Gimeno Sacristán y Perrenoud entre otros, señalan la cuestión del tiempo prolongado necesario para la adquisición de una competencia, “aprender la competencia es un objetivo que se logra como consecuencia de realizar una serie de tareas determinadas, de aprender unos contenidos precisos en un tiempo determinado. Las competencias no se infunden en otros, ni se logran como efecto súbito de unos aprendizajes previamente programados y de un golpe, sino que son fruto de la condensación y acumulación de efectos de reiteradas oportunidades, de ejercitarlas” (cit. en Gimeno Sacristán 167). Y, por lo mismo, los modelos de movilización de diversos recursos cognitivos en situación de acción compleja

se desarrollan y se estabilizan según la práctica. En efecto, en el ser humano, no se pueden programar los modelos mediante una intervención exterior. No existe, salvo en las novelas de ciencia-ficción, «un trasplante de modelos». El sujeto no puede construirlos por más tiempo a través de la simple interiorización de un conocimiento por procedimiento. Los modelos se construyen de acuerdo a una formación, de experiencias renovadas, redundantes y estructuradoras a la vez, formación aún más eficaz porque se asocia con una postura reflexiva. (Perrenoud 8)

Las competencias propuestas en el proyecto DeSeCo incluyen: comunicación en la lengua materna, comunicación en una lengua extranjera, competencia matemática y competencias básicas en ciencia y tecnología, competencia digital, aprender a aprender, competencias interpersonales y cívicas, espíritu emprendedor y expresión cultural. Cabe destacar que nuestra Ley Nacional de Educación 26.206 menciona la palabra “competencia” sólo en dos incisos, relacionadas con la lengua y las tecnologías:

- “Desarrollar las competencias necesarias para el manejo de los nuevos lenguajes producidos por las tecnologías de la información y la comunicación” (Ley 26.206-Cap II-art.11-Fines y objetivos de la política educativa nacional)
- “Desarrollar las competencias lingüísticas, orales y escritas de la lengua española y comprender y expresarse en una lengua extranjera.” (Ley 26.206-Cap IV- Educación Secundaria, Art. 30)

¿Qué propuestas?

Las ideas centrales que parecen estar presentes en gran parte de las definiciones del término “competencia” incluyen, un conocimiento o conjunto de conocimientos, una información, una destreza o habilidad, valores o actitudes y una voluntad, movilizados para la resolución de una situación –para algunos inédita- similar a las que se podrían presentar en la vida diaria. Si esto significa trabajar por competencias en educación, la planificación de las tareas escolares es mucho más compleja, más difícil.

El Dr. Ángel Díaz Barriga en su “Conferencia Magistral” en el marco de la Reforma Educativa en México, menciona distintas propuestas didácticas que de acuerdo con las características mencionadas, se enmarcan dentro del enfoque por competencias, y que ya han sido propuestas por otros autores. Menciona el trabajo con Proyectos (Perrenoud, 2006), Resolución de Problemas (Didáctica de Aebli-Piaget, 1951), Estudios de Casos relacionados con las Pedagogías de situación, donde se utiliza lo que aparece en las noticias, en las cuestiones que tienen que ver con la vida cotidiana (00:03:30-00:04:16).

Si bien no son nuevas en el campo de la enseñanza, Díaz Barriga advierte que estas propuestas didácticas requieren de más tiempo, más dedicación y no se podrían trabajar todos los contenidos con las mismas. Pero señala el académico, que se puede trabajar una parte de los contenidos por exposición y otra parte con estudio de casos, o un proyecto, por ejemplo (“Conferencia Magistral”). Es mucho más rápido y simple para el docente presentar contenidos por exposición, pero la realización de un proyecto, o el planteo de problemas es mucho más significativo en términos de construcción de conocimientos para el alumno.

Las críticas

Acerca de las corrientes de pensamiento que sustentan el Enfoque por Competencias tenemos que aclarar, con Tenutto, Brutti, Algañarás, que el marco teórico desde donde diversos autores conciben a las competencias responde a cuatro líneas teóricas diferentes. Si bien en este trabajo hemos hecho referencia principalmente a lo que estos autores denominan el enfoque superador de la dicotomía acción/conocimientos disciplinares, debemos advertir que se distinguen cuatro enfoques muy diferentes. Estos son:

- el Enfoque Conductista que entiende a las competencias como conductas observables y el curriculum es organizado en base a resultados de aprendizaje;
- el Enfoque Genético que considera conocimientos, capacidades, habilidades, actitudes, que eran desconocidas por el enfoque anterior. Se trata de características generales que pueden ser transferidas de una situación a otra. La crítica que se le hace es sobre las posibilidades de un aprendizaje descontextualizado y de su transferencia a otras situaciones;
- el Enfoque Integrado (Claude Levy-Leboyer, 1997 y Gonczi y Athanasou, 1996) que procura integrar el enfoque anterior con el contexto. Se concibe como una compleja estructura de atributos (conocimientos, actitudes, valores y habilidades) para el desempeño en situaciones específicas. Incorpora la idea de juicio, la ética y los valores y el hecho de que es posible ser competente de diferentes maneras; y
- el Enfoque Superador de la Dicotomía Acción/Conocimientos disciplinares (Perrenoud, 2001). Perrenoud sostiene que la competencia nunca es el puro y simple empleo racional de conocimientos, de procedimientos, no es una mera aplicación de modelos de acción. Por el contrario, se trata de “la facultad de movilizar un conjunto de recursos cognoscitivos (conocimientos, capacidades, información, etc.) para enfrentar con pertinencia a un tipo definido de situación” (19).

Quienes realizan críticas acerca de este enfoque argumentan que la palabra “competencias” tiene un carácter polisémico y sus orígenes se sitúan en la psicología conductista y en la teoría del capital humano. Estos críticos argumentan que las reformas educativas basadas

en competencias aparecen como el remedio a una pobreza detectada en las prácticas de aula, en los modelos didácticos con los que se viene trabajando. Pero se olvida tomar en cuenta las condiciones en las que desempeña su trabajo un profesorado al que se le insta a cambiar, pero sin llegar seriamente a implicarlo. No se tienen en cuenta las condiciones contextuales de la educación, ni la cultura pedagógica y cultural del docente (Jurjo Torres cit. en Moreno Olivos 294)

Otro problema observado por Pérez Gómez y GS, Álvarez (cit. en Moreno Olivos 296) entre otros, tiene que ver con la evaluación por competencias. Se descuida todo aquello que se refiere al contexto socio-cultural. Al evaluar las competencias, de acuerdo con objetivos y aprendizajes básicos determinados por organismos internacionales, a través de pruebas estandarizadas en distintos países y regiones, cabría preguntarse como lo hace Gimeno Sacristán, “¿se puede reflejar lo que es una persona caracterizándola con dos o tres cifras en algunos de sus rasgos? Creemos que no. ¿Entonces por qué damos por supuesto que un número o unos cuantos datos puedan darnos la fotografía de lo que es un sistema educativo?” (156). Y más adelante, el mismo autor se pregunta acerca de quiénes definen los objetivos, los fines de la educación, quién decide qué tipo de sociedad o ciudadano queremos, qué cultura hemos de impartir. “Se supone que el esquema funciona sin referirse al medio en el que se desenvuelve la escuela ni la naturaleza de sus destinatarios o el papel de sus agentes (especialmente el profesorado)” (159). Se asimila la preparación de docentes a la de un trabajador o técnico en una industria de tipo fordista (Eraut cit. Moreno Olivos 293).

Sin más referencias a las formas de entender la enseñanza y el aprendizaje, la evaluación se reduce a un mero ejercicio de control. Se busca el control de resultados entendidos como productos acabados, que se ofrecen bien para establecer comparaciones, independientemente de los contextos en los que se generan y ajenos a las personas que los producen y que le dan significados contextualizados. Sin referentes de conocimiento todo cabe, incluidas las contradicciones, los contrasentidos, las lagunas, la falta de claridad. Sólo hay propuesta de carácter programático y pragmático, con una tendencia marcadamente operacional, de fuerte connotación eficientista, que apunta a exigencias de carácter económico-productivo ante situaciones socioeconómicas muy competitivas (Álvarez cit. en Moreno Olivos 296).

La definición de “competencias desgajadas de los contextos socioculturales de adquisición y de uso puede dar lugar a un proceso de homogeneización curricular que acabe ahogando la diversidad cultural” (Coll 5). Se puede crear la ilusión de que la identificación y selección de aprendizajes es un proceso que puede y debe ser abordado desde la más estricta

neutralidad ideológica. No cabe duda ya que el proceso en la toma de decisiones sobre los aprendizajes escolares tiene un componente ideológico importante cuya visibilidad puede quedar seriamente comprometida en algunas variantes de estos enfoques (Coll 38).

La idea de competencias supone un cambio en el enfoque del conocimiento: del saber qué al saber cómo. En la práctica, el discurso de las competencias refuerza la importancia de los métodos y omite los otros elementos del proceso educativo, además de pasar por alto el marco conceptual de referencia que da luz a los distintos elementos que componen la estructura curricular, incluida la evaluación. Centra la importancia en los métodos. Sin duda que el método es importante, pero no deja de ser mera cuestión técnica, variable dependiente de los principios y del marco conceptual, que le dan sentido y significado.

Las Competencias en el campo de las Lenguas Extranjeras

Cuando llegamos al campo de la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de las lenguas extranjeras cabe hacerse los mismos planteos antes esbozados. Competencia en una lengua extranjera no significa otra cosa que poder comunicar o comunicarse en situaciones determinadas. Nada nuevo. Pero, ¿logramos ese objetivo, a priori, muy general y universal en nuestras escuelas de nivel primario y secundario? Es difícil encontrar hoy en nuestro ámbito un diseño áulico, una planificación anual que no contemple en su marco teórico, conceptual o introducción, la mención al Enfoque Comunicativo, el claro propósito de aprender una LE para comunicar o comunicarse. Inmediatamente sigue el planteo de las habilidades necesarias a desarrollar, es decir Lectura, Escucha, Habla, Escritura. Es decir en el plano del discurso formal, todo está planteado. Sin embargo, es bien sabido por muchos de los que estamos acá y que tenemos contacto con los alumnos en el nivel Superior, que quienes llegan a los primeros años de una carrera universitaria no cuentan con las competencias comunicativas correspondientes.

Nos preguntamos entonces, ¿por qué?, ¿en qué estamos fallando? Nos atrevemos a lanzar la hipótesis de que la propuesta didáctica tiende a lo que Verónica Edwards llama “conocimiento operacional”, más centrado en la adquisición de componentes lingüísticos, morfo-sintácticos, en donde el énfasis está puesto en la aprehensión de la forma, de la estructura abstracta, independientemente del contenido. Nuestros alumnos aplican reglas, tal como si resolvieran cálculos, en donde la “fórmula es lo más importante”, en donde “la estructura gramatical” se transforma en el conocimiento más importante (26).

Consideramos que los Enfoques basados en Tareas, por proyectos o resolución de casos, entre otras posibilidades, se presentan como una opción superadora a las modalidades que apuntan a un “conocimiento operacional”. De hecho, el Marco Común de Referencia

Europeo pone sobre el tapete al aprendizaje por tareas. Hay, a su vez, alternativas interesantes con las TIC con gran potencialidad para “lectura y escucha crítica” y desarrollo del pensamiento crítico.

Como ejemplo, podemos mencionar el aprendizaje colaborativo, a través de las “webquests”. Existen diversos modelos en distintos sitios web que pueden ser utilizados en forma gratuita, e incluso dan la posibilidad de adaptarlas a nuestro contexto y situación particular. Se “construyen en función de una tarea atractiva que provoca procesos de pensamiento superior. Se trata de hacer algo con la información. Implica la resolución de problemas, enunciación de juicios, análisis o síntesis. La tarea debe consistir en algo más que en contestar a simples preguntas o reproducir lo que hay en la pantalla. Promueve la creación y el pensamiento crítico a través de los distintos procesos de pensamiento que demandan (Dodge).

Pero, por supuesto, esto supone una demanda de tiempo mucho mayor que la mera exposición y resolución de ejercicios. Y la decisión de trabajar con este tipo de propuesta didáctica no es casual o arbitrario, tiene mucho que ver con nuestras condiciones laborales. Es bien conocido este tema por todos nosotros: la cantidad de horas de clase distribuidas en distintas instituciones, el número de alumnos por cada clase, todo lo que hacemos los docentes cuando no estamos en el aula y que también constituyen las prácticas docentes, como la programación previa, la corrección de trabajos, la burocracia que origina nuestro propio trabajo. De hecho, en la mayoría de las instituciones, todas las actividades que el docente realiza cuando no está frente a la clase no se contemplan a la hora de la retribución monetaria por su trabajo.

Para concluir, consideramos que el enfoque por competencias puede resultar una propuesta superadora de la escisión teoría-práctica siempre y cuando se la acompañe de la autorreflexión y la metacognición sobre los aprendizajes que genere la apropiación crítica y situada de saberes, y no se la tome como una receta única y descontextualizada que busque resultados de aprendizaje eficientes, fragmentados y atomizados propios de la concepción conductista.

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Teaching Business English: how to be ahead of the pack?

Jorge Luis Yunes
jorgeluisyunes@yahoo.com.ar
UCCuyo

Abstract

The world of Business English may look like an odd, unknown and even frightening one. Thus, teaching Business English might appear as something difficult to approach and not easy to keep focused on in the long run.

Clearly, a number of companies which are becoming more and more interested in training their professionals to deal with several challenges that are much commoner nowadays than they were a few years ago.

When teachers are faced with teaching professionals in company there are a series of issues they have to consider in order to be effective, resourceful and reliable trainers.

In this article, I will try to address some of the most important factors we must be aware of by answering the following questions: What is Business English? What and how to teach? Who are our students? Why are they learning English? What about the learning context? and some others that might help us trigger some useful reflection.

Key words: Business English, skills, training, material, context.

English has become the lingua franca of the business world. Nowadays English teaching is facing the challenge of being able to provide knowledge for those who want to go up their career ladders by gaining language skills in the special area of Business English. It is vitally important for present and future managers, entrepreneurs and anyone who is or is about to enter the world of business.

The present work aims at addressing the main factors we as teachers should focus on at the time of teaching Business English in a company. It also discusses the materials used in teaching as well as what teacher trainers must put emphasis on when preparing future teachers of Business English. In this presentation, I will try to address some of the most important factors we must be aware of by answering the following questions: What is Business English about? What and how should we teach? Who are our students? Why are they learning English? What is the learning context? Probably some other questions that might help us trigger some useful reflection will pop up.

What is teaching BUSINESS ENGLISH about?

Teaching Business English nowadays is especially about teaching communication in the authentic business context because learners want to be able to communicate in a way that would be appreciated and recognized by their counterparts and superiors.

And it is not just teaching the target language, it is also crucial to consider **cultural differences** since we are teaching people who are already meeting or are about to meet

their customers, suppliers or colleagues from abroad, who not only might speak a different language, but might as well be immersed in a different culture.

There are highly specific **goals and objectives**, because students need English for communication in a particular context. For this reason, the approach to be used must be one based on the learner's needs, and characteristics. It may seem too obvious, but considering whether it is an engineer, a lawyer or an accountant the student we are teaching, might become a decisive factor at the time of making pedagogical, and didactic decisions.

Communication is a key issue in learning and teaching Business English. That is why the communicative approach should be adopted when teaching English for business purposes. Effective communication in a business context might imply getting a promotion, boosting the chances to get a pay rise, or otherwise, preventing the workers from getting them. That is why accuracy and proper vocabulary acquisition and usage in English play much of an important role. The ultimate key to successful business is communication, and it is here where the teaching context can under no circumstances go ignored.

What is the teaching context?

There is a need for clear communication; **information** needs to be **communicated** with a **minimum risk of misunderstanding**. Dudley-Evans and St. John list the following communicative events as the ones every Business English teacher must consider in order to address at the time of preparing a lesson:

- telephoning,
- socializing,
- making presentations,
- taking part in meetings,
- negotiating,
- showing a visitor round the plant, and
- corresponding and reporting (63-64).



