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Founded in 1973   **Mexican Association of English Teachers, Mextesol, A. C.**

Fundada en 1973   **Asociación Mexicana de Maestros de Inglés, Mextesol, A. C.**

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MexTESOL, a professional organization for teachers of English in Mexico, seeks to develop in its members, as well as in non-members, the highest standards for teaching English to speakers of other languages so that their students can communicate effectively in all the diverse situations in which they may find themselves.

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Focusing on the special circumstances of teaching and learning English in Mexico, the MEXTESOL Journal publishes articles dealing with both practical and theoretical topics of interest to the classroom teacher. Articles and book reviews related to EFL teaching in Mexico and in similar situations throughout the world are accepted for publication. Articles may be written in English or Spanish. Abstracts are to be written in both languages.

The MEXTESOL Journal is published three times a year, in April, August, and December.
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Paul Davies, Senior Consultant, The British Council, México

Editorial Policy

The MEXTESOL Journal is dedicated to the classroom teacher in Mexico and Latin America. Previously unpublished articles and book reviews relevant to EFL teaching and research in Mexico and Latin America are accepted for publication. Articles may be of a practical or theoretical nature and be written in English or Spanish. The Journal reserves the right to edit an accepted manuscript in order to enhance clarity or style. The author will be consulted only if the editing has been substantial.

Research-Based Articles: A research-based article should report original research or discuss research-related issues. These articles are usually submitted as refereed (judged as acceptable, conditional, or not acceptable) by two members of the Editorial Board who are experts in an area related to that of the article. The refereeing process is blind but, if an author wishes, a referee may be assigned as a mentor to guide the author through the revision process. A footnote will state that the article was refereed.

Professional Practice Issue Articles: In order to open the publication process to more authors, refereed or non-refereed articles are accepted in this section. These normally describe professional teaching experiences or library research related to teaching which the author wants to share with the readers. These articles will be read, judged and styled by members of the Editorial Staff for originality, quality and clarity of ideas.

Reviews: The Journal welcomes review articles summarizing published research or professional practice, position papers which promote or defend positions on a current, controversial topic, and book reviews of classroom texts, recorded material, computer software or other instructional resources. Reviews are non-refereed but are subject to editing.

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Any correspondence to the Journal concerning manuscripts should be e-mailed to the Editors at the address below. Information concerning advertising in the Journal or MEXTESOL membership should be sent to the National MEXTESOL Office at the addresses also listed below.

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Política Editorial

La revista MEXTESOL está dirigida al maestro de inglés en Mèxico y en Amèrica Latina. Se aceptan manuscritos y reseñas relevantes a la enseñanza del inglés como idioma extranjero e investigación que no hayan sido previamente publicados. Los artículos pueden ser de naturaleza teórica o práctica y pueden ser escritos en inglés o en español. La revista se reserva el derecho de editar un manuscrito aceptado para brindarle mayor claridad o mejorar su estilo. El autor será consultado únicamente para sugerir cambios.

Artículos basados en la investigación: Un artículo basado en investigación debe reportar investigación original o discutir asuntos relacionados con la investigación. Estos artículos generalmente se someten a arbitraje (juzgados como aceptable, condicional o no aceptable) realizado por dos miembros del consejo editorial expertos en un área relacionada con el artículo. El proceso de arbitraje es anónimo, pero si el autor lo desea se le puede asignar a un árbitro como mentor para guiarlo en el proceso de revisión. El artículo se publica con una nota al pie de página para indicar que es arbitrado.

Artículos relacionados con la práctica docente: Con el propósito de abrir las posibilidades de publicación a mas autores, se aceptan artículos arbitrados y no arbitrados. Generalmente describen experiencias docentes o investigación bibliográfica relacionada con la enseñanza. Estos artículos son leídos y juzgados por miembros del personal editorial para asegurar su originalidad, calidad y claridad de ideas.

Reseñas: La revista acepta reseñas de investigación publicada o de práctica docente, ponencias que argumentan a favor o en contra de temas actuales o controvertidos y reseñas de libros de texto, materiales audiovisuales, programas de computadoras, y otros recursos didácticos. Las reseñas no son sometidas a arbitraje pero son sujetas a edición.