Fig.1 Showing a visitor round a plant

As there is great competition in business, between companies as well as within companies, it follows that **performance objectives take priority over educational objectives** or language learning for its own sake. Then, much of language will be transactional, which means getting what you want and persuading others to agree with your choice of a course of action.

Content is the core of the classroom activities. For this reason, it is tremendously important that teachers are familiar not just with the business of the company where they are to teach, but also with what is going on at a specific moment in that company. Starting a lesson without knowing, for example, the company is being audited, or some personnel have either been fired or promoted might prevent Business English teachers from tailoring the lesson to cater for students' needs on a specific day in the most suitable way.

Who are our students?

In Business contexts the need to communicate with others from different cultural backgrounds makes intercultural communication highly important. Thus the importance of getting to know who students are.

In today's global economy, professionals want not only to acquire the skills to read, write, listen to and speak English fluently, but they also want to be able to communicate in a way, which will be recognized and appreciated by their counterparts internationally. Successful use of language is considered in terms of the successful outcome of a business event. Therefore, it is understandable that those who use Business English need to be clear and concise as well as accurate in the use of the language. Learners of Business English need to be aware of **appropriate language** as well as **behaviour for cultures and situations** in which they will function. It is then essential here to take into consideration the fact that for business people there is a need to contact others whom they do not know or know very little. Meetings are often short and there is a need for internationally accepted way of doing things, so that people of different languages, nationalities, and cultures can feel comfortable with each other quickly.

Learners have a clear idea of what they need the language for. So it is many times the students themselves the ones who provide the material to be used in class, either an email they have just received, or a report they are about to send which they feel needs correcting.

In Business English being clear and concise often go hand-in-hand. And for this same reason many times lessons must be tailored to very specific needs, sometimes teaching one or two skills which the attendants will be using for very specific purposes as well - English for

specific business purposes which is often aimed at job-experienced learners. So what should teachers be equipped with?

Teachers' most relevant characteristics and traits

Being and getting **interested in what students and the company** they work for **do** is a must for teachers. Although teachers are not expected to become experts in the specific area of work, it is advisable to become as much familiarized as possible with the company's business. The more interested the teacher is in the content a lesson focuses on, the more chances both the teacher and students will have of getting the most out of this lesson.

Considering **students' needs and suggestions** allows Business English teachers to gain a clearer insight of what and how to teach, which in turn will derive into an effective and more efficient "supplier" of knowledge.

Becoming **familiar with the most common and widely used abbreviations and acronyms** in the business world will also equip teachers with a wider and stronger range of tools, which, needless to say, will enable not only teachers but also students to enter the real business world with higher chances to perform more effectively. HR, GDP, ASAP, FYI or R&D are typical examples of abbreviations every Business English teacher must be aware of.

Last but not least, a Business English teacher must be **a good negotiator**; especially when it comes to job-experienced learners who might feel like using the lesson for very specific and individual purposes the teacher must be able to cater for both individual and group needs, so that everyone feels the lesson is worth attending. So, a mixture of a clear plan as to where the lesson must be oriented and some flexibility are crucial.

This way, Business English students are very likely to experience a sense of organization and flexibility, feel they get the most of their time, experience they can actually use the language in meaningful ways and contexts, and have an enjoyable learning experience. If the Business English teacher does not manage these aspects appropriately, this may move the focus and/or goals of the lesson away from the desired ones.

A BUSINESS ENGLISH TEACHER

SHOULD (IDEALLY)

- ✚ HAVE AN OUT GOING PERSONALITY (sensitive to the needs of the learner)
- ✚ BE A GOOD NEGOTIATOR (Especially with job-experienced learners)
- ✚ BE CURIOUS AND INTERESTED (in all aspects of business, though not expected to be an expert)
- ✚ BE CLEAR ABOUT WHAT THE JOB INVOLVES

Fig. 2. Summary of most relevant ideas on the characteristics of Business English Teachers (based on Ellis and Johnson qtd. in Procházková 7).

Also, one of the biggest issues concerning the role of the teacher is the choice of material to be used.

What about the material to be used?

Teaching Business English in companies means the teacher needs to carefully select materials and activities. A mix of general and specific content is very often advisable, since there are many situations where the distinction between General and Business English is not so clear. Thus, the teacher has to detect what kind of material is the most suitable depending on the business of the company, group characteristics, students' needs and personal characteristics as well, not just at the beginning of the course he is about to teach - when planning it-, but also throughout the different stages of the training - as a permanent process.

Also, having **certain knowledge of General English** is a **prerequisite** to start **learning Business English**. This does not mean that one needs to be fluent in English to start studying Business English. There are Business English course books which are designed for different levels of knowledge of English. But, once again, as one of the most important differences between General English and Business English is content, a decisive element in a Business English environment could be the right choice of material, either authentic or prepared for students of English.

Summing up

- ❖ The core principles of BUSINESS ENGLISH TEACHING include teachers' developing students' confidence, fluency, autonomy in language, making language practice interesting and social; and teaching language skills, content and forms that are useful, relevant and meaningful in their specific areas of work.
- ❖ It is crucial for instructors to get to know the work atmosphere and business context, though we are not expected to become experts in a specific area. Getting to know students' needs and expectations allows the teacher to make right decisions.
- ❖ It is very important also to make students notice they are getting the most of their time.
- ❖ A decisive point when teaching BE is to address both communicative events (foster interaction), and content (combination of professional as well as general language skills).
- ❖ As in General English teaching, group and pair work are common, be it role play, dramatization or other activities to facilitate language use in different social contexts.
- ❖ The use of appropriate material plays much of an important role in BE classes.
- ❖ Students' cultural awareness should be developed and enhanced and their attention should be drawn onto vocabulary choices made.
- ❖ Showing flexibility, allowing students to have fun (interesting lessons become funny lessons), and dealing with inconveniences (absenteeism, leaves, newcomers, etc.) as well as being a good negotiator become crucial for any BE instructor.
- ❖ Being open to students' suggestions and contributions is a must for BE teachers.

Everything that has been said here is just a starting point in order to trigger some useful reflection on our everyday practices in the world of Business English Teaching. As we have seen, this requires some specific skills we must learn and acquire to advance our careers and help our students pursue their interests.

Adopting and having the right attitude and preparation are very likely to have serious implications on the way we deal with the challenge of teaching Business English. It is important to bear in mind that we can always do more, and we must always do more.

As British singer Phil Collins once said "In learning you will teach, in teaching you will learn"

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PAPERS

Extra-Textual and Intra-Textual Factors in English for Academic Purposes Reading Comprehension Courses. Implementing the Flipped-Classroom Methodology, in tandem with ICT Tools

María Lourdes Nafá
lourdesnafa@yahoo.com.ar
FFHA - UNSJ

Abstract

Over the past years, the macroskill of Reading Comprehension in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) at EFL university courses has been thoroughly reconfigured, due to the impact and contribution of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). In this new scenario, various methodological and technological tools (ranging from glossaries to automatic translation and post-edition) have come to play a crucial role in both intra- and inter-translation processes. Bearing this in mind, a flipped-classroom methodology has been designed to include new technologies in English for Academic Purposes Reading Comprehension Courses. The proposal aims at stimulating *active* reading strategies involving, not only the translation from one language to the other, but also the search for suitable terminology, the collaborative construction of related grammatical contents, and, most importantly, reading comprehension strategies including not only intra-textual factors, but also, and mainly extra-textual factors that anchor the text in the communicative context (Nord 1991).

Key words: Reading Comprehension – English for Academic Purposes (EAP) – ICT Tools – Flipped Classroom

Introduction

In the Age of Information and Communication finding, analysing, and synthesising enormous amounts of information has become a crucial academic skill. Unlike the Modern Industrial Model of Education, which focused on repeating conceptual contents transmitted in teacher-centred classrooms, current paradigms of academic university training emphasise procedural and attitudinal contents managed at the non-declarative, or procedural memory.

An educational revolution is underway, and various dilemmas have come to the fore when introducing changes in real classroom contexts. In the case of English for Academic Purposes (EAP), the impact of paradigm change is even more noticeable, because of various factors that will be put forward below. English for Academic Purposes (EAP) entails training students, usually in a higher education setting, to use language appropriately for study. It is one of the most common forms of English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

An EAP program focuses instruction on skills required to perform in an English-speaking academic context across core subject areas generally encountered in a university setting. Although in Argentina, English is not the language of academic instruction, it is the foreign or second language most thoroughly used by undergraduate and graduate students, as well as by professionals of all kinds to consult state-of-the art bibliography of their fields of expertise,

and to publish their own research in academic settings. For these reasons, the two most commonly included skills in EAP courses are reading comprehension and abstract writing. In contrast, for example, in US universities EAP courses include many more skills because English is not only the language of instruction in almost all degrees, but also because study skills (such as note taking and research/library skills) are considered aspects which should be systematically taught even at university levels. Take, for instance, the case of the University of Delaware, where EAP courses include listening comprehension, fluency development, oral intelligibility, reading, grammar, writing, and vocabulary development. Academic study skills addressed include: test taking and note-taking skills, academic vocabulary usage, critical reading and writing, comprehending academic lectures, research and library skills, formal composition forms and development, including research papers. Programs may also include a more narrow focus on the more specific linguistic demands of a particular area of study, for example business subjects (sites.udel.edu/eli/programs/iep/tracks/eap).

In Argentina, where the language of instruction is Spanish, EAP courses have traditionally been focused exclusively on reading skills, as the most relevant in terms of academic and professional usefulness. It should also be noted that, in general, these courses are allotted very little credit hours by current curricula throughout the country, and for this reason, a general four-skill language course has been pragmatically excluded from the typical syllabus design in the country.

In this scenario, the vast majority of EAP courses in Argentine universities, then, deal exclusively with Reading Comprehension skills. Only courses with more credit hours some time devote time to abstract writing, or paper writing, but at more advanced levels and not in all cases. It should be noted, as well, that in the majority of these courses, the traditional procedure of reading and working with a paper dictionary continues to be the basic methodological design in force.

Moreover, the inclusion of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) is still a pending subject in this respect. There have been, however, some attempts to include new technologies in the contexts of EAP (Domínguez, Laurenti and Aguirre, 2013; Cañedo, 2016; Karnal and Pereira, 2013) but the generality is that there is still much to be done in this field.

Also, there are philosophical/ethical challenges involved in this respect, because of the advent and proliferation of automatic online translation tools, and the reluctance of the academia to accept them as a useful and ubiquitous tool for university students throughout the country. In this context, post-edition is a very useful tool, which should be implemented in

EAP courses, but is not, because of generally accepted stereotypes regarding automatic translation quality, as will be explained in the following sections.

Bearing this in mind, a flipped-classroom methodology has been designed to include new technologies in English for Academic Purposes Reading Comprehension Courses. Reading is a core skill in this context, because of its academic and professional usefulness and relevance to consult state-of-the-art bibliography written in English, and because a four-skills course could not be developed in the little time allotted to these subject, according to the current Curriculum. The proposal was originally made for undergraduate students of the History Department of Facultad de Filosofía Humanidades y Artes, Universidad Nacional de San Juan, but it can be adopted and adapted for other EAP university courses, in other fields of expertise.

The proposal aims at stimulating *active* reading strategies involving, not only the basic translation from one language to the other, but also the search for suitable terminology, the collaborative construction of related grammatical contents, and, most importantly, reading comprehension strategies including not only intra-textual factors, but also, and mainly extra-textual factors that anchor the text in the communicative context.

Why Extra-Textual and Intra-Textual Factors in Reading Comprehension EAP Courses

The notion of Intra- and Extra-Textual Factors for this methodological proposal was adopted and adapted from a reference publication in the field of Translation Studies, *Text Analysis in Translation* by German scholar Christiane Nord, a cornerstone in the Functionalist Theory of Translation worldwide.

Although the purpose of EAP courses is not translation *per se*, the foundations of text analysis allow for a thorough comprehension not only of the text itself, but also of the communicative context surrounding it. Additionally, Nord's proposal is a pedagogic one, addressed for undergraduate students. Hence, its layout and organisation is simple, systematic, straightforward, and most importantly, teachable and learnable. Nord's model allows the reader to have a clear understanding and a sound knowledge not only of the linguistic and textual structures, but also of their relationship with the system and norms of the source language and culture. Active reading involves both linguistic expertise and also awareness of social networks and social interactions: texts are not written in the vacuum; they are intended for a specific audience and for specific purposes.

As explained in Limongi for the context of translation, and adapted here for the EAP purposes, Nord devised a model of text analysis which can:

- be applicable to all text types and text specimens,
- be used in any translation task that might arise,
- enable the text analyst to understand the function of the elements or features observed in the content and structure of the text, always in relation to the communicative context,
- be applicable to any language and culture pair, provided the reader has sufficient proficiency in such a language and culture pair,
- be valid for both directions, i.e., into and out of the reader's native language (which means it is both useful for reading comprehension and Abstract writing skills),
- be independent of the reader's level of competence, i.e., whether they are professional or a trainee,
- be of use for teachers, trainees and professionals,
- be general enough to be applicable to any text,
- be specific enough to account for as many universal reading problems as possible,
- foster active and critical reading strategies in the students and professionals applying it (32).

For all these reasons, this model has been applied, in the present pedagogic proposal, to devise a standard Reading Comprehension Grid (see fig. 1. Reading Comprehension Grid by María Lourdes Nafá, 2017) which combines a two-fold intra-and-extratextual analysis for undergraduate university students attending EAP reading courses. Before analysing the various components in the grid, a brief summary of Extratextual and Intratextual Factors is included below.

It should be noted, beforehand, that both these factors are interrelated, within their respective categories, and with the other complementary set of factors. "Like the extratextual factors, the intratextual factors are closely related to one another, since the information elicited about each factor generally yields information about the characteristic features of other factors as well" (Limongi 36). This means, for example, that one Extra-Textual Factor will be integrated and combined with various or all the other Extratextual factors, as well as with the Intratextual Factors. For instance, a certain author will chose a certain style of writing, certain word choice and syntax depending on his personal style, and the moment and place of elocution.

Extratextual Factors

In Nord's systematic framework of 1991, Extratextual Factors, also referred to as Situational Features or Situational Factors, allow for the analysis of circumstances that *surround* the text

to be analysed, and anchor it in a specific communicative context. Among Extra-textual Factors, Nord (qtd. In Limongi 33-34) includes the following:

1. the author or sender of the text (who?)
2. the sender's intention/Illocutionary Force (what for?)
3. the addressee or recipient the text is directed at (to whom?),
4. the medium or channel the text is communicated by (by which medium?),
5. the place (where?)
6. and time (when?) of text production and text reception,
7. and the motive/reason (why?) for communication
8. the function the text can achieve (with what function?): Expressive, Referential, Conative, Poetic, Phatic, Metalinguistic (Jakobson 355-359; Nord qtd. in Limongi 35-36).

Intratextual Factors

Extratextual Factors provide de foundation and necessary contextual and situational information, to pursue more detailed inside-the-text analysis, by considering Intra-textual factors. These are analysed by enquiring about:

9. the subject matter the text deals with (on what subject matter?),
10. the information or content presented in the text (what?),
11. the knowledge presuppositions made by the author (what is not said but implied?),
12. the composition or construction of the text (in what order?),
13. the non-linguistic and paralinguistic features accompanying the text (using which non-verbal elements?),
14. the lexical characteristics (in which words?),
15. the syntactic structures (in what kind of sentences?) found in the text,
16. and the suprasegmental features of intonation and prosody (in which tone?). (Nord qtd. in Limongi 37)

On the basis of this systematic framework of Extratextual and Intertextual Factors in Nord's Model, a grid was designed to cater for the needs derived from active-critical reading comprehension at undergraduate university EAP courses in Argentina. This grid is used in a flipped-classroom methodology and can be used in any kind of text or language combination.