Indicaciones para enviar una propuesta: Para facilitar el proceso de publicación se recomienda enviar el manuscrito por correo electrónico a la dirección de la revista. Se debe utilizar un procesador Microsoft Word para el artículo y gráficas que lo acompañen y ser enviado como un attachment. Favor de indicar si se desea que el **artículo sea** o **no arbitrado**.

Cualquier correspondencia a la revista que tenga que ver con artículos para publicación debe ser enviada vía fax o correo electrónico a las direcciones que aparecen abajo. La información concerniente a propaganda en la revista o a membresías debe ser enviada a la Oficina Nacional de MEXTESOL cuya dirección también aparece abajo.

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Manuscript Guidelines Mextesol Journal

Articles must be typed, double-spaced and preferably no more than twenty pages long. The format should conform to the Publication Manual for the American Psychological Association (A.P.A.) guideline format.

In-Text Citations:

References within the text should be cited in parentheses using the author's last name, year of publication and page numbers (shown below):
Rodgers (1994) compared performance on two test instruments.
or In a recent study of EFL writing (Rodgers, 1994) ......

Or for Direct Quotes:

Rodgers (1994) argued that, "most existing standardized tests do not accurately assess EFL writing performance" (p. 245).

Reference Page:

The list of references found in an article must appear at the end of the text on a separate page entitled "References". The data must be complete and accurate. Authors are fully responsible for the accuracy of their references. The APA format for reference page entries is shown below.

Books:
Brown, J. (1991). *Nelson-Denny Reading Test*. Chicago: Riverside Press

Journal Articles:

Ganschow, L. (1992). A screening instrument for the identification of foreign language learning problems. *Foreign Language Annals.* 24, 383-398.

Web sites:

Pratt-Johnson, Y. (2006). Communicating cross-culturally: What teachers should know. The Internet TESL Journal, 12. Retrieved November 22, 2007, from http://iteslj.org/Articles/Pratt-Johnson-CrossCultural.html

From the Editors

The Mextesol Journal has undergone a few changes since the last issue. We have six new members of the Editorial Board and two Associate Editor positions have been created.

We start this issue with two articles in Spanish. The first one, by Adriana Medellín, presents an overview of issues concerning vocabulary learning and teaching. It makes us reflect on the complexity of the concept of *word* and the different aspects involved in "knowing" a word. This article emphasizes the importance of explicit instruction of vocabulary strategies and presents a wide collection of teaching techniques.

In the second article Manuel Villa Ramos, José Luis Ramírez Romero and Rocio Tapia Meneses present some internet applications and activities of various types which promote the use of video in the EFL classroom to develop linguistic and paralinguistic aspects of language use. A highlight of this article is that it presents up-to-date web sites where video materials can be found for free!

Next we have included an article from a far-away land. We can easily see that the EFL field in Mexico shares some of the global experiences of the Native Speaker/Non-Native Speaker dichotomy . Author Zhenghui Rao gives us an inside view of how foreign native-speaking EFL teachers in China can improve their practice in China—and we can reflect on what parallels can be drawn between the situation in China and our own situation in Mexico.

Another article in this issue which emphasizes the use of media technology for learning purposes is Leigh Thelmadatter's. This article discusses the importance of contact with social situations where the students can use language genuinely and the difficulties of achieving this in the traditional classroom. Leigh presents a whole range of alternatives for the student to create a 'virtual world' to adapt and integrate into in order for learning to take place.

We also have an article which can help us in our teaching; making what we would like the students to learn easier to comprehend through the use of graphic organizers. Josefina Santana Villegas explores the different kinds of graphic organizers there are and provides excellent examples of their use.

Finally, we have an interesting and perhaps provocative opinion article by Paul Davies, a founding member of Mextesol and a long-time observer and participant in the ELT field in Mexico. The title of his article, "ELT in Mexican Higher Education should be mainly ESP, not EGP" is meant to move us to reflect on the roles of English for General Purposes and English for Specific Purposes in our institutions of higher education.

We hope that you will find these articles useful for you and that they will help you to improve your teaching practice.

Saul Santos
M. Martha Lengeling
Ulrich Schrader

La Enseñanza de Vocabulario en Segunda Lengua
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La importancia del vocabulario

> "When our words change, we change".
> Dale y O´Rourke, 1971.