VIII JORNADAS DE ACTUALIZACIÓN EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS

PLANILLA DE LECTO-COMPRESIÓN INGLÉS DISEÑADA POR: Lourdes Nafá, Ph. D. (Copyright: 2017)		
TOP DOWN READING – LECTURA DESCENDENTE - SKIMMING (1)		
FACTORES EXTRATEXUALES (2)	1. ¿Quién transmite el mensaje? / Emisor WHO	
	2. ¿A quién lo transmite? Receptores posibles (directos e indirectos) TO WHOM	
	3. ¿Con qué finalidad e intención se transmite el mensaje? FOR WHAT/WHY	
	4. ¿En qué lugar y momento se emite el texto? WHERE AND WHEN	
	5. ¿En qué medio se transmite el mensaje? (Internet, libros, revistas académicas, periódicos, artículo científico, etc)	
	6. ¿Cuál es la función principal o preponderante del texto? (expresiva, referencial, apelativa, fática, metalingüística, poética, sabiendo que una predomina y puede haber funciones secundarias o subsidiarias)	
	7. ¿En qué género textual se ubica principalmente este texto? (Ej. Obra de historiador, capítulo de libro historiográfico, artículo de un periódico, crítica de una obra, etc)	
	8. ¿Qué efecto perlocutivo se espera en el lector?	
BOTTOM-UP READING – LECTURA ASCENDENTE - SCANNING (4)		
FACTORES INTRATEXUALES (2)	9. ¿Se trata un texto que forma parte de un hipertexto o un texto autónomo? ¿Por qué?	
	10. ¿Qué dice el texto? (5) Resúmelo en pocas palabras	
	11. Preguntas específicas sobre contenido del texto/Verdadero-Falso (Corregir oraciones falsas):	
	12 ¿Qué NO dice el texto? Presuposiciones, sobreentendidos, elipsis	
	13 ¿En qué orden se presenta el texto? (6) Lógico, cronológico, retrospectivo, etc? ¿Por qué crees que el autor sigue este orden?	
	14 ¿Cuáles son las palabras clave (key words) del texto? (7)	
	15 ¿Qué tipo de oraciones y conectores observas en el texto? (7)	
	16. ¿Hay algo en la forma de presentar el texto (negritas, cursivas, mayúsculas, subrayados) que te llame la atención? Cita ejemplos del texto e indica para qué sirve cada uno de estos recursos tipográficos? (8)	
	17. ¿Qué elementos no-verbales se usan para transmitir el mensaje? (8)	
18. ¿Cuál es el «tono» del texto? Cercano, distante, dominante, no dominante, etc... (8)		
CERRANDO EL CÍRCULO DE LECTURA COMPRESIVA Y CRÍTICA: CRÍTICA PERSONAL AL TEXTO (9)		
	19. Una vez leído el texto, ¿te ha enriquecido su lectura? Por qué sí, o no. Si contestas que sí, dinos cómo te enriquece...y para qué te sirve su lectura en el futuro	
	20. Has cambiado tus opiniones personales una vez leído el texto, o sigues pensando igual que antes? Si pudieras hablar con el autor, ¿qué le preguntarías o le dirías?	
	21. Pregunta optativa: Si se trata de un artículo de Internet, se puede agregar comentarios de otros lectores en inglés, para que el alumno responda a dicho comentario en español, a la manera de un debate virtual con un lector similar a él/ella.	

Aclaraciones teórico-metodológicas

- (1) *Skimming*
- (2) Factores extratextuales y Factores intratextuales (Nord 1991)
- (3) Intencionalidad – *Operaciones retóricas del Hecho Retórico: Intellectio e Inventio*
- (4) *Scanning*
- (5) Lo dicho – Operación retórica del Hecho Retórico: *Elocutio*
- (6) El orden del texto – Operación retórica del Hecho Retórico: *Dispositio*. Partes del Texto Retórico: *Exordium, Narratio, Argumentatio, Peroratio* La superficie textual – Operación retórica del Hecho Retórico: *Elocutio*
- (7) El modo de presentación – Operación retórica del Hecho Retórico: *Actio* (Albaladejo 3.2. *Operaciones*)
- (8) Lectura crítica transformacional del lector

Fig. 1. Reading Comprehension Grid by María Lourdes Nafá (2017)

The Flipped-Classroom Methodology in tandem with ICT Tools in EAP Courses

Because of the little credit hours generally allotted to EAP courses in Argentina, most of these programmes are conducted on a *blended-learning* basis, i.e. combining online digital media with traditional classroom methods. The proposal described in this paper requires the physical presence of both teacher and student in the classroom, at least once a week for two hours, and this physical presence should be combined with computer-mediated activities, to cater for the various syllabus contents.

In this sense, the Flipped-Classroom methodology is a very suitable framework to attain blended-learning objectives. A flipped classroom is an instructional strategy and a type of blended learning that reverses the traditional learning environment by delivering instructional content, often online, outside of the classroom. It moves activities, including those that may have traditionally been considered homework, into the classroom. In a flipped classroom, students watch online lectures, collaborate in online discussions, or carry out research at home while engaging in more complex cognitive tasks in class, such as problem solving, discussions, and critical thinking activities, with the teacher's guidance (Alsowat 109-110).

In the design described herein, conceptual contents are introduced outside class, and in-class activities involve oral presentations combined with problem-solving, critical thinking and collaborative knowledge construction. On a weekly basis, students choose an author which they have read and studied in other previous subjects of their degree. In general, they choose authors that they like or feel academically inclined to. This decision has been made considering the benefits of interdisciplinarity and of working with previously acquired knowledge which serves as cognitive scaffolding for learning new contents. Also, by choosing authors of their own preference, motivation is generally higher than when texts are teacher-imposed. Students also choose if they prefer to work in pairs or individually, although

pair work is suggested for the development of attitudinal contents such as negotiation skills, empathy, solidarity and respect, among others.

This reverses the traditional didactic model in which teacher decides the material to be worked on, and at the same time, contributes to enhance students' autonomy, search tools, library skills and critical decisions. In tandem with the text, they look for a short biography of the author in English and an academic video online, of no more than 4-5 minutes, of the author or a suitable third party talking in English (with English subtitles) about the author or their work. Both items are sent to the teacher via email or whatsapp for analysis. The teacher promptly comments on the appropriateness, quality, length and degree of difficulty of the materials suggested, and highlights two or three grammatical aspects which should be analysed from theory to practice by each group of students to be presented and explained to the rest of the students in class. Students look for theory about for example Time Connectors, and prepare some exercises for their presentation. At this preparation stage, they also have to answer the reading comprehension grid, to fully analyse the text chosen, along the lines of Extratextual and Intratextual Factors, coupled with critical thinking questions. All these activities account for a collaborative-formative *Trabajo Práctico*. The biography, text and grammatical exercises are logged on to the Subjects Platform, and the rest of the students start reading and working on it, for the following lesson.

On the appointed date, each group of students presents the author's biography in class (in English or Spanish, depending on their command of L2), broadcasts the author's video and asks questions to the rest of the class. They then present the author's text, and work with the standard reading comprehension grid with the whole class, with greater emphasis on critical reading strategies. They solve doubts and provide feedback to the students on a dialogical, interactive basis. They finally focus on grammatical aspects derived from the text, and solve exercises in class. Collaborative knowledge-construction is also attained by students' compiling a bilingual (English-Spanish) glossary of the discipline, on a Google Drive file accessible to all the class. All this presentation is another formative collaborative *Trabajo Práctico*, which is graded individually.

As can be seen, this flipped-classroom methodology intentionally shifts instruction from the traditional teacher-centred model to a learner-centered environment "in which class time explores topics in greater depth and creates meaningful learning opportunities, while educational technologies such as online videos are used to 'deliver content' outside of the classroom" (Krishnan and Priya 1). Teacher's interaction with students in a flipped classroom can be more personalized and less teacher-centred, and students are actively

involved in knowledge acquisition and construction as they participate in and evaluate their learning (Álvarez 19).

Because these types of active learning allow for highly differentiated instruction, more time can be spent in class on higher-order thinking skills such as problem-finding, collaboration, design and problem solving as students tackle problems, work in groups, research, and construct knowledge with the help of their teacher and peers (Alsowat 108-110).

All this reverse process is possible thanks to the Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). Under this proposal, students are allowed to use as many ICTs as required by the tasks or problem solving solutions. They are allowed to use their mobile phones in class, and of course at home, to look for material and check bibliographical issues, vocabulary, and grammar, among others. Teacher supervision is required to indicate which sites offer reliable information from less reliable sources, although students are generally aware of this distinction, especially when they have already been used to searching quality information online for other courses.

Students are advised to first grasp the general ideas of the texts using the skimming technique. This speeds the process up, as they realise it is not necessary to look for every single unknown word to understand the overall ideas of the text. They are guided into identifying the specific terminology of the field of knowledge, which they are normally acquainted with both in Spanish and English, and for this reason, as a collaborative online activities, students prepare an online bilingual Glossary of Terms belonging to their field of expertise, using Google Drive. This glossary can be consulted in class and at the various formative and summative evaluations of the Subject. Online quality bilingual dictionaries are suggested by the teacher (such as Oxford and Cambridge bilingual dictionaries), but students also find their own resources and the exchange is mutually enriched. It is relevant, at this stage, to consider that students from non-linguistic programmes may not be familiar with the use of dictionaries, so it is advisable to include an introduction in this respect regarding abbreviations, word classes, and various meanings depending on the context, among others.

In addition to glossaries, dictionaries and online encyclopaedias, book and paper repositories, students are also advised to consult parallel texts online, because they provide for language-in-use in specific contexts. In this respect, www.linguee.com is particularly useful, as it provides the term in context, in two columns, containing real communicative contexts in the source and target languages.

All these ICTs allow for permanent contact with students on an asynchronous basis, which facilitates interaction wherever and whenever students and teacher can. In the survey conducted at the end of the term, students indicated that they really enjoyed and appreciated being able to use all these ICTs both in class and at exams. All of them considered that these tools are user-friendly and allow them to locate, analyse and criticise texts which, at first, seemed really difficult to approach, considering their command of English.

There is still, however, a controversial methodological issue regarding automatic translation tools and for this reason, for the time being, these tools are not allowed to be used in class, tests or exams. It is assumed that students constantly use these tools on their daily lives as the primary alternative to understand meanings conveyed in other languages, but there is still ongoing academic debate in Argentina as to whether to include them or not in academic settings. The basic reason is not only the reliability of these automatic translation tools (varying considerably, according to language combinations and directionality), but also the pending requirement to combine their use with Post-Editing skills which, students do not normally have in their L1, let alone in their L2.

Post-editing is the process by which professionally trained translators or linguists review and correct the MT (machine translation) output *to remove both semantic and linguistic errors*. Post-editing can be roughly divided into two categories: light/rapid and full post-editing. The first focuses mainly on transferring the correct meaning, while ignoring any stylistic issues. In a full post-editing scenario, by contrast, the text should attain a high-quality level comparable to that of a human translation and all issues need to be dealt with.
(unige.ch/fti/en/faculte/departements/dtim/recherches/ta/)

Determining the usefulness and efficiency of Post-Editing is a difficult task, depending on language combination, directionality, availability of quality translation memories and the expertise of post-editor, among other factors. The general claim in the literature, is that post edition contributes to the speed of the translation process (Green, Spence, Heer & Manning 2013; Federico, Cattelan & Trombetti 2012), but general agreement has not been reached in this respect, especially for academic contexts. Post-editing appears to offer great potential for EAP courses, not only for understanding and comprehending texts in L2, but also for producing texts in the target language, such as Abstracts or research papers, but its pedagogical implementation and limitations are still to be determined empirically.

Some Preliminary Results

This three-fold methodology which merges Intratextual + Extratextual Factors in a standardized reading comprehension grid, coupled with the Flipped-Classroom methodology and ICT Tools, has been applied at undergraduate level in the History Department of Facultad de Filosofía, Humanidades y Artes, Universidad Nacional de San Juan, since 2017. The overall quality assessment by students regarding the methodology used in this EAP was very positive (100% of positive feedback in 2017), and was conducted along the lines of the recently passed *Carrera Docente Project*, which includes a Students' Survey Form, and was complemented with subject specific questions.

Both the formative and summative evaluations in this course have rendered good and very good results in *all* the students attending the EAP course in 2017. It is worth noting that no student failed the subject, or individual tests, even when the prior knowledge of English was not homogeneous in the sample. All the students managed to search for meaningful texts in their field of expertise, to analyse, comprehend and criticise them, from a holistic and autonomous perspective, which is desirable not only during the course of their studies, but also for their professional careers.

They additionally internalised Nord's Model for Text Analysis and came to understand the importance and interrelation of Extra- and Intratextual Factors in active and critical reading comprehension. The systematic use of ICTs has also been greatly valued by students in the quality survey, because they feel very comfortable using them, and because -as they explain- ICT tools can really boost their active and critical reading comprehension skills in a foreign language.

Conclusions

The above proposal has been designed and implemented bearing in mind not only the students' academic and professional needs, but also the technological revolution underway. Nowadays, more than ever, students need to be equipped with critical thinking strategies to select and process enormous amounts of information available at a keystroke. Intertextuality, multiple viewpoints, cultural dilemmas all come into play in this scenario, and affects education in all its forms. EAP courses are no exception and require an update of the traditional methodological designs in order to: (1) systematize the analysis of various textual typologies, language combinations and directionalities, (2) value and take advantage of the benefits derived from ICTs, (3) focus on procedural and attitudinal contents which promote critical reading skills, as well as collaborative virtual work. All these desirable learning

strategies exceed the traditional paradigm along which EAP courses have traditionally been designed.

The requirement, nowadays, should not only be to rudimentary translate a text from L2 to L1, but also and mainly to be able to contextualize the comprehension in a specific communicative context, where the readers can “speak” with the authors on an imaginary basis, or on a web forum, where the readers can position themselves critically and build their own points of view, and where they can really be transformed as human beings by being enriched from the various sources of reading in a foreign language. Learning to read actively implies that the reader is no longer a passive recipient of the text, but a fully valid interlocutor. Active readers bring to the fore their culture, their previous knowledge, and the Internet 2.0 allows for a virtual dialogue which enriches both authors and readers, likewise. Multimodality and hipertextuality require other forms of reading literacy to be able to process heterogeneous and ever changing input. Educational proposals need to bear these demands in mind, if programmes are to cater for students’ current needs in academic and professional contexts.

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English Rhythm Revisited: Including Meaningful TPR and Collaborative Activities in EFL Classrooms

María Lourdes Nafá
lourdesnafa@yahoo.com.ar
Patricia Beatriz Castro
pacas2003@yahoo.com.ar
Marcos Alberto Torres
marcostorres911@gmail.com
DLYLI-FFHA, UNSJ

Abstract

The traditional distinction between stress-timed and syllable-timed languages is being reviewed in the literature, however, the inclusion of rhythm as a conceptual-procedural content in EFL classrooms remains undisputed, because rhythm is a crucial suprasegmental feature contributing to the overall performance in reading aloud and speaking. In order to make these contents more appealing and meaningful for learners a set of activities have been designed, following Celce-Murcia et al (2010) didactic sequence, to cater for students' current needs and learning styles. In this respect, practices have been organized along perception and production objectives, from more guided to less guided, always bearing in mind the overall communicative situations. For this reason, a twofold top-down & bottom-up methodology is followed to create a 'virtuous circle', departing from the text as input and returning to it in a parallel production by students.

Key words: Rhythm – TPR – Collaborative Activities – EFL classrooms

Introduction

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, *rhythm*, as a general concept, refers to: a "movement marked by the regulated succession of strong and weak elements, or of opposite or different conditions" (OED 2537). The meaning of regular recurrence or pattern in time can apply to a wide variety of cyclical natural phenomena having a periodicity or frequency of anything from microseconds to several seconds; to several minutes or hours (as with the tides rhythm, the heart rhythm, etc.), or, at the most extreme, even over many years. From the linguistic perspective, the most widely accepted definition is the one that conceives this prosodic feature as "the perceived regularity of prominent units in speech" (Chun 7), i.e., the "succession of stressed and unstressed syllables in speech" (Crystal 266-267).

Medina, in her thorough study of Rhythm and Verbal Memory and Retention, indicates that "From the steady beats of the human heart to the cadence of a musical piece, rhythm pervades every aspect of our lives. Rhythm plays a particularly significant role in the functioning of the human organism including the psychomotor, affective and cognitive domains. It is the rhythmic nature of our physiological processes which drives our movements, hearts beats, and other regularly occurring physiological functions" [...] (2).