Todas las lenguas del mundo tienen palabras. El lenguaje emerge primero como palabras, tanto históricamente como en la manera en que cada uno de nosotros aprendemos tanto nuestra primera lengua, como cualquier otra lengua subsiguiente (Thornbury, 2002). La creación de nuevas palabras nunca se detiene, de la misma manera en que nunca se detiene el aprendizaje de las mismas, inclusive en nuestra lengua madre continuamente aprendemos palabras nuevas y significados nuevos para palabras ya conocidas.

"Without grammar, very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary *nothing* can be conveyed" (p.3). Así es como resume David Wilkins (2002) la importancia del aprendizaje del vocabulario. El mismo autor sostiene que "si pasas demasiado tiempo estudiando gramática, tu inglés no mejorará demasiado. Verás un mayor avance si aprendes más palabras y expresiones. Puedes decir muy poco con gramática, pero puedes decir casi todo con palabras" (p. 3).

A pesar de que en el pasado la enseñanza y el aprendizaje del vocabulario recibieron poca prioridad en los programas de lengua (Richards y Renandya, 2004), en años más recientes el interés por el mismo se ha incrementado notablemente, como lo demuestran algunas de las contraportadas de los libros de texto utilizados para la enseñanza del inglés:

> "Strong emphasis on vocabulary, with a particular focus on high frequency useful words and phrases" (Cutting Edge, Intermedio, Longman; 2004).

> "Well-defined vocabulary syllabus plus dictionary training and pronunciation practice, including the use of phonetics. (New Headway English Course, Oxford University Press; 2005).

> "...a strongly lexical syllabus, presenting and practicing hundreds of natural expressions which students will find immediately useful. (Innovations, Thompson ELT; 2005).

Pero, ¿por qué debemos como maestros de lengua interesarnos en el crecimiento del tamaño del vocabulario de nuestros estudiantes? Muchos autores han escrito al respecto. Para Nation (1994), el aprendizaje de vocabulario no es un fin por sí mismo, sino una manera de enriquecer las habilidades de escucha, habla, lectura y escritura del estudiante, lo que finalmente desemboca en una mayor fluidez en la lengua. Anderson y Freebody (1981) sostienen que existe una fuerte correlación entre el vocabulario y el desempeño académico de los estudiantes, mientras que Richards y Renandya (2004) afirman que sin un vocabulario extenso y sin las estrategias para el aprendizaje del mismo, los estudiantes frecuentemente alcanzan un desempeño mucho menor al de su potencial real. Pero la razón principal radica en que enseñar vocabulario es más que agregar palabras nuevas al "diccionario" de nuestros alumnos; es incrementar sus habilidades lingüísticas y brindarles las herramientas para comprender nuevos contextos y expresar sus ideas en mundos nuevos.

Este artículo tiene como objetivo enfatizar la importancia de incrementar el tamaño del vocabulario de nuestros estudiantes de segunda lengua a través de técnicas específicas de enseñanza. A través del documento se establecen las definiciones básicas de conceptos como palabra y vocabulario, los procesos y factores que influyen en el aprendizaje de nuevas palabras, para después concluir con una breve reseña de algunas de las metodologías más frecuentemente utilizadas en el proceso de enseñanza/aprendizaje del vocabulario en segundas lenguas.

La definición de "palabra"

> "A word is a microcosm of human consciousness".
> Vygotsky.

La definición de palabra como tal ha evolucionado de ser "un grupo de letras entre dos espacios" (Juilland y Roceric, 1972, p. 19) a formar parte de una compleja serie de familias, inflexiones y derivaciones que involucran múltiples consideraciones morfológicas, sintácticas y semánticas. Encontramos muy diversas y distintas definiciones de palabra. Para Venetis (1999) las palabras son simplemente "etiquetas de conceptos mentales" (p. 4) Para Carroll (1964) las palabras son "conceptos socialmente estandarizados" (p. 26) y para Cruse (1986) son "el elemento mínimo dentro de una oración que tiene movilidad posicional (p. 22)".

En otras conceptualizaciones, encontramos que Hunt y Beglar (2002) definen la palabra como "una palabra base o familia de palabras" (p. 258), lo cual implica que cada palabra incluye su base simple, (e.g. *make*) y todas sus inflexiones y derivaciones (e.g. *makes, made, making, maker y makers*). Otros autores, como Bogaards (2001) sostienen que particularmente en el caso de la lingüística aplicada, la noción de "palabra" debe ser ampliada al concepto de "unidad léxica". El autor

sostiene que debido a que una sola palabra puede tener muchos significados en diferentes contextos, definirla como una unidad conceptual única representa serias dificultades a nivel semántico.