Rhythm also partakes of a significant role in our cognitive functions, especially in memory and retention. Incorporating rhythm in collaborative and TPR activities in the EFL Classroom does help students to learn faster and more easily (Alipur Gorjian and Zafari, 2012; Varnel, 2013). However, when it comes to Teaching English as a Foreign Language, the systematic training into Rhythm is soon left aside once students leave kindergarten. The conception that rhymes and rhythm is solely associated with kid's EFL classrooms appears to be a missed opportunity for the acquisition of more natural prosody in EFL upper level students, especially when the rhythmic properties of L1 and L2 are different and a negative interference of the former may hinder the acquisition of the later in most EFL classroom settings.

With this idea in mind, and based on years of observation and reflection in the subject of English Phonetics and Phonology II at Profesorado de Inglés and Licenciatura en Inglés, Facultad de Filosofía, Humanidades y Artes, Universidad Nacional de San Juan, we have designed a methodological proposal which includes both Total Physical Response and Collaborative Activities, to cater for the persistent need of students to acquire and master English Rhythm, because it not only contributes to the naturalness of production of L2 prosody, but also to the overall comprehension and retention processes in classroom and conference environments. This means that, if a future teacher or researcher (*licenciado*) is significantly equipped with a natural English Rhythm, their respective audiences (in classroom and conference settings) will have greater opportunities to comprehend and retain the information transmitted.

Some Theoretical Considerations about English Rhythm

It has long been acknowledged that natural languages may be classified according to their rhythm. Lloyd James first noticed that some languages, Spanish among them, have a rhythm that resembles that of a machine-gun, while other languages, notably English, have a rhythm evocative of messages in Morse Code (Lloyd James qtd. in Abercrombie 171). Pike labeled the two types of rhythm 'syllable timed' and 'stress timed', respectively (35). Abercrombie went a step further and claimed that isochrony, either of syllables or of interstress intervals, is at the basis of rhythm in the languages of the world (97). The first type of language would be characterised by the isochrony of syllables, and the second, by the isochrony of interstress intervals (Mehler and Nespor 3-4).

However, the latest research into these categories, supported by empirical phonetic data, is tending to show that language rhythmical categories are more of a gradient than of a dichotomy or trichotomy, if we consider mora-timed languages, such as Japanese. This

means, that languages should be considered to be mostly stressed-timed, or syllable-timed, or mora-timed, but not fully so. There are even experiments showing that the definition of rhythm entailing isochrony does not fully encompass what happens when real stretches of language are experimentally analysed, because rhythm is more of a perceived quality of languages than an objective laboratory reality (Pamies 73).

For pedagogical purposes, English has been conceived as a *generally* stress-timed language, which means that **stressed** syllables are said at approximately regular intervals, and unstressed syllables shorten (by means of other pronunciation resources such as elision, assimilation, compression, linking and weakening) to fit this rhythm. In the EFL classroom, learners whose first language is syllable-timed (such as Spanish) often have problems producing the unstressed sounds in a stress-timed language like English, tending to give them equal **stress** ("Stress-Timed").

Because of this negative interference of L1 syllable-timed rhythm into L2 stress-timed rhythm and the pedagogical challenges this poses in EFL and ESL teaching-learning environments, we have designed a pedagogical proposal based on the way students learn best, in terms of communication, meaningfulness and retention of learned material in long-term memory, as procedural content. For this purpose, we have resorted to various sources, ranging from the Communicative method for foreign and second language teaching (Celce Murcia et al., 2010), neurolinguistic principles related to Total Physical Response (Asher, 1969, 1981) as a still valid meaningful learning strategy.

In this respect, Anderson explains that declarative content is the factual information stored in memory and known to be static in nature. Other names, e.g. descriptive knowledge, propositional knowledge, etc. are also given. It is the part of knowledge which describes how things are. Procedural knowledge is the knowledge of how to perform, or how to operate; it entails mastering skills and acquiring competences. Names such as know-how are also given. It is said that one becomes more skilled in problem solving when one relies more on procedural knowledge than declarative knowledge (Anderson 179). Declarative knowledge involves knowing THAT something is the case - that J is the tenth letter of the alphabet, that Paris is the capital of France. Declarative knowledge is conscious; it can often be verbalized. Metalinguistic knowledge, or knowledge about a linguistic form, is declarative knowledge. Procedural knowledge involves knowing HOW to do something - ride a bike, for example. We may not be able to explain how we do it. Procedural knowledge involves implicit learning, which a learner may not be aware of, and may involve being able to use a particular form to understand or produce language without necessarily being able to explain.

Some Pedagogical Implications about Teaching Rhythm in EFL contexts

The acquisition of a foreign language, especially of its Phonology was basically guided by two prevailing models: The Audio-Lingual Approach and the Communicative Approach. While the first was a behaviourist approach based on motor repetition and imitation, away from contextual anchorage, the Communicative Approach serves to place EFL Phonology within the communicative context. Although articulatory precision was not the main concern of the Communicative Approach in the first years of its classroom implementation (see quotes below), there has been a recent revival and inclusion of Phonological contents in materials and classroom practices, which result from the fact that both segmental and suprasegmental features can and **do** hinder communication:

- ‘the teaching of pronunciation has been **considered almost a luxury** in the ESL/ EFL curriculum’ (Celce-Murcia et al. 5)
- ‘**an orphan** in English programs around the world’ (Gilbert 38)
- ‘pronunciation has been **marginalized** within the field of applied linguistics. As a result, teachers are left with **little direction**’ (Derwing and Murno 380)

In this context, Celce Murcia et al. have contributed with a didactic sequence (Framework for Teaching Pronunciation), which we adopt in our classrooms with some additional elements, as follows:

0. *Sensitization: features in context (semi-authentic input - our contribution)*
1. *Listening and discrimination activities*
2. *Description and analysis of features*
3. *Controlled practice with feedback*
4. *Guided practice with feedback*
5. *Communicative practice with feedback: unguided communicative production + feedback (36)*

As can be seen, the proposal starts with focus features (rhythm in this case) in authentic or semi-authentic material (real interviews, films, series) (Bradford 86) and the process moves downwards, first dealing with perception and then moving towards guided and less guided production, to finally reach a similar result as the one posed in the Sensitization phase. This means that Celce-Murcia et al.’s contribution is Top-Down (1-3) and then Bottom-Up (4-5). The meaningful practice is, hence, organized first along perception challenges, to then move to guided and less guided production, as will be seen below, for the case of Rhythm as significant prosodic feature in ESL and EFL classrooms.

In line with the steps proposed by Celce Murcia et al, in this proposal, another relevant learning strategy from the 1970s is to be implemented. Put forward by Asher in the late sixties

and seventies, Total Physical Response is still considered useful in our EFL/ESL lessons. This method relies on the assumption that language should be learned in coordination with physical movement. The input is oral, i.e. obtained from listening and discrimination and once it is duly processed, a physical response ensues (*Learning Another 29*).

Asher developed TPR as a result of his experiences observing young children learning their first language. He noticed that interactions between parents and children often took the form of speech from the parent followed by a physical response from the child. Asher made three hypotheses based on his observations: first, that language is learned primarily by listening; second, that language learning must engage the right hemisphere (holistic, creative, interactive) of the brain; and third, that learning language should not involve any stress (*Total Physical Response 10*).

The three hypotheses put forward by Asher four decades ago are being now confirmed by thorough laboratory testing by neuroscientists throughout the world. Current neurolinguistic literature based on sound experiments confirms, then, that learning is facilitated when sufficient amount of stimuli unleash certain neurotransmitters in our brain, which activates the processing and adequate response to the stimuli. There is also thorough empirical evidence that learning should stimulate both brain hemispheres so that learning is meaningful and more permanent. Also, there are data confirming that stressful situations unleash neurotransmitters which hinder learning. Hence, students need to feel safe, comfortable and in a resonating environment to be able to learn. One of the things that stresses students most is error correction, and TPR strategy is specially organized in this respect. Asher advises teachers to treat learners' mistakes the same way a parent would treat their children's. Errors made by beginning-level students are usually overlooked, but as students become more advanced teachers may correct more of their errors.

As will be seen below, various meaningful activities have been included in our proposal along the didactic guidelines put forward by Celce-Murcia et al. in 1996, and the kinesthetic principles stated by Asher in his 1977 publications. Both references have resulted in greater engagement, motivation and retention in our students, as will be shown below.

Methodology and Preliminary Classroom Results

Considering the teaching strategies to develop the phonological competence of the English language, this project is based on the model proposed by Celce-Murcia et al. (2010) which combines both the analytical-linguistic approach with the intuitive-imitative approach. The first one explicitly focuses the attention on the linguistic information related to the prosodic features already selected. The second approach focuses on the learner's ability to listen,

imitate and produce the sounds, stress, rhythmic and intonation patterns of the target language.

A wide range of teaching pronunciation practices have been designed, in which learners are engaged in the use of different techniques going from structured to free production activities with the purpose of raising the learner's awareness of the linguistic prosodic feature in focus and guarantee successful learning of the phonological component of the English language.

The activities have been carefully designed following the hierarchical framework proposed by Celce-Murcia et al. (1996), which can be described as follows:

1. **Description and analysis:** linguistic description of the target phonological aspect, i.e., when and how this feature occurs with the purpose of raising the learner consciousness through oral and written illustrations.
2. **Listening and discrimination:** focused listening, imitation aural discrimination of the prosodic features in focus with feedback.
3. **Controlled practice with feedback:** reading aloud of words, minimal pair sentences and short dialogues with a special attention on the focused prosodic features.
4. **Guided practice with feedback:** structured communication activities, such as information gap activities, cued dialogues, rhymes, tongue twisters, limericks, to help learners monitor their progress in the use and manipulation of the features in focus.
5. **Communicative practice with feedback:** less structured activities in which learners are engaged in different kinds of verbal interaction such as role-plays, story-telling, acting-out, interviews etc., with the purpose of helping the learner to pay attention to both form and meaning of the utterances produced (36).

This proposal also includes a **Sensitisation** stage (Bradford 3), before the Description and Analysis activities, in which a video session is introduced to help students become aware of the choices a speaker makes in relation to the prosodic feature in question. First, students watch a scene from the film *The King's Speech* (2010). Next, they reply some comprehension questions related to the content and the context of the scene. After that, they are asked to watch an extract from the scene, and later, they do a series of tasks related to the prosodic feature of rhythm in focus. Here, students are asked to watch and listen to an extract from a tongue twister: they identify the missing words, and then, the stressed and unstressed syllables in that extract. The next step is *imitation* which involves a simple repetition (as a cognitive strategy) of a selected model. Students first listen to the selected extract and are then encouraged to produce the feature with accuracy and confidence.

The following stage is known as **Description and analysis**, in which students are asked to read the bibliography related to the feature in focus in order to work collaboratively in small groups and do a quiz, bearing in mind the following categories: rhythm's nature, isochronicity, types of rhythm, units of analysis: foot and rhythmic groups and other variables: pause and tempo.

The stage of **Listening discrimination** comes next after students become aware and reflect upon the main characteristics of the prosodic feature in question. During this stage, listening activities are put forward in order for students to discriminate and identify stressed and unstressed syllables in short selected texts, such as limericks and nursery rhymes. At this stage, students go back to the video session already introduced, and they are asked to listen to a tongue twister. Next, they work on the following nursery rhymes presented in the film by the speech therapist, such as *Jack and Jill* and *Ding Dong Bell*. Here students mark the rhythmic patterns by identifying feet in each line of the rhymes. Later, students work on the identification of rhythmic groups by listening to a short dialogue taken from the previously watched scene.

EXAMPLE 1

Section 2: Listening & Discrimination	
<p>A-Do you remember which the two main units of analysis of English rhythm are? Now, let's select two more lines from the above tongue twister and mark feet:</p> <p>Line 1: _____</p> <p>Line 2: _____</p>	
<p>B-Let's watch the scene once more. Which other two nursery rhymes are used by the therapist? Now that you know which they are, complete them. Can you analyse them in terms of the two main units of rhythm in English?</p>	
<p>JACK and JILL</p> <p>Jack and Jill Went up a..... To fetch a of water. Jack down And broke his And Jill came after. Up Jack got And home did As fast as he could He went to bed To his head With and brown paper.</p>	<p>DING DONG BELL</p> <p>Ding, dong, bell Pussy is in the..... Who put her in? Tommy Tim Who her out? Tommy Stout What a boy was that To poor pussy cat.</p>

Fig.1. Listening and Discrimination. From Torres, M. "Video Session on "The King's Speech", Section 2, p. 2.

Regarding, the stage of **Controlled practice with feedback**, students here focus on form. This stage includes choral repetition and reading aloud practice. Students read aloud some nursery rhymes, limericks and tongue twister. They also choose a nursery rhyme, mark the rhythmic patterns and later produce a podcast which should be uploaded onto the Wiki page which has been designed for the purpose of the activity. After a while, students receive the

corrective feedback (problematic features being highlighted at this stage) in order to reflect on and optimize their oral production of the rhythmic patterns by producing an improved version.

EXAMPLE 2

A-Nursery Rhymes: Black socks

- Have you ever gone camping? What happens with your socks when you go camping?
- Watch and listen to the video.
- Let's sing it altogether but starting at different times.

BLACK SOCKS

<p>Black socks they never get dirty The longer you wear them the stronger they get Sometimes I think I should wash them But something inside me says no, no, Not yet not yet not yet not yet not yet</p>	<p>Black socks they never get dirty The longer you wear them the stronger they get Sometimes I think I should wash them But something inside me says no, no, Not yet not yet not yet not yet not yet Not yet not yet not yet not yet not yet...</p>
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Fig. 2. Controlled practice with feedback. Nursery rhymes: *Black Socks*. A video created by Scratch Garden https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_AOeL-QgDco

It is also important to highlight the significant role of kinesthetic reinforcement (TPR) and drama and imitation techniques - the use of chants, rhymes, and videos from the BBC, to consolidate the significant learning of the focused features.

EXAMPLE 3

- Let's see what happens with rhythm in music:

B-Claps and beats

- Let's work together (TPR)

1-**“One, two, three, GO!”**


Example: You have to say “Yes”. **Now, one, two, three, GO!**

2- Let's move our body. First, you have to clap your hands twice and afterwards you have to raise and open your arms. Now let's try it!

3- Now you have to say: **We will, we will rock you!**

4-Watching a Video:

Watch the video and listen to a song. Try to coordinate body and language together. Remember what you have to do: clap your hands, raise and open your arms and say: **“We will, we will rock you!”**



1

Fig. 3. Total Physical Response (TPR), music and rhythm. Study Guide on Rhythm.

In relation to the **Guided practice with feedback**, students were asked to work with four different limericks, which emphasise the use of the weak vowel sound ‘schwa’ which


contributes to rhythmical naturalness. Students were told to shadow read the limericks and then to practise saying them aloud.

EXAMPLE 4


1. Let's see how English rhythm works in limericks.

Poems 4.5: Schwa Limericks


1. I met an accountant from Spain
Whose *custama's* *neva's* complain
She now can afford
To travel abroad
and fill up her bath with Champagne



2. I know an old waiter called Treva
Whose *custama's* wait forever
He lets you grow thinner
While waiting for dinner
and says 'Betta' late than neva'



3. I met a young man from Mauritius
Whose *motha's* was so superstitious
She said that a ghost
Had eaten her toast
and the ghost said the toast was delicious



4. a film crew was off to Milan
But nothing was going to plan
The cinematographer
(Not a great geographer)
Got on a plane to Japan




Fig. 4. Guided practice with feedback. (From Hancock, M. "Limericks". In *Pronunciation PronPack 4*. Chester: Hancock Mc Donald ELT, 2017, p.32)

Finally, for the **Communicative practice with feedback** section, students were required to role-play a situation with the aid of a prompt taken from *English Through Drama* (Hillyard 125-126) The students were divided into large groups of 12 (twelve). Then, they were asked to work on a given situation in which someone was zapping from one channel to the next. Each member of the group had to interpret the line they had to deliver. They were given time to rehearse and practise interrupting each other.

It is crucial to highlight, at this point, that the development of these activities may be enhanced by the conscious use of learning strategies. In this respect, teachers should provide the necessary tools for the learners to allow them to reinforce those strategies already developed in the previous courses/classes, and foster new ones while developing the complex skill of pronunciation.

Currently, the development of ICT has had a great impact on the teaching-learning contexts. ICT tools offer endless possibilities and have posed a variety of challenges through the combination of traditional teaching with teaching through the implementation of an array of technological tools such as *Power-Point*, *Prezi*, *C-maps*, emails, podcasts, blogs, websites related to the teaching of pronunciation and social networks. The use of these technological aids contributes to framing different scenarios and construct different modes of interaction among teacher-students, student-material and student-student in the pursuit of successful learning (Hanna 63).

Conclusions

This is a recent and prototypical pedagogical proposal conceived to address the rather complicated topic of English Rhythm. For this reason, not sufficient qualitative and/or quantitative data has been produced in order to reach permanent conclusions. Extensive research on this topic and on this new methodology is still being conducted at various didactic levels. However, further work still needs to be pursued in other EFL contexts, to account for the ecological validity of this preliminary project.

Being aware of the limitations of this study, further research should be done with the student population in order to observe the positive effect of these teaching strategies on the students' achievement of the English rhythm and how they contribute to enhance the students' phonological production in English, at various formal levels.

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Literacy Skills in Times of Technoculture

María Victoria Sergio
victoriasergo@gmail.com
DLYLI-FFHA, UNSJ

Abstract

Today's society increasingly demands that audiences adopt new ways of communication, participation and collaboration through the Internet across multiple modalities. Even though such requirements frequently differ from those of formal education, the youth are acquiring several of these new skills outside the classroom. In order to approach this topic, a research project called *Transmedia Literacy: Roles and Skills in High School and Undergraduate Students* is being carried out (Res. N° 2234-R-17-UNSJ). However, for the purposes of this paper, only high school students have been surveyed. Results have been useful to broadly describe the social skills that most teenagers in San Juan develop informally as well as to identify the role educational institutions in such students' learning process.

Key words: Transmedia- Literacy- Technoculture- Education

Introduction

Day-to-day, the vast amount of information as well as creation-and-distribution tools on the internet increase significantly. Consequently, today's society demands that users adopt new ways of communication, participation and collaboration across multiple modalities. In other words, the audience is being forced to adopt new roles and acquire new competences.

Teenagers, for instance, create online communities and play videogames while interacting with people from different parts of the world. They also watch tutorials to learn and make things, and carry out plenty of other activities outside the classroom. Not only that, by performing these tasks, they are picking up new skills (Scolari 3).

However, if we pay a look at the relationship between schools and technology, it can easily be seen that most educational institutions are not accompanying such social changes. Even though many schools are making an effort to incorporate the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs hereafter), most of them still require students to stop doing the activities that are part of their daily digital lives when it comes to learning in the classroom (Castells 38). Hence, there exists a divide between students' everyday tasks and way of learning and schools' furthered activities and learning styles.

This paper, which is part of a larger research project named *Transmedia Literacy: Roles and Skills in High School and Undergraduate Students* (Res. N° 2234-R-17-UNSJ), tries to describe both the activities that teenagers most commonly do outside school and the ensuing skills those students might be acquiring. The idea behind these objectives is that the greater similarity among the tasks performed inside and outside the classroom, the more effective learning will be.

Theoretical Framework

For a long time, the media were approached from an instrumentalist perspective that treated them as means to transmit information. At the same time, however, the mass media were regarded as disruptive, distracting, and manipulative since it was believed that the actual reason behind informing the population was for them to reproduce such information (Dussel 184).

Thus, schools had to protect students from such dangerous devices and only incorporate them in the classroom after neutralizing them. From this view, the role of formal education was to promote media literacy, i.e., to encourage students to use and interpret information critically (Scolari 5).

By then, the idea of literacy encompassed the creation and critical comprehension of both oral and written texts as well as the production of audiovisual content by making use of digital tools (Ciastellardi and Di Rosario 8). Media literacy was highly esteemed and was thought to be necessary for young adolescents, as it would prepare them for their lives and future jobs. As a result, it was even promoted by international organizations, such as the United Nations or UNESCO (Scolari 8).

Nevertheless, technology has started to pervade every aspect of life in the last decades, and so it has become part of the culture of each society. Not only is it present in everyday activities, but it also interacts with its users asking them to adopt a more and more active role. Different authors refer to this situation as Technoculture, and define it as a constant interaction between media, culture, and technology (Sangüesa 2).

Such transformations in society necessarily involved a view change as regards mass media and literacy. Nowadays, the media are no longer seen as information transmitters. Instead, they are deemed as spheres where conflict resolution and problem solving take place, and as virtual environments where personal ideas are expressed and collective identities are built (Scolari 2).

The youth are now users of new social media. This means they participate in a media ecology that is mainly distinguished by convergence (Comba, Toledo, Carreras, Casal, Duyos y Stra. 43). On one side, new social media are characterized by the co-existence of traditional and new media as, for instance, newspapers can be read on social networks. Also, mass-media and self-media converge in this media ecology as it is possible to find pieces of news written by professional journalists and the comments by ordinary users, too (Comba et al. 43). Consequently, new social media encourage the audience to create and share their own content across the web.

Nowadays, users need new competences to understand and interpret new kinds of genres and hyper-textual texts, create their own content, recombine their productions and share them on the internet. Today's audiences are even asked to develop the ability to surf the net, creating an online identity and participating in virtual communities.

Therefore, the traditional media consumer is no longer passive, but has an active role. The audience does not act as mere consumers any more, but they are becoming prosumers, i.e. both consumers and producers, instead. (Comba et al. 45)

As stated above, these transformations have also paved the way for the emergence of new perspectives on literacy. In the last years, multiple concepts have been placed under the umbrella term "new literacies" (Scolari 6). Even though they differ in some points, all of them have something in common: they suggest the need to foster the development of new skills and competences that go beyond the ones promoted by media literacy. Of course, this does not mean that abilities like critical interpretation or production of texts have to be left behind, but that they are not the only ones whose development should be pursued.

In this context, the concept of transmedia literacy is born to enrich the idea of media literacy. Transmedia literacy is a model of cultural convergence in which content is part of the audience's daily lives and favours the use of different platforms where many channels offer the same content in a unique and particular way (Ciastellardi and Di Rosario 9; Sergio 3).

Many authors have classified Transmedia literacy skills. Pérez-Latorre, for example, divides them into three categories: cognitive and emotional abilities, transmedia skills, and social skills (2). This paper mainly focuses on the social side of this form of literacy.

Social skills are related to prosumers' interaction on social networks, the virtual exchange of information and their participation in an online community. Today's users take part in collaborative or participatory cultures (Jenkins qtd. in Ciastellardi and Di Rosario 7). According to Jenkins, a participatory culture is

a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing content, and some type of informal mentorship whereby experienced participants pass along knowledge to novices. (qtd. in Ciastellardi and Di Rosario 7).

In addition, in a participatory culture members think their contributions matter and feel some degree of social connection with one another.

In 2006, Jenkins identified four forms of collaborative culture: *association*, *expression*, *collaborative problem solving*, and *circulation* (qtd. in Scolari 7). As for the first one, it has to do with taking part, formally or informally, in an online community or group. Expression is related to producing new content. Some examples of expression is the creation of fanfiction,

a story written by a fan of a TV series, movie or film, or the production of a mashup, which is a musical remix. The third form of collaborative culture, collaborative problem solving, takes place when members of an online group work together towards a common goal in order to complete a task or acquire knowledge. Finally, circulation consists of being part of the media ecology by sharing and distributing the content you create, e.g. by podcasting or writing in blogs.

Considering that such social skills make up transmedia literacy, this form of literacy can be broadly defined as a set of skills, practices, values, exchange and learning strategies developed and used in this collaborative culture (Scolari 8).

Methodology

The aims of this study were to explore the forms of participatory culture in the everyday activities carried out by students in San Juan as well as to identify the existence of skills they might be acquiring because of their interaction with new social media. In addition, this study tried to describe the role today's high school students are adopting as they participate online.

In order to achieve these objectives, a non-experimental design was adopted and a survey was designed and conducted with 25 (twenty-five) 4th year students of a private high school in San Juan.

The survey was divided into 19 (nineteen) sections, which consisted of two or three questions each. At the beginning of every part, students had to provide an answer to the main question and then, to one or two follow-up questions. The vast majority of them only required students to choose options, i.e. they were closed. As for the ones that were open, they aimed at getting to know students opinions or asking them for examples that illustrate their answers.

Data Analysis

First, it can be noticed that most students only make use of social networks.

When it comes to analyzing social skills, it is worth considering the classification made by Jenkins (See Theoretical Framework, paragraph 13). Taking this into account, the predominant form of collaborative culture is, evidently, informal association since students engage in online communities as they use social networks. Most of them reported participating in virtual groups in Whatsapp, Wattpad, Sweek and Amino. Wattpad and Sweek are online communities for readers and writers that encourage them to publish new user-generated stories in different genres. As for Amino, it is a network of communities that offers its users the possibility of joining a wide variety of virtual groups.

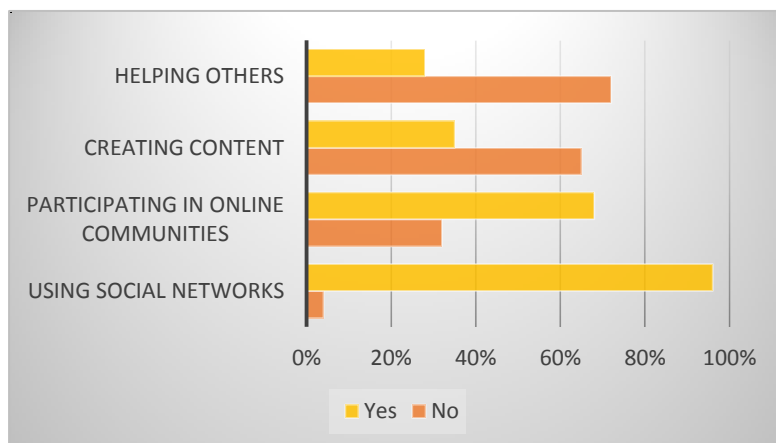


Fig. 1: Online activities

However, when it comes to creating content of their own, only 35% of the students do it. Among the students who answered positively, most of them said that they make memes and almost all of them shared them online with their friends and other online users. In addition, fewer students stated that they write *fanfiction* or that they make *mashups*. All the same, when they were asked if they shared this content, all of them said they did not even do that with their close friends. Therefore, going back to Jenkins' classification, it is possible to say that even though the form of expression is present, as students do create content, the form of circulation hardly ever takes place since most of them do not share their productions.

Finally, participants were asked whether they had ever helped someone online. Most of them answered negatively. Only less than 30% of them stated they have done that. A few of them reported having helped unknown users with their personal problems by giving them advice or with technical problems by explaining to them how to solve an online difficulty. So, it could be claimed that the collaborative problem solving form of participatory culture is almost absent among students in San Juan.

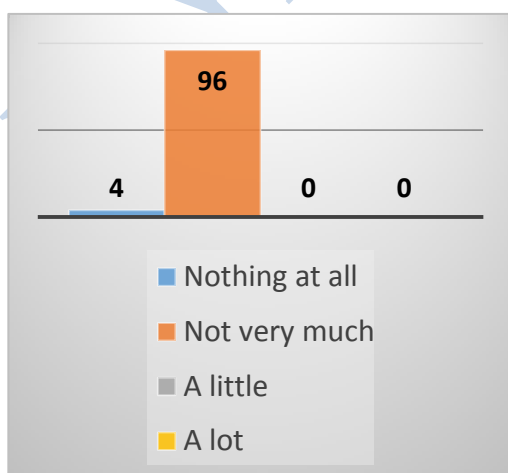


Fig. 2: Do you work with technology at school?

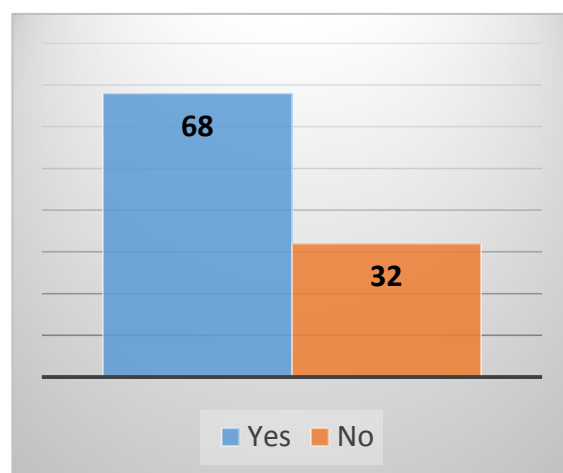


Fig. 3: Would you like to work more with social media and technology at school?

As Figures 2 and 3 show, another question in the survey was “Do you work with technology at school?” Almost all the participants said that they did, but not very much. In addition, when they had to answer if they would like to work more with social media and technology at school, the vast majority answered positively. Among the reasons they gave, they said it is easier for them to find information on the Internet than in books and that it is much more motivating and interesting to work with technology than with books.

Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications

Even though social skills are only one kind of competences among the ones necessary to acquire transmedia literacy, these results are useful to identify the roles that teenagers tend to adopt as they interact with new social media. Considering that most students in San Juan use social networks and participate in online communities, but that they do not create so much content or share it, it could be suggested that they are not pure consumers or prosumers, but they are in a middle position. Consequently, they might be in process of becoming prosumers.

Besides, the data obtained shows that, when it comes to social online skills, most students are still developing them.

What is surprising is that they are picking up these abilities by themselves because the vast majority claimed that they do not use technology so much at school, even though they would like to do so. Perhaps, schools in San Juan still have a traditional view on literacy and are still promoting media literacy by helping students just understand and produce information critically.

Thus, these results invite us to start using new social media and technological devices to foster the development of the skills that are necessary for students to acquire transmedia literacy. Not only will using them be more motivating, but it will also be more meaningful for our students because they will be doing real-life tasks.

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**Workshop: from Enhancement to Transformation - Incorporating ICTS
and Fostering Critical Thinking in the EFL Class.**

Rosario Fabrini
rfabrini19.ffha@gmail.com
E.F.E – San Juan
Eliana Pizarro de la Vega
elipizarrodelavega@gmail.com
ACSJ

Abstract

Technological advancements are made daily in our contemporary world. Our learners are always in the forefront of cutting edge gadgets, incorporating them to their lifestyles and getting the most of them to gain new ideas and knowledge in the topics of their interest. Even though the way our students find new facts has changed, the way they learn at school has not. Most teachers are teaching in the same way as their predecessors and are using the same tools to do so, despite the fact that technological devices have long been overrunning the classrooms.

The following paper focuses on presenting a model that can help EFL teachers to incorporate ICTs with educational purposes. This model will turn useful as it will show how it can adjust itself to different teaching methodologies and foster critical thinking skills.

Key Words: ICTSs- SAMR Model- EFL- Critical Thinking Skills

Introduction

Technological advancements are made daily in our contemporary world. Our learners are always in the forefront of cutting edge gadgets, incorporating them to their lifestyles and getting the most of them to gain new ideas and knowledge in the topics of their interest. Nevertheless, our learners still learn in the same way at school as we did ten, twenty or thirty years ago. What is more, we teachers continue to teach in much the same way our predecessors did and are using the same tools to do so, despite the fact that technological devices have long been overrunning the classrooms.

In this workshop, we will introduce a framework that may help language instructors to include ICTs in their classrooms. This model will turn useful as it will show how it can foster critical thinking skills in the EFL class.

The SAMR model: redefining the ways we work with TICs

Professor Ruben Puentedura developed the SAMR model while working as a Harvard undergraduate student for the Maine Learning Technologies Initiative, which sought to “encourage educators to significantly enhance the quality of education provided via technology in the state of Maine” (Romrer, Kidell and Wood 4). Eventually, and after years of

research, Puentedura discovered that this model provided a theoretical basis to help teachers reflect on the ways ICTs have a direct impact on the learning process overall.

The SAMR model consists of four levels of technological use placed on a scale “ranging from substitution at the lowest level to redefinition at the highest level” (Chell and Dowling 3). In this workshop we are particularly interested in seeing how this model can help us reflect on our daily practice, focusing especially at the different stages we incorporate technology and for which purposes.