También es necesario resaltar que en 1992, Nattinger y DeCarrico observaron que una cantidad significativa del idioma inglés esta constituido por frases léxicas completas, que abarcan desde verbos compuestos hasta frases institucionalizadas. Como las frases léxicas pueden ser aprendidas al igual que las unidades aisladas, los principios para la enseñanza de vocabulario se aplican tanto a frases léxicas como a palabras. (Hunt y Beglar, 2002).

La definición de "vocabulario"

Las palabras deben ser utilizadas cuidadosamente debido a que como lo mencionamos en la sección anterior, pueden contener diversos significados. En el caso de la enseñanza de segundas lenguas, cuando utilizamos la palabra "vocabulario" debemos especificar cuidadosamente a qué nos referimos. Para hacer esta distinción, tomaremos la definición de Coomber, Peet y Smith (1998) para distinguir el tipo de vocabulario que como profesores de lengua debemos enseñar:

El vocabulario que escuchamos (Listening Vocabulary): Este tipo de vocabulario está compuesto por todas aquellas palabras cuyos significados reconocemos cuando las escuchamos.

El vocabulario que leemos (Reading Vocabulary): Es el vocabulario que está conformado por todas las palabras que podemos reconocer e identificar durante la lectura de diversos textos.

El vocabulario que escribimos (Writing Vocabulary): El vocabulario escrito es el que incluye las palabras que conocemos lo suficientemente bien como para utilizarlas en nuestra escritura.

El vocabulario que reproducimos en forma oral (Speaking Vocabulary): Este tipo de vocabulario está compuesto por todas las palabras que utilizamos cuando hablamos.

¿Qué significa "conocer" una palabra?

En el sentido más básico, conocer una palabra involucra conocer su forma y su significado (Thornbury, 2002), pero no solamente implica conocer la traducción de palabras de la lengua materna (L1) a la segunda lengua (L2), ya que esto no garantiza el uso correcto de las mismas en el contexto de la L2 (Prince, 1996). Nation (1994) menciona que existen varios aspectos relacionados con el

conocimiento de una palabra como son la identificación de sus patrones gramaticales, los afijos que pueden unirse a ella, sus grupos léxicos más comunes así como el conocimiento receptivo y productivo de la palabra.

El conocimiento receptivo implica tener la capacidad de reconocer los aspectos del conocimiento de la palabra a través de la lectura o la habilidad de escuchar, mientras que el conocimiento productivo involucra la capacidad de utilizar estos aspectos en el habla o la escritura (Hunt y Beglar, 2002). El conocimiento receptivo sobrepasa al productivo y generalmente, aunque no siempre, lo precede. Esto es, que somos capaces de entender más palabras de las que somos capaces de producir y casi siempre las entendemos antes de poder producirlas (Thornbury, 2002).

Proceso del desarrollo del vocabulario en segunda lengua

Para Loucky (1998) el proceso para desarrollar el vocabulario de los estudiantes en la L2 sigue los siguientes pasos cruciales:

Introducción del vocabulario:
> Este encuentro puede darse a través de la enseñanza directa en el aula de clase, por actividades de lectura y escucha extensiva o por aprendizaje incidental. Es el primer encuentro de los estudiantes con el nuevo vocabulario.

Establecimiento del vocabulario previamente presentado:
> Más allá del primer acercamiento con las palabras meta, los aprendices deben encontrar nuevamente el vocabulario en diferentes ocasiones y contextos, esto con el objeto de fijar los nuevos significados tanto en la memoria pasiva de vocabulario como en la memoria de uso activo del mismo. En esta etapa, el profesor debe desarrollar material que permita la "repetición espaciada" del vocabulario a través de todo el curso.

Enriquecimiento del vocabulario previamente presentado:
> Debido a que hay diversos aspectos que aprender a cerca de cualquier palabra nueva, el profesor debe ayudar a los estudiantes a distinguir entre las palabras de baja frecuencia o aquellas que pueden ser inferidas a través del contexto, y las palabras clave y de alta frecuencia que resultaran esenciales para el estudiante. Esta etapa también involucra el conocimiento de nuevas inflexiones y derivaciones que se generan a partir de la nueva palabra.

Desarrollo de estrategias de vocabulario:
> Desde el momento en que los estudiantes inician el proceso de adquisición de una lengua extranjera deben desarrollar habilidades para la decodificación de palabras y habilidades para el reconocimiento de vocabulario.

Desarrollo de fluidez en la lengua meta a través del vocabulario aprendido:
La clave para desarrollar mayor fluidez en la lengua meta es maximizar las oportunidades para el uso activo y significativo del vocabulario a través de actividades comunicativas.

Factores que influyen en la enseñanza del vocabulario en segunda lengua

Existen varios factores que influyen en el proceso de enseñanza/aprendizaje del vocabulario en una L2, entre los más importantes tenemos (Coomber, Peet y Smith, 1998):

Procesamiento activo: Cuando los estudiantes realizan una acción involucrada con la palabra, como visualizar un elemento relacionado con la misma o incluso actuarla, existe mayor posibilidad de que la recuerden posteriormente. Cualquiera que sea la acción que realicen, a través del procesamiento activo los estudiantes hacen más que repetir o definir una palabra, más bien hacen del uso de la palabra una parte vital de su vocabulario.

Uso de contextos diferentes: Se puede aprender mucho de una palabra a través de los diferentes contextos en que es utilizada. Entre más contextos tengamos, mayor será la flexibilidad con respecto a su significado y mayor será la posibilidad de recordarla.

Uso de varias técnicas para revisar el conocimiento de las palabras: Así como los estudiantes adquieren mejor el vocabulario a través de varias técnicas de enseñanza, el uso de diferentes técnicas de repaso aparentemente favorece el desarrollo del mismo. Cada actividad de repaso muestra una manera distinta de utilizar cada palabra y su significado.

Procesamiento elaborado: Este tipo de procesamiento involucra el hecho de que los estudiantes generen conexiones profundas entre la palabra meta y sus propias experiencias y conocimientos. Implica generar actividades y ejercicios que requieran de un mayor esfuerzo mental por parte de los estudiantes.

Metodologías para la enseñanza del vocabulario en segunda lengua

Aunque tanto autores como educadores coinciden en que la adquisición de un vasto vocabulario es importante para la comprensión y la comunicación así como para el desempeño académico de los alumnos, existen discrepancias sobre cual es el método más efectivo para la enseñanza del mismo. A continuación recorreremos algunos de los conceptos básicos relacionados con la metodología de la enseñanza

de vocabulario en segundas lenguas, así como algunas técnicas sugeridas para la mejor adquisición de éste.

Tipos de Aprendizaje

Aprendizaje incidental

Muchas de las palabras que aprendemos tanto en la L1 como en cualquier lengua subsiguiente son aprendidas a través del aprendizaje incidental. Este se presenta en la lectura y escucha casual de la lengua. Aunque la gran mayoría de nuestros estudiantes no realizan lectura recreativa en la segunda lengua (Hunt y Beglar, 2002) en muchos casos se encuentran con nuevas palabras en canciones, programas televisivos o películas. Estos "encuentros" con nuevas palabras son una gran oportunidad para la ampliación del vocabulario de los aprendices, debido a que básicamente son palabras que los estudiantes encontraron por sí solos en contextos de su propio interés. Este tipo de aprendizaje es particularmente aplicable en el caso de los estudiantes de lengua más avanzados (Hunt y Beglar, 2002). Aún así, Loucky (1998) sostiene que el aprendizaje incidental resulta eficiente solamente para la adquisición del vocabulario en la L1, debido a que tanto la cantidad como la calidad del vocabulario que los estudiantes de segundas lenguas reciben por este medio es muy deficiente, sobre todo en el caso de aquellos que no están inmersos en la cultura de la lengua meta.

Aprendizaje intencional

Aunque gran parte del vocabulario que adquirimos en una lengua finalmente se presenta a través del aprendizaje incidental (Hunt y Beglar, 2002), el aprendizaje intencional de vocabulario contribuye notablemente en la formación del vocabulario del estudiante (Nation, 1990). Este tipo de aprendizaje se presenta básicamente por la instrucción explícita que el profesor de lengua brinda al alumno.