The SAMR model goes as follows:

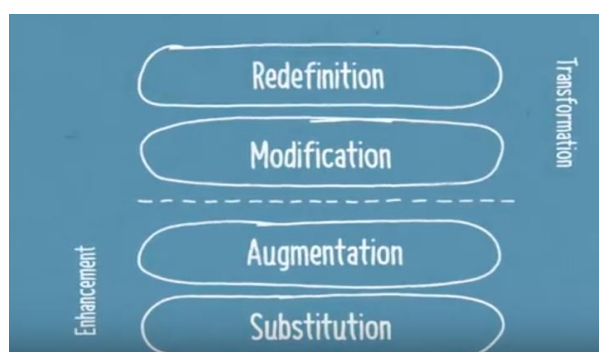


Fig. 1. The SARM Model by Puentedura in Chell and Dowling 3

- **Substitution:** in this stage ICTs are used as a replacement for standard classroom tools, like the board, a textbook, a notebook and so on. In other words, technology is used to perform the same tasks as before but with no significant functional improvement. For instance, a PowerPoint presentation is used instead of a poster, but no significant change is made in the class.

- **Augmentation:** here, technology is still used as a substitute tool; however, there is some functional improvement, i.e. as regards the task process and how the technological device helps to accomplish this. For example, a Word, processed piece of writing is asked, instead of a student's handwritten draft. Again, no major changes.

In these first two levels there is a core goal of “enhancing the practice”, making the learning process a bit more innovative by introducing ICTs across the curriculum (Puentedura qtd. in Chell and Dowling 3-4).

- **Modification:** in this case, there is a significant task redesign mediated by technologies. The difference between this stage and the previous one relies on whether teachers reproduce what they have tried before or if there is a significant modification in the task “while keeping the heart of it” (Puentedura *How to apply...* 02:54-03:11). Let's go back to the example of the writing task. This task could be framed in this stage if the teacher creates

a blog and asks their learners to write the text on that platform, so as to post it and then share it within the classroom community (and maybe beyond).

- **Redefinition:** this last part of the model has to do with how learners solve and can create new tasks only conceivable through the use of ICTs. In this stage especially, the learning process is mediated by the social interaction that takes part in the task, which allows learners to develop their thinking and problem-solving skills while fostering collaboration. The last two stages of the SAMR model can be placed within the transformation process because it is through technology that tasks assigned can be carried out and then learning takes place.

It is obvious that educational and economic resources are needed to carry out this model efficiently. What's more, if instructors seek to innovate with SAMR, it can take more than one year for technology to change and redefine both, the way students learn, and the way educators teach (Puentedura qtd. in Chell and Dowling 9-10). Nevertheless, we still believe that the effort is worth it. After all, the way learners have changed and transformation in teaching models is in order to "prepare students for the challenges of the 21st century workplace" (Chell and Dowling 4).

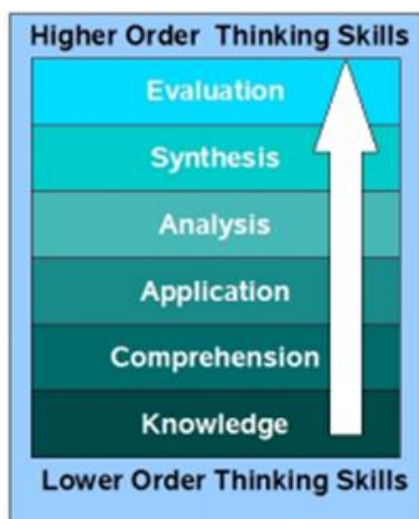
Bloom's Taxonomy: developing students' critical thinking

Whenever teachers design activities with the assistance of new technologies, it is important to explore the ways in which these innovative tools can aid in cognitive processing. According to Salomon, Perkins and Globerson *computer technologies*, mainly, can support intellectual performance and enrich individuals' minds (2). In this sense, it is important that teachers identify the "educational objectives" of a specific course or curriculum, as it will give them a good overview of what students actually learn as result of instruction (Krathwohl 5).

During the 1950's, Benjamin Bloom, a distinguished American educational psychologist, developed a framework for classifying the most important thinking behaviors present in the processes of learning. Initially, the framework became a taxonomy of three domains

- Cognitive: knowledge or mental skills based domain
- Affective: Attitude based domain (feelings or emotional areas)
- Psychomotor: skills based domain (physical skills) (Churches 1-3) [our translation]:

Focusing especially on the cognitive domain, Bloom developed a taxonomy -often referred to as "Bloom's Original Taxonomy"-, consisting of six cognitive levels in which thinking skills were classified: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation (Krathwohl 212).



This taxonomy resulted particularly interesting for teachers as they usually encouraged students to *climb* to higher levels of thought, i.e. from lower order thinking skills to higher order thinking skills, as shown in picture 2. So, for example, if a student is *functioning* in at the ‘Analysis’ level, it means he has already mastered concepts of the previous levels (Churches 1-2) [our translation].

Fig.2 Bloom’s Taxonomy (Churches 2) [our translation].

Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy

During the 1990’s, Anderson and Krathwohl revised the original taxonomy and, in 2001, they published ‘Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy’. The revision involved changes in terminology, in the arrangement of the cognitive levels and more importantly, it involved some structural changes. While Bloom’s original taxonomy was a one-dimension form, the Revised Taxonomy involved two dimensions (Krathwohl 213)

- The Knowledge Dimension: it refers to the nature of the knowledge to be learned, and it is composed of four levels: Factual, Conceptual, Procedural and Meta-Cognitive.
- The Cognitive Process Dimension: it refers to the processes used to learn and it is composed of six levels, as shown in Fig. 3:

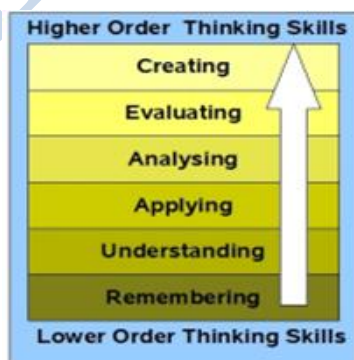


Fig 3: Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy (Churches 2) [our translation]

According to Churches, although categories in the Revised Taxonomy are arranged in a hierarchical structure, they are not as rigid as the original one. By using this taxonomy, teachers are not only able to “classify objectives, activities and assessments” so as to have a

clear representation of the course of their lesson plannings, but they also have the opportunity to improve them (2) [our translation].

In other words, the elements in each category cover most of the objectives we set in our teaching practices.

SAMR and Critical Thinking: what's with the EFL Class?

Puentedura has stated that the SAMR model cannot and should not be necessarily looked as it is, in isolation. This model constitutes a framework that teachers can use to analyze and explain the sort of tasks which the former and learners should design in order to incorporate technologies so as to improve educational. Therefore, if we look at SAMR accompanied by another theoretical basis, we can come to realize that there are even more specific paths to achieve our learning goals in the EFL context (*The Impact* 05:21-7:38).

We will now turn our attention onto how the revised Bloom taxonomy and the SAMR model can enhance critical thinking in our lessons.

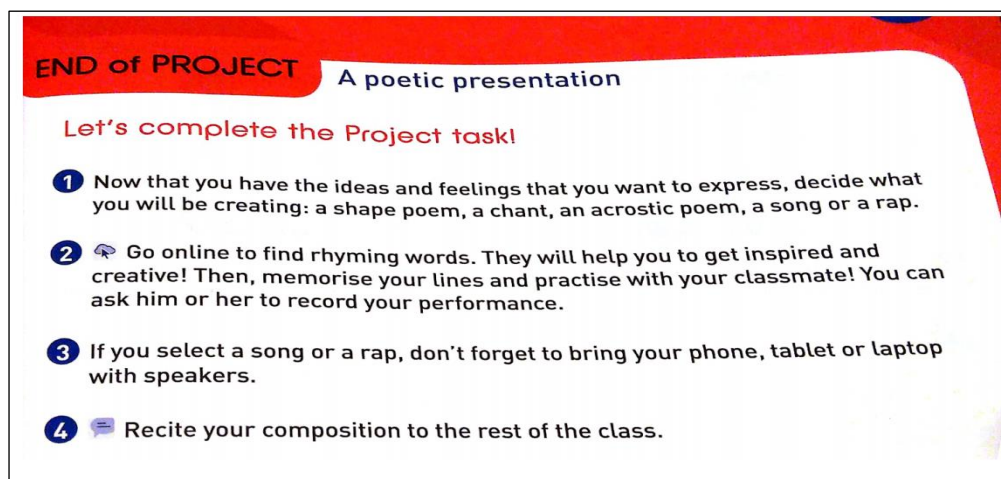
Let's look at the following tasks from a popular course book and see how the authors seek to improve or enhance technological use and thinking skills:

Let's create a survey!

You will be creating a survey about your spare time activities using an online survey platform.



Look for tips on how to build your project on p. 45. You will complete the project on p. 47.

This activity could be considered to be in the "augmentation" level because a new tool (the online platform) is being used to replace a more traditional one (a word processor, for instance) in order to add some functional improvement that makes the task process easier. However, there is no methodological improvement as the effect in learning process does not change substantially. As a consequence, learners will only develop LOTS (lower order thinking skills) like making lists, recognizing and retrieving lexis from their memory system, classifying and summarizing.

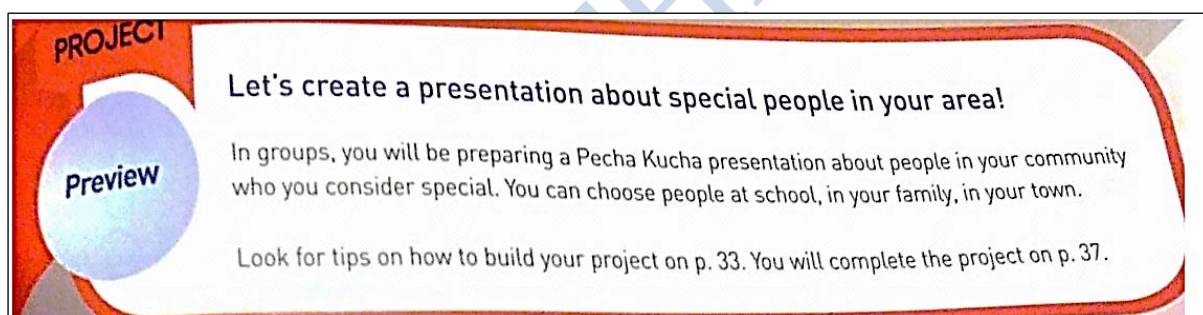


END of PROJECT A poetic presentation

Let's complete the Project task!

- 1 Now that you have the ideas and feelings that you want to express, decide what you will be creating: a shape poem, a chant, an acrostic poem, a song or a rap.
- 2  Go online to find rhyming words. They will help you to get inspired and creative! Then, memorise your lines and practise with your classmate! You can ask him or her to record your performance.
- 3 If you select a song or a rap, don't forget to bring your phone, tablet or laptop with speakers.
- 4  Recite your composition to the rest of the class.

In this sequence of activities, only the second one seems to require the use of a technological device. What's more, it could be set within the substitution stage because there is simply a technological replacement which does not imply any functional or methodological change. This task requires, like the previous example, no major critical thinking skills simply because learners are expected to apply the discourse content by using a different ICT tool to record their voices.



PROJECT

Preview

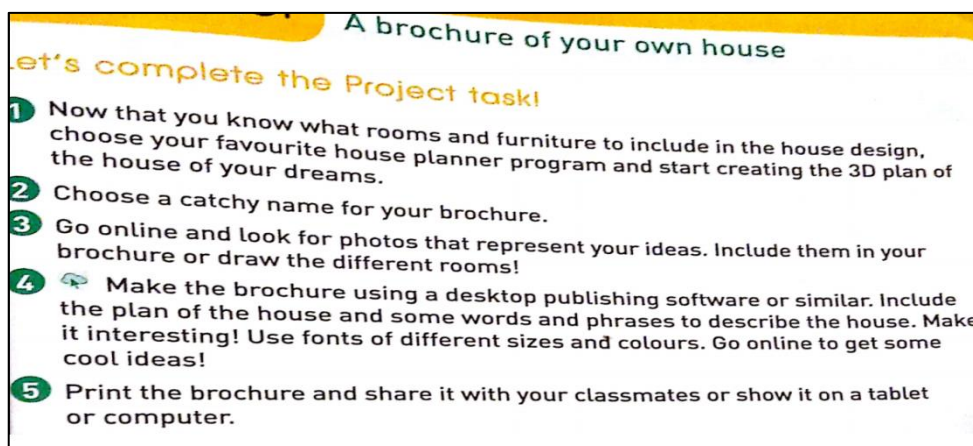
Let's create a presentation about special people in your area!

In groups, you will be preparing a Pecha Kucha presentation about people in your community who you consider special. You can choose people at school, in your family, in your town.

Look for tips on how to build your project on p. 33. You will complete the project on p. 37.

This task could be placed within the modification level in the SAMR model. Here, we can identify a methodological change that entails a redesign of the task by means of technology. Therefore, significant improvement in learner performance could be pointed out since students are not only required to remember the contents from the unit but to analyze, organize, evaluate and revise whatever they will include in their presentations.

NOTE: PechaKucha is a storytelling format, where a presenter shows 20 slides for 20 seconds of commentary each (6 minutes and 40 seconds total) (pekachuka.com).



This project could be considered as an example of the redefinition stage. Here, learners could be asked to collaboratively complete the task process in real time and by adding multimedia elements created by themselves. The key of thinking a task that fits redefinition is that it cannot be conceived without the use of the available technology (Puentedura *Spark* 00:00- 09:02). Because students are involved in new learning settings and possibilities, higher order thinking skills are necessary. In this case, they are required to create, design, plan, revise, choose and organize the content they will include in their project.

SAMR and Critical Thinking: a path for revising our lessons.

When we asked instructors attending our presentation about the amount of use of ICTs in their lessons, most of them stated that they try to include them as much as possible, though they may find some bumps along the road as regards the availability of ICT resources and internet connection in their classrooms

The second question we asked them required teachers to reflect on their placement levels within the SAMR model. They considered their practices were in the Augmentation level. As we stated before, this level entails EFL practitioners using ICTs as a substitute tool but making some functional improvements in task proposals. However, they recognized the importance of attaining the highest level of the SAMR model, redefinition, in order to enhance higher order thinking skills through the use of technology.

The third and the last questions requested teachers to consider the types of critical thinking skills (according to Bloom's and Krathwohl's taxonomies) they foster in their classrooms. The majority of our colleagues said that they ask students to resort to lower order thinking skills (*understanding, remembering, analyzing and applying*) in their lessons; nevertheless, most of them agreed on the need to upgrade the planning of their courses in order to make their students achieve higher order thinking skills.

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**PAPERS BY
STUDENTS**

A Multimodal Lens on Texts

Aldo Prado
aldoprado_@hotmail.com
María Sol Gardiol
solgardiol@gmail.com
DLYLI-FFHA, UNSJ

Abstract

The purpose of this presentation is to discuss the potential of a multimodal approach to class design, both from a historical and modern-day perspective. Our conception of multimodality is based on the Systemic Functional Linguistics framework, which focuses on verbal and non-verbal language as a meaning-making tool. From a historical perspective, we will discuss the transformation of language teaching materials that the growth of multimodal resources has given rise to. From a modern practical perspective, we will illustrate how a multimodal lens can enrich text interpretation and will introduce a number of technological resources that teachers of English can use in their classes to promote a multimodal view of language.

Key words: Multimodality – SFL - ICT

Introduction

For a number of years now, the notion of Multimodality² has become a central area of interest in the world of education. The field of foreign and second language teaching has embraced this notion and has incorporated a multiplicity of multimodal resources into teaching materials and methods. In line with these developments, we will explore the potential of a multimodal approach to class design. We will do this following two perspectives: a historical perspective and a modern-day perspective. The former is associated to past time multimodal texts, while the latter is associated to present time multimodal texts.