Instrucción explícita

La instrucción explícita es aquella en la cual el profesor de lengua diagnostica las necesidades de vocabulario de sus estudiantes, diseña materiales y actividades que proveen oportunidades para el aprendizaje intencional del vocabulario, así como ejercicios dedicados a reafirmar y utilizar activamente el nuevo vocabulario adquirido. De acuerdo con Klesius y Searls (1991) la instrucción explícita puede ser tanto directa como indirecta. La directa implica que el profesor de lengua presente la información deseada concretamente a los alumnos, mientras que en la instrucción indirecta el profesor debe "orquestar varios aspectos del ambiente del salón de clases con el objetivo de guiar a los alumnos para que obtengan el contenido meta por sí mismos" (p. 165).

Mientras que algunos profesores prefieren la instrucción indirecta, otros como Stahl y Fairbanks (1986) sostienen que la enseñanza directa del vocabulario y de estrategias relacionadas con éste brinda excelentes resultados no solo en las palabras que se enseñan directamente a los alumnos, sino incluso en las palabras que aún no se les han enseñado. Esta afirmación tiene sentido si consideramos que entre más explícito es el conocimiento del alumno sobre la morfología, sintaxis y semántica de las palabras, más estrategias de reconocimiento de las mismas podrá desarrollar.

Los libros de texto dirigidos a profesores de lengua recomiendan una gran variedad de técnicas útiles para la instrucción explícita del vocabulario. A continuación se presentan algunas de las más mencionadas.

Enseñanza en contexto:

De acuerdo con varios investigadores interesados en el tema, los estudiantes requieren de un contexto en la L2 que les permita identificar el uso y significado del vocabulario meta. Para algunos autores como Omaggio (1986), el uso del contexto en la segunda lengua es necesario para que el hablante vaya más allá de los límites del aula de clase y utilice el lenguaje en el mundo real con propósitos comunicativos. Gauthier (1991) asegura que las palabras deben ser presentadas y enseñadas a través de un contexto interesante y significativo para los alumnos, mientras que Stahl y Fairbanks (1986) sostienen que cuando los estudiantes son expuestos a las mismas palabras en varias ocasiones dentro de diferentes contextos, obtienen un mayor grado de conocimiento de la lengua, a la vez que incrementan su habilidad para recordar las palabras a largo plazo.

Por otro lado, existen otros autores que contradicen estas aseveraciones. Blachowicz (1993) sugiere que el método de la enseñanza en contexto no es adecuado para utilizarse con aquellas palabras que se refieren a conceptos completamente desconocidos para los alumnos, mientras que Nation (2002) sostiene que la afirmación de que todo el aprendizaje de vocabulario debe estar contextualizado no está soportada por los resultados de las investigaciones relacionadas con el tema. Los puntos que este autor resalta son:

El estudio explícito y descontextualizado del vocabulario es un medio efectivo de incrementar rápidamente el tamaño de vocabulario de los alumnos.
El aprendizaje alcanzado por este método se mantiene por largo tiempo dentro del conocimiento del estudiante.

Este conocimiento está disponible para el uso significativo del lenguaje.

Existen diversas técnicas para incrementar considerablemente la eficiencia del aprendizaje del vocabulario explícito y descontextualizado.

Inferir significados por contexto:

Este tipo de actividad, involucra que los alumnos se enfoquen concientemente en las palabras desconocidas dentro de una lectura (Nation, 2002). Inferir el significado de una palabra a través de su contexto se enfoca básicamente en el hecho de que el significado de la palabra está asignado por el propio texto en el que se encuentra. De acuerdo con Nation (2002), este tipo de estrategia genera que el conocimiento de la palabra entre directamente en la memoria explícita del estudiante.

Contrario a Nation, Blachowicz (1993) sostiene que los significados que los estudiantes infieren a través del texto no necesariamente son los más adecuados para las palabras, mientras que autores como Coomber, Peet y Smith (1998) afirman que irónicamente, entre más esencial es el significado de una palabra para la comprensión general de un pasaje, menor es la posibilidad de que el texto provea las claves para la identificación de su significado.

Lectura extensiva:

El aprendizaje del vocabulario a través de la lectura extensiva puede beneficiar el lenguaje de los aprendices de todos los niveles (Woodinsky y Nation, 1988). Tomando en cuenta las ventajas que presenta la instrucción en contexto, muchos investigadores han concluido que la enseñanza del vocabulario en el contexto de la literatura y la lectura es particularmente benéfica para los alumnos (Nagy y Anderson, 1985). Sin embargo, diversas investigaciones sostienen que los estudiantes no necesariamente incrementan su léxico con el simple hecho de leer las palabras en contexto (Carver, 1996) sobre todo en el caso de aprendices de segunda lengua, y sostiene que es necesario desarrollar las estrategias explícitas necesarias para la identificación y aprendizaje de vocabulario. En este punto, Nagy y Anderson (1985) afirman que enseñar estas estrategias durante la lectura es justificable solo si pueden ser utilizadas con palabras no enseñadas en clase, de forma tal que los alumnos puedan ser capaces de aplicarlas a todas esas palabras desconocidas que se encuentren en su vida cotidiana fuera del aula de clase.

Diccionarios bilingües

Muchos estudios han demostrado que el uso del diccionario bilingüe en el aprendizaje de vocabulario en segundas lenguas puede ser benéfico para los estudiantes, por lo que es importante entrenar a los alumnos en el uso correcto del mismo desde etapas tempranas en el estudio de la lengua meta (Hunt y Beglar, 2002). Estos estudios sostienen que la aplicación de técnicas de enseñanza como son la lectura extensiva, requiere del conocimiento de los aprendices sobre el uso del diccionario, sobre todo en el caso de los estudiantes menos avanzados, debido a que la falta de vocabulario puede impedirles la comprensión adecuada de los textos.

Traducción y listas bilingües

En 1996 Prince encontró que tanto los estudiantes más avanzados como los más débiles obtuvieron un mayor aprendizaje de vocabulario a través de la traducción que a partir del aprendizaje en contexto de la L2. La traducción tiene un rol útil y necesario en el estudio de lenguas, pero puede detener el avance de los alumnos si excluye técnicas para el aprendizaje de la segunda lengua (Hunt y Beglar, 2002). Estos mismos autores sostienen que para ser efectivo, el uso de la traducción debe emplearse siempre acompañado de ejercicios y actividades que refuercen el vocabulario en contextos de la L2.

De acuerdo con Nation (1990) el uso de listas de vocabulario bilingües puede ser un método efectivo y rápido para aprender pares de palabras en ambas lenguas. Rodríguez y Sadoski (2002) encontraron que la repetición de listas bilingües resulta la técnica más efectiva para la retención a largo plazo en aquellos estudiantes con un nivel intermedio de vocabulario. A pesar de estos resultados, Hulstijn (1997) afirma que las listas bilingües deben estar acompañadas obligatoriamente de la instrucción por contexto, debido a que es muy difícil recordar una lista de palabras aisladas y que aprender las palabras a través de la repetición no es más que un ejercicio de memorización, ya que al carecer de ejemplos en donde puede utilizarse no ayuda a entender completamente su significado.

Además de estás técnicas ampliamente mencionadas por varios autores, Foil y Alber (2002) mencionan brevemente en su artículo "Fun and Effective Ways to Build your Students' Vocabulary" otras técnicas para incrementar rápidamente el tamaño del vocabulario de nuestros alumnos:

Enfoque kinestético

Muchos educadores recomiendan incorporar el enfoque kinestético dentro de la instrucción explícita del vocabulario. Este enfoque consiste en producir fragmentos de obras teatrales con diálogos que incluyan las palabras meta o generar una acción física que se relacione o represente el nuevo vocabulario.

Mapas semánticos

Los mapas semánticos proveen al estudiante un medio visual para organizar el contenido de la información presentada. El uso de estos mapas como facilitadores del desarrollo del lenguaje se ha demostrado empíricamente por autores como Anderson y Freebody (1981).

Video

Utilizar el video en el aula de clase es una manera rápida y divertida de incrementar la comprensión de escucha del vocabulario de los estudiantes, aunque es necesario no abusar de él como un medio recreativo y desarrollar actividades bien enfocadas y prácticas para los alumnos.

Uso de Palabras Claves

El uso de palabras claves es una estrategia mnemotécnica para elaborar un concepto significativo y concreto para una palabra desconocida a partir de palabras familiares. En este método, el estudiante debe relacionar el sonido de la palabra nueva con el sonido de una palabra conocida y a partir de estas relaciones, generar conceptos concretos fácilmente identificables que le permitan recordar más tarde la palabra meta.

El uso de varias técnicas para la enseñanza del vocabulario en segunda lengua

La gran mayoría de los educadores coinciden en que la mejor estrategia general para la enseñanza/aprendizaje del vocabulario en una L2 consiste en una combinación de diversos métodos y técnicas (Coomber, Peet y Smith, 1998). Esta afirmación, está sustentada por varios estudios realizados en diversos grupos y bajo diferentes condiciones experimentales. Entre estos estudios encontramos a Groot (2000) quien realizó un experimento en una L2 que combinaba el uso del aprendizaje del vocabulario en contexto y el uso de listas bilingües. Así mismo, Rodríguez y Sadoski (2000) realizaron un experimento sobre el uso del aprendizaje del vocabulario en contexto combinado con la repetición de palabras y el uso de palabras claves. Algunos años más tarde, Ronald (2002) llevó a cabo un experimento en el cual comparó el conocimiento de sus estudiantes a través del aprendizaje incidental con el uso del diccionario monolingüe en la lengua meta. Todos los estudios concluyeron que el mayor desempeño por parte de los aprendices se obtuvo a partir del uso de dos o más técnicas combinadas.

Pero, ¿qué palabras debemos enseñar?

Como hablantes de una L1 estamos conscientes de la imposibilidad de conocer la totalidad de las palabras existentes en nuestra propia lengua. Las palabras mueren, resucitan y se reinventan cada día en el discurso cotidiano de sus hablantes, por lo que debemos determinar cuidadosamente los lineamientos a seguir para la construcción del vocabulario de nuestros aprendices de L2. En el caso de la lengua inglesa, *The Global Language Monitor*, reportó recientemente un conteo total de 988,968 palabras, de entre las cuales, el hablante nativo es capaz de identificar un

total de 12,000 a 20,000, dependiendo de su nivel de educación (McCarten, 2007). Ante la eminente dificultad de enseñar a nuestros alumnos un rango aproximado de 20 mil palabras, es necesario considerar únicamente aquellas palabras a las cuales los estudiantes de L2 estarán más expuestos, esto es, las palabras más frecuentes de la lengua. Para el caso del discurso escrito se ha reportado que un número aproximado de 2 mil palabras permitirían al estudiante comprender cerca del 80% del texto (Francis y Kucera 1982), mientras que en el discurso verbal éste porcentaje se iguala con un tamaño de vocabulario equivalente a 1, 800 palabras (McCarthy 2004;O'Keeffe, McCarthy, y Carter 2007).

La práctica de contar las palabras más frecuentes de una lengua tiene una larga historia que se remonta incluso hasta los tiempos de la cultura helénica (DeRocher, 1973). Varios de estos primeros conteos de frecuencia de palabra se mencionan en Fries y Traver (1960). Actualmente y para el caso específico de la lengua inglesa existen varias listas de frecuencia de palabra que a pesar de considerarse poco contemporáneas, aún son ampliamente utilizadas por teóricos de adquisición de segunda lengua así como por los diseñadores de textos y programas de estudio del inglés. Algunas de las más citadas son:

The General Service List o GSL (West, 1953) que contiene un total de 2000 familias de palabras frecuentes (e.g. *know*) y más de 11 mil palabras formas flexivas (e.g. *knows*) y derivadas (e.g. *unkown*) que se extrajeron de un corpus desarrollado durante los años cuarenta.

The Teachers Word Book of 30,000 words (Thorndike y Lorge, 1944) que contiene un total de 30 mil palabras divididas en 13 mil familias de palabras. Esta lista se desarrolló en base a un corpus de 18 millones de palabras escritas.

The American Heritage Word Frequency Book (Carroll, Davies y Richman, 1971) la cual se basa en los textos escritos utilizados en las escuelas de educación elemental y media de los Estados Unidos de América.
The Brown (Francis y Kucera, 1982) basada en un corpus de un millón de palabras del inglés.

The University Word List o *UWL* (Xue y Nation, 1984; Nation, 1996). Esta lista incluye las palabras más frecuentes de los textos académicos generales de nivel universitario utilizados en los Estados Unidos de América.

Si bien estas listas pueden brindarnos una idea sobre las palabras que nuestros aprendices requerirán