Systemic Functional Linguistics and Multimodality

We decided to follow a Systemic Functional Linguistic Framework in order to study the meaning potential of verbal and nonverbal language. This Framework conceives language as a resource to create meanings in order to achieve communicative purposes. In its study of meaning making, it puts special emphasis on language in its context of use, i.e., on meaning as something that you do in that context (Egins 2). This focus on the creation of meaning allows us to move beyond the traditional view of communication (in which verbal language is seen as the only way of creating meaning), to a Multimodal approach to communication (in

² This paper was developed within the framework of the research project named “Dimensiones socio-histórica culturales de la Lingüística Sistemico Funcional e implicancias pedagógicas en la enseñanza-aprendizaje de ILE”, which is being carried out in Facultad de Filosofía, Humanidades y Artes at Universidad Nacional de San Juan.

which nonverbal and verbal language are studied as meaning making tools) (Kress 2009, 2010, 2012; Bezemer 2011, 2012, 2016).

Multimodality

With every new technological development in the field of Information and Communication Technologies our notions and practices of communication are challenged and eventually reconfigured to fit new ways of making meaning. These constant changes imply a need for the study of visual marks, such as colour, space, images, as well as other modes of representation (Jewitt 315).

This need gave birth to the development of a **Multimodal approach** to communication. Bezemer defines it as “an inter-disciplinary approach that understands communication and representation to be more than about language”. A multimodal approach studies the creation of meaning in all modes, by analysing all the resources that people use to make meaning (Bezemer et al. 1). This approach conceives communication as consisting of a multiplicity of modes together with cultural aspects inherent to the moment of history in which the message is embedded (Bollati 4).

Multimodality assumes that the resources that people use to create meaning are shaped over time to meet people’s communicative demands. Within this approach, these resources are described and organized in sets which have been referred to as **Modes**. Bezemer defines modes as sets of semiotic resources that share a cultural sense within a society that uses them to create meaning.

The Three Principles of Multimodality

It is important to point out that there are three general principles that are basic to take on a multimodal approach (Bollati 4). The first principle we are going to develop refers to the fact that all texts draw on a multiplicity of modes to create meaning. We can exemplify this principle by comparing English as a second language coursebooks published in the ‘60s with those brought out in the last years. When we look at the cover of an old book, we can see that the most significant mode present is the written language. For instance, if we are looking for specific information about the book on its cover, we would be forced to rely on the written mode almost exclusively, i. e. to the words written on it. On the other hand, if we look at the cover of a relatively new book, we would not only resort to the written mode but also to the pictures, symbols, colours, among other modes that might have been chosen by the authors to convey meaning.

A second principle that underlies multimodality is that of modes being socially shaped through time, which means that they change through time according to the communicative

needs and the resources available in the society in which they are used at a specific moment (Bollati, 4). The change of language through time is being studied within the SFL framework as a dimension of language called semogenesis. This principle can be illustrated by referring to the evolution of messagery. In the past, letters were a means of communication for people who were far away from each other. People would try to convey as much information as possible in each letter because they knew it took time to reach the other person and then to receive a reply. Letters also had a certain format as regards the layout and organization of ideas. But people's need for faster communication was satisfied with the invention of the email, in which the same modes we analysed in the letter –layout and organization of ideas– seemed to change up to some degree due to the fact that we expected a faster, if not, immediate answer. However, due to the creation of faster and easier ways of communication, the use of emails has changed. The newest and most popular example of messaging service we will refer to is WhatsApp. Again, our need for smarter communication led to the creation of mobile phones and social media Apps, and to the change of the orchestration of modes- in WhatsApp the use of images and emojis is almost a requirement and they are as important as, or even more important than, the written mode in many cases. What are the advantages of using different modes then?

This question can be answered by referring to the third principle of multimodality, and to the concept of modal affordance (Nelson). As we said, people use many modes at the same time to create meanings they need to convey. Modes are important because each mode has been designed to convey a particular meaning or type of meaning. According to the concept of modal affordance, some modes are better at communicating certain ideas than others. So, according to the third principle, the use of modes depends on the semiotic decisions we make considering our message and its purpose.

We will now illustrate the third principle by referring to music videos. Nowadays it is a must for songs to have a music video which in most cases complements the meaning of the song. What we found most interesting were the music videos which did not only complement the song but changed its meaning. We analysed the song "Cae el sol" by Airbag (an Argentinean rock band). If we only hear the song, we identify it as a romantic song because of its lyrics. The importance of the selection of modes becomes extremely relevant when we also watch the music video. This song actually talks about sex trafficking. So, when we watch the video we automatically re-signify the meaning of the lyrics according to what we can see in the video. The authors use different modes to convey different meanings because we can use modes to do different things, considering the possibilities they provide us with.

Multimodality and ICTs

The invention of ICTs implied a shift in the way we communicate and it is directly relevant to the notion of Multimodality and its use in the EFL classroom.

The term ICT, Information and Communication Technology, is generally accepted to mean “all devices, components and systems that combined allow people to interact in the digital world” (Rouse). The use of technology in communication has implied broad shifts in society, as individuals are moving from personal, face-to-face interactions, to ones in the digital space. These interactions can take the form of different texts. We will refer to each type of text as genres. To be more specific, genres are defined as typical ways in which language is used depending on the purpose and the context (Eggs 54)

When we teach English as a Second Language, we often come across the *review* genre. This type of text is very popular in ESL coursebooks but it has experienced important changes over time. Older books used to depict it as a text written by professional review writers. Nowadays, if we considered the potential places where our students would need to read or write a review, we would need to take a look at Google Maps reviews, or the mobile phone App stores. In these Apps, we can read or write some short comments intended to inform future customers or buyers, and we can rate an application. This type of review is a far cry from the traditional review genre.

Our work in class with these types of reviews can start with the analysis of the basic information that goes with every review, i.e. we could ask our students the basic questions: what?, where?, when?, etc. We can find this information at the beginning of any mobile app review. However, our analysis could go further to and include the analysis of other modes, such as the use of icons which also give us information. Icons can show us the location of a place, working hours, contact information, intended audience, among other relevant data.

In every ICT review we can also find pictures of the place, game, item, etc. that we are interested in. We could ask our students to make a choice based on the information conveyed through the images.

Another multimodal element in reviews is the use of graphs which give us information about general trends. We could ask our students to analyse the graphs and draw some conclusions taking into account this information.

Finally, every ICT review will include the use of rating stars (in general from 1 to 5) and comments. Stars are a way of measuring the quality of the service and sometimes of the products. We could ask our students to compare items based on their ratings and number of

positive and negative comments. Comments in these Apps are usually shorter than the ones portrayed in course books, but they give us the opportunity to work with original texts, written with a clear communicative purpose.

Conclusion

Modes have emerged over time due to our need as humans to express ourselves. In the past, due to a lack of technologies, we would limit ourselves to the use of certain modes such as the written mode, but with the emergence of new modes of communication, we can use a wider multiplicity of modes so to as communicate more effectively. Considering this present situation we think that we should use a multimodal approach in our English as a second language classes through the use of ICTs to bring the real world into the classroom.

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The role of EFL syllabuses at secondary school

Gabriela Martin
gabrielamartincm@gmail.com
DLYLI-FFHA, UNSJ

Abstract

This paper has been developed as part of an EVC-CIN research project named “El enfoque funcional en una institución de educación secundaria de San Juan”, which explores whether the syllabuses designed by EFL teachers in a public secondary school of San Juan contain explicit or implicit references to a functional approach to language teaching/learning. Based on the context-centered communicative view of language promoted by SFL, advocated by many current approaches to the teaching of EFL/ESL, we seek to illustrate the actual role of syllabuses in real educational contexts and the impact they can have on the meaningfulness of the teaching-learning process.

Key words: functional approach – SFL - syllabuses

Introduction

Teaching is a complex activity which includes more complex responsibilities than giving a lesson. Teachers are expected to prepare and hand in different documents, prepare tests, communicate discipline rules and control students' behavior, participate in institutional meetings, organize and carry out special celebrations, among other tasks. Among the several responsibilities teachers need to fulfill, planning is usually considered as a central one.

Syllabus planning has a very important role in teacher training programs (TTP). It is usually taught as one of the most important aspects of teaching and, during the last year of the TTP, teacher-learners are expected to create quasi-professional curriculums for their practices, to follow them to the letter and to explain the theories that lie behind them.

However, in real educational contexts, sometimes syllabus planning becomes one more bureaucratic task, and, instead of being considered as a crucial tool for class development, it is just another responsibility of the job, and sometimes it is even considered meaningless.

This paper seeks to illustrate the actual role of syllabuses in real educational contexts. It shows the first steps of the investigation project called “El enfoque funcional en una institución secundaria de San Juan”, which aims at analyzing the focus on form or on meaning of public secondary school's syllabuses. In particular, we have analyzed the syllabuses of English as a Foreign Language in a public secondary school of San Juan.

Theoretical background

This paper follows the view of language proposed by Systemic Functional Linguistics which, according to Eggins, is a “functional-semantic approach” that understands language as a

system of human communication and seeks to explain the relationship between grammatical form and function (3).

Following this rationale, we can say that SFL considers language as a resource by which people create meaning. Eggins argues that speakers use language to communicate with others by making meaningful choices (a semiotic process). Through their linguistic choices, speakers fulfill purposes which are inescapably influenced by the socio-cultural context in which meanings are created (3).

One of the notions developed by SFL is that of semogenesis which describes the relation between language and time. Halliday and Matthiessen claim that Semogenesis is concerned with the ways meanings unfold over time and it has three timescales to model socio-semiotic change, namely, logogenesis, ontogenesis and phylogenesis. *Logogenesis* refers to short timeframes such as the unfolding of a text; *ontogenesis* refers to longer timeframes such as the development of language in the individual, while *phylogenesis* refers to extended time-periods such as the evolution of language in a culture (17).

These timescales presented by Halliday in connection with language and time can be related to the teaching process. Following Martin's perspective, syllabus planning could be oriented to phylogenesis because it includes revisions of state curricula and pedagogy based on socio-cultural and, therefore, educational language changes (125). Explicit teaching can be associated with ontogenesis: according to Vigotsky's scaffolding theory, the student develops its language with the help of others –classmates or teachers. Finally, consultations or revisions with students can be related to the logogenetic frame. The editing process always involves teachers' or classmates' interventions which involve support at the logogenetic level.

The basics of syllabus

The notion of syllabus is taken from Steiman's conception. Steiman considers a syllabus to be a hypothetical work plan, a tool with pedagogical purposes. In this work plan, teachers make previsions, decisions and conditions explicit for their didactic practices and specify the agreements established between students and the institution (3). Therefore, syllabus construction involves planning educational situations ahead, their process and their outcome.

The decisions and conditions teachers need to make when planning a syllabus are divided into four steps: who will be taught, what will be taught, how it will be taught, and how what is learned will be evaluated (Graves 115). It is important to clarify that every decision a teacher makes will be based on his/her view of language.

The first decision *-who will be taught-* involves the gathering of information about the learners who will experience the syllabus: who they are, their previous knowledge about the subject –

conceptual and practical – their expectations, their contexts, and everything the teacher considers of importance for the construction of the syllabus. This also includes what the learners should know as a result of the educational experience.

When considering *what will be taught*, teachers are making one of the strongest decisions of all, Steiman says (23). The contents represent the main pillar of the syllabus; they are the first things to be considered in teacher's minds and they are directly linked to the goals of the program.

Once teachers decide on the contents, it is time to define *how these contents will be taught*, meaning that teachers will make decisions about the institutional practices through which the learners will be taught (Graves 115). According to Steiman, for these decisions it is necessary to take into account the discipline we are teaching, the specific pedagogical strategies used for it and the sociocultural context of the classroom. This is so, Steiman claims, because there is not a unique model (35). Here it is important to include the organization of the contents and the sequencing of potential activities.

Finally, syllabus planning involves the definition of strategies to evaluate the effectiveness of the program, that is, how well learners were able to achieve the planned goals.

Syllabus planning and educational policies

Syllabus planning does not only depend on teachers' decisions. According to Cordoba, they are based on three different elements: institutional, personal and professional duty, stated objectives and available resources. The first two elements are also based on psycho pedagogical theories, socio-critical theories and educational policies (25).

In Argentina, there is a whole institutional system aimed at unifying contents and processes. The system includes "Contenidos Básicos Comunes" (CBCs) and "Núcleos de Aprendizaje Prioritarios" (NAPs). Decisions taken by the Ministerio de Educación de la Nación and provinces' representatives are stated in the CBCs and NAPs. CBCs include the different declarative and procedural contents that should be taught in each educational level. It was based on the CBCs that NAPs were created, and they were intended to reduce the number of topics and to focus on the most important and meaningful contents.

These documents function as pillars in the construction of regional syllabus designs (RCD) (*diseños curriculares provinciales*). Each province decides which contents will be taught in its schools and states these decisions on RCDs. Then, teachers design a syllabus for each of their classes, taking into account the contents of RCD.

Nowadays, this system is changing. There is a new federal education policy called "Secondary School 2030". Here, the choice of declarative contents depends on the

capacities and life projects we want our students to achieve. Therefore, syllabus planning today should follow this new policy and teachers need to select the different declarative and procedural contents taking into account six competences, considered to be “Skills for the Future” by the Ministerio de Educación de la Nación.

The value of syllabus planning

Syllabus planning seems to be an indivisible part of teaching that carries great importance. According to Steiman, the value of the syllabus can be analyzed from three different perspectives: the teacher’s perspective, the students’ perspective and the institution’s perspective (4).

From the teacher’s perspective, the syllabus is useful in terms of class and content organization, avoidance of improvisations and incoherencies, better communication with colleagues and students and self-evaluation (Steiman 4).

In terms of organization, the syllabus helps teachers relate topics and rationally articulate the various components of the teaching experience. At the same time, this organizational function helps teachers avoid unplanned lessons which then may result in meaningless work. With respect to communication, it mainly facilitates the academic exchange between colleagues, who can thus learn about each other’s teaching proposal and inner visions of their work, and between teacher and student, providing them with dates and necessary requirements to pass the subject.

The syllabus also has a significant role in the analysis and evaluation of teachers’ own practice. Re-reading the syllabus helps teachers reflect on their decisions and actions and change them, if necessary, to improve their teaching.

For students, the syllabus has a different value. It is useful for organizing their tasks and their time, noting down evaluation dates and requirements, as well as the teacher’s expectations, having a list of useful bibliography to look for more detailed information about a particular topic, and having all the conditions of the class in black and white to avoid surprises (Steiman 4).

When considering the value of the syllabus for the institution, we mostly think about the institution’s possibility of supervising activities, but it can also be useful for other purposes such as exploring the absence or repetition of contents, methodology or evaluation techniques, verifying the performance of the planned activities and having a tool for evaluating academic quality (Steiman 5).

Therefore, theoretically speaking, syllabus planning provides teachers, students and institutions with certain benefits, which makes it a tool of great value for the three main actors of the teaching-learning process.

Methodology

In an attempt to analyze the role given to syllabuses in public secondary schools, we have decided to explore the syllabuses of English as a Foreign Language in 4th, 5th and 6th year of a public secondary school of San Juan. The classes analyzed are six in total, divided into two orientations: Business and Administration and Social Sciences and Humanities.

Our hypothesis states that syllabuses in public secondary schools in San Juan come to be separated from the teaching practice. In order to confirm the hypothesis, we decided to use two different research strategies. First, we compared and contrasted the syllabuses of English of the analyzed classes with the different evaluations the teachers used during the first term. Then we carried out unstructured interviews with the English teachers of those classes.

The criteria followed when comparing syllabuses with assessment strategies were:

- Agreement between stated conceptual-procedural contents and assessed contents-processes.
- Agreement between stated assessment strategies and actual practices.
- Agreement between stated view of language and the view of language underlying evaluations.

We also took into account whether the syllabus was original, i.e. the teacher's own creation, or whether it was reproduced on the basis of other syllabuses available at the institution..

Analysis and results

The analysis showed the following results:

Stated contents – evaluated contents

Four out of six syllabuses did not show agreement between the conceptual-procedural contents stated and those evaluated.



Fig.1. Contents (green: poor/no correspondence / Black: correspondence)

In these four syllabuses the conceptual contents did not totally concord with the ones assessed in the analyzed evaluations. In most cases (3 out of 4) this deficiency was related to the absence of a particular topic such as time expressions, connectors or adverbs but two of the four syllabuses showed no connection to contents in the syllabus whatsoever. As an example, we can mention a case in which the Simple Past was proposed as a content in the syllabus but the Simple Future tense (“will”) was evaluated.

As regards procedural contents, there was a recurrent discrepancy between the syllabus and the evaluation: the syllabuses stated that the four skills were to be taught but the evaluations showed that only reading comprehension and grammar were taken into account, leaving aside oral and written production.

Stated assessment strategies – Actual assessment strategies

Half of the analyzed syllabuses did not show correspondence between the assessment strategies stated on the syllabus and the strategies teachers actually followed during their lessons.



Fig.2. Strategy assessment (orange: poor/no correspondence / Black: correspondence)

All the syllabuses included formative tests (*trabajos prácticos* in Spanish) and speaking tests as assessment strategies. Formative tests usually involve pair or team work and the use of helping notes or notebooks. However, only in three cases were the assessment strategies followed as they were proposed in the corresponding syllabuses: teachers assessed students' skills through projects or tasks which usually involved pair work and the use of ICTs.

The remaining three syllabuses had summative tests as their main assessment strategy but the interviews showed that the strategy used consisted of formative tests. In other words, these teachers wanted to assess their students' skills through summative tests, following a traditional approach, but, in the end, they asked their students to work at home and in groups or pairs in different tasks. The interviewed teachers justified this situation through time constraints.

View of language

In five cases, a mismatch was observed between the view of language stated in the syllabus and the view of language underlying evaluations.



Fig 3. View of language (Red: no correspondence / Black: correspondence)

The six syllabuses state that language is a tool for communication and put emphasis on meaning and free production in different contexts. However, the evaluations do not show this perspective but a view of language seen -exclusively as form.

Reproductions

Regarding authorship, we found that five of the six analyzed syllabi were partial or total reproductions.



Fig. 4. Reproduction (Blue: partial/total reproduction/ Black: original production)

This happened mainly in the first part of the syllabus which includes a justification, a diagnosis, objectives and resources. The syllabuses also had the same format. Some of them (2 out of 6) had the same contents with few adjustments.

In general terms, the analysis reveals that there is a predominant discrepancy between what is stated in the syllabuses and what actually happens in the classroom. This discrepancy may show that teachers do not really consider syllabus planning as a valuable resource for their lessons or as a meaningful decision-making process. Instead, syllabuses seem to be considered a bureaucratic responsibility. The results of this analysis seem to confirm our hypothesis that syllabuses in public secondary schools in San Juan are quite separated from the teaching practice.

Conclusion

This paper has presented the first steps in this research process exploring the actual role of syllabuses in real educational contexts. After analyzing the syllabuses of English as a Foreign Language of a public secondary school of San Juan following different criteria, we

can affirm that syllabuses are quite separated from the teaching practice. Syllabuses are often considered a bureaucratic responsibility that comes together with the teaching job but without much practical value in many situations. This means that planning a syllabus is reduced to a required task teachers complete year after year to fulfill a responsibility and not a meaningful decision-making process which will affect the whole teaching-learning experience.

Undoubtedly, this is a worrying situation which requires immediate attention, not only at an institutional but also at a personal level. Awareness of this problem can be a first step towards redefining the approach to syllabus planning in TTPs and in actual teaching contexts.

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**The More the Proverbs, the Merrier the Writing:
Some Pedagogical Suggestions on How to Use Proverbs to Teach Writing**

Fernando Pereyra
ferpereyra2912@gmail.com
DLYLI-FFHA, UNSJ

Abstract

This paper aims at providing EFL teachers with practical techniques so as to be able to fully exploit proverbs in their language lessons, especially when teaching writing. It firstly presents the appropriate conceptual scaffolding which is necessary for EFL teachers to understand what is meant by “using proverbs to teach writing”, and subsequently offers some pedagogical suggestions on how to use proverbs in the writing class.

Key words: proverbs – writing - suggestions

Introduction: “A good beginning makes a good ending”

Proverbs are part and parcel of every language. Every language user has at least once heard, read and even used one popular saying that goes around his/her speech community and such a phenomenon should not be ignored by teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL).

To firstly understand what is meant by using proverbs to teach writing, some appropriate conceptual scaffolding is necessary. Then, it will be simpler to visualize how to implement practical courses of action in the class.

In this paper, proverbs will first be defined and then they will be analyzed from two different perspectives: cultural and pragmatic. After that, a look at previous research in the field with special emphasis placed on the pedagogical application of proverbs will be in order. Finally, some pedagogical suggestions on how to use proverbs to teach writing will be put forward.

Theoretical Framework:

A. Definition of Proverbs: “If you don’t know how to fly, don’t jump off the cliff”

EFL teachers would take great pains to embark themselves on applying a methodology involving proverbs or fully exploiting them in their language lessons, if they only think of a proverb as its etymological meaning suggests: “words put forward”, from the Old French term “proverb”. However, barely does such a literal definition do any justice to proverbs since they are more than just an utterance delivered at a particular situation.

For such a reason, many authors from different disciplines have attempted to define proverbs. For instance, Meider says a proverb is

a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorable form and which is handed down from generation to generation (qtd. in Dabaghi et al. 1).

In turn, Mollanazar defines a proverb as "a unit of meaning in a specific context through which the speaker and hearer arrive at the same meaning"(qtd. in Dabaghi et al. 1).

Finally, Norrick characterizes a proverb as

a traditional, conversational, didactic genre with general meaning, a potential free conversational turn, preferably with figurative meaning. (qtd. in Dabaghi et al. 1).

Proverbs can also be defined by themselves. As they are ingrained in every language, and therefore in the culture of a particular speech community, each culture defines them differently. Thus, while a proverb "*is to speech what salt is to food*" to the Arabs, or "*the wisdom of the ages*" to the German, the English may think of them as "*the children of experience*" (Bartleby).

However ingrained in culture, how are proverbs coined? According to Nkosi (101), their origins can be explained by dividing them in two groups: those coined prior to the era of writing and those created a posteriori. The former do not often indicate the source on which they draw because many of them have been transferred by word of mouth. The latter consist either of natural phrases which became accepted and widespread in a language community; or of phrases and sentences borrowed from narratives.

In short, and blending the definitions above in one, proverbs may be defined holistically as a semantic unit in the form of a sentence or phrase which serves various purposes in different communicative situations taking place within a language community. Their meanings vary depending on the particular culture in which they are coined.

B. Cultural Aspect of Proverbs: "*As the country, so the proverb*" (German Proverb)

As the German say, every culture can be characterized in terms of the proverbs that its members use in their daily life. It is not the case that proverbs are just set phrases which are put forward randomly within a particular communicative situation. On the contrary, Wolfgang points out that

proverbs are useful guideposts based on a multitude of experiences and observations that are part of everyday life in the family, the workplace, business and any form of human exchange (qtd. in Nkosi 101).

In other words, the members of any culture may preserve their empirical wisdom and own social values for posterity by means of a short-and-sweet expression that is transmitted either by word of mouth or through writing.

In his study “Use of Proverbs and Narrative Thought”, Lauhakangas argues that although they may maintain solidified attitudes or traditional modes of thought of a certain culture, proverbs are multifunctional and flexible instruments of everyday reasoning (80).

Even though proverbs may look as if they were fixed expressions when being heard or seen in black and white, they can be perfectly adapted by each language user to fulfill different purposes in a wide array of situations. In that way, proverbs are made to be broken, too.

The scholar also claims that “the ideas of proverbs are mostly international” (83). This means that sometimes proverbs share the same meaning across different cultures, with that phenomenon being reflected on languages. Consider, for instance, the English proverb: “*When the going gets tough, the tough get going*” and its Spanish version: “*Cuando se pone duro el andar, los duros siguen andando*”. Those proverbs have the same connotation; they only differ in the linguistic resources used by each language to convey such a meaning. Then, they become a very useful tool to make students reflect on how different languages work

According to Lauhakangas, “the speech using proverbs enables interactivity to bring different people closer to each other and it fades away cultural boundaries” (83). Proverbs embody a community’s cultural knowledge and experience, and this is the main reason why they should be used by EFL teachers as a springboard to foster students’ cultural empathy with people from cultures different from theirs.

C. Pragmatic Aspect of Proverbs: “Appearances can be deceiving”

“Proverbs in every culture depend on context for use in communication among the people” (LawalOlarewajuAdesina 3), which means that proverbs need a communicative context against which they must be interpreted.

In the field of Pragmatics, proverbs’ appearances are deceiving, since they are defined by Grice as pragmatic implicatures, that is

terms used to account for what a speaker or writer can imply, suggest, or mean, as distinct from what they literally say or write (qtd. in Lichao 878).

For instance, if at birthday party a father happens to notice that his son does not seem very enthusiastic with a particular present received and comes up with the proverb “*never look a gift horse in the mouth*”, this does not necessarily mean that the gift in question is a horse. But rather, the father is teaching the child to be grateful for every present he is being given.

However, it is worth mentioning that proverbs can serve other purposes in a communicative exchange. Thus, some authors have attempted to specify some functions that a proverb may

fulfill in social interaction, such as “entertain, persuade, advise and teach morals” among others (Owiti et al. 185).

A chart developed by LawalOlarewajuAdesina (Fig. 1) has been adapted to show a correlation between the concepts presented in this section.

Proverb	Context	Implicature	Main function
<i>“Don’t count your chickens before they’re hatched”</i>	“In cases where people would brag, plan, or make other deals before the event actually occurred”. (Urbandictionary).	“Don’t make plans depending on events that may not happen”. (Collins 68).	Advise
<i>“People who live in glass houses shouldn’t throw stones”</i>	When someone is calling people names or sneering at them.	“People should not criticize others for bad qualities in their character that they have themselves” (Cambridge Dictionary)	Teach moral values

Fig.1. Correlation between the implicatures and functions of proverbs: examples

In brief, and in view of the arguments pointed out above, it can be said that “proverbs represent by no means neutral everyday talk” (Lauhakangas 82). On the contrary, they are used to achieve various goals in different communicative contexts taking place within a language community. Furthermore, it is those contexts that determine how they are interpreted. And their pragmatic aspect should not be ignored, either.

Pedagogical Suggestions: How to Use Proverbs to Teach Writing

A. The reason behind this proposal

The second part of this paper aims at providing EFL teachers with a few suggestions on how to use proverbs to teach writing. But before proceeding to that step, it becomes a must to reflect on the reason behind this teaching proposal.

This paper is intended to come up with a solution to both EFL teachers who may not know how to use proverbs to teach language and those who attempt to use proverbs in their lessons, but find it difficult to fully exploit them as a teaching tool.

A recent study carried out in Kenya which showed that many EFL teachers are so unaware of the value of using proverbs in the teaching of grammar that they cannot even think of an example of how proverbs could be used in their lessons (Owiti et. al 191). The findings of this study may allow us to infer that if most EFL teachers do not know how to use proverbs in the teaching of the basic components of the language, then it would be very hard for them to use proverbs to teach such a complex language skill as writing.

B. Previous Research in the Field

Several researchers have already come up with different ideas about how to use proverbs to make the most of a class, whether it be teaching a particular subject -History, for instance-, or different aspects, such as grammar or phonology in a language lesson.

As regards a particular subject such as Chemistry, Ibañez points out that “informal techniques have frequently been used to provide a relaxed atmosphere at various points in chemistry courses” (454). On that account, proverbs can be used as a teaching tool to create the environment in which students may feel motivated to learn the conceptual contents of a subject usually regarded as boring and even off-putting. Ibanez proposes an exercise in which students are asked to match a popular saying or proverb to “its counterpart chemical phenomenon or application” (454). Fig. 2 illustrates the activity designed by this author.

Popular Saying or Proverb	Chemical Phenomenon
Rome wasn't built in a day.	Crystal growth may take years.
A rotten apple can spoil the whole barrel.	Generalized corrosion of a metal usually starts with a small spot that soon spreads over the entire surface.

Fig.2. Matching proverb/saying and chemical phenomenon

Proverbs can always be used as linguistic resources to teach various language components. On that account, Zaid suggests using proverbs as a lead-in activity to teach some linguistic aspects (2). The following paint a partial picture of this author's suggestions:

- Grammar: Teachers can use certain proverbs to teach some grammatical structures. For example: “*Look before you leap*” and “*Don't bite the hand that feeds you*” - for teaching imperatives.
- Phonology: By the same token, proverbs can be used to teach either segmental (consonant and vocalic sounds) or supra-segmental phonological aspects (rhyme). For the first aspect, a teacher could make use of a proverb such as “*Haste makes waste*” – where the emphasis would be placed in the teaching of the diphthong /ei/;

whereas for the second aspect, any proverb that rhymes will be useful, for example: *“When the cat’s away, the mice will play”* - in which now the same sound *-/eɪ/* is performing a major phonological feature.

Moreover, “proverbs can serve as an alternative lead-in activity to start new lessons to keep the students interested in the lesson from the beginning” (Zaid 1). This means that proverbs can be used as teaching tools not only to introduce the teaching of a language component but also to create a relaxed atmosphere in which students feel engaged in their own learning process.

Although the studies mentioned above are not aimed at the teaching of writing, they are paving the way for providing EFL teachers with some insights on how to use proverbs in the teaching of this skill.

C. Pedagogical Proposals for Using Proverbs to Teach Writing:

C. I. Preliminary Considerations:

At this point, it seems relevant to clarify some issues related to the use of proverbs before putting forward any activity involving such use.

Firstly, the proposed activities are not mutually exclusive, but rather, they are designed to support one another by forming part of a systematic sequence, organized according to levels of complexity. Secondly, the activities represent a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching, which means that proverbs can be implemented in every EFL course. Obviously, in such case, activities should be adapted to specific students’ level of proficiency. Finally, the activities are intended to change EFL teachers’ mindset on proverbs and make instructors aware of the value of proverbs as a teaching tool.

C. II. Proposed Activities for Using Proverbs to Teach Writing:

a) Writing Dialogues Using Proverbs from Students’ L1 and English:

- Teachers can hold a brainstorming intercultural session in which they ask students to come up with proverbs used in their L1. L1 proverbs are written on the board, together with their English version –if any- just to make students reflect on both languages’ similarities and differences.
- After that, students can write a short dialogue in their L1 in which they refer to situation where a proverb of their choice could be applied. In such a way, students will become aware of proverbial meanings in their mother tongue.
- Finally, students can be asked to choose one of the English proverbs from the first activity to write a dialogue in which the selected proverb may be used.

b) Writing Proverbial Meanings Inferred in Games: As a warming-up activity, teachers can use proverbs to make their students play different games with a writing task being the subsequent activity.

- A good idea can be to hold a “proverbial contest” between different teams of students. One group has to “draw” a proverb, while the other tries to guess the proverb in question.
- Another option can be to play charades. Students are divided into two teams and the teacher assigns different proverbs to each group. Then, students take turns to act out proverbs while the “opposing” team guesses them.
- After each game, students can be asked to write, in no more than three lines, the meaning of the proverbs which they could not get a grasp of.

c) Writing Titles for Different Genres Using Proverbs:

- Teachers can help students become aware of the frequency with which proverbs are used in the media by analyzing articles from magazines or newspapers, or sections of radio or TV news programs.
- Students can be asked to make up headlines for newspaper articles using English proverbs. If necessary, they can make changes in the wording or structure, as long as the proverbial meaning is suitable and can be easily inferred from its linguistic context.

d) Writing Different Genres Based on Proverbial Meanings:

- Students can be asked to write different texts based on proverbs. Initially, they may start writing simple texts – informal e-mails, for example-, and later on, move towards more complex ones. Again, they can be allowed to “adapt” the proverb’s structure or wording to their written productions, as long as the proverbial meanings be clear.

e) Writing Song Lyrics and Poems Including Proverbs:

- Teachers can help to spark students’ creativity by initially analyzing different song lyrics or poems which include proverbs, and then asking pupils to try their hand at writing a similar piece themselves.
- Instructors can use memes about proverbs and then ask students to create new ones using proverbs and images of their choice.

Concluding remarks

Proverbs are part of every language and members of a language community use them on a daily basis. Such a phenomenon should not be ignored by EFL teachers. However, more often than not, proverbs are not used in teaching basic components of the language, and let alone in teaching writing.

The activities proposed in this paper are intended not only to encourage EFL teachers to use proverbs as a teaching tool, but also to carry out their own research projects on further pedagogical uses of proverbs.

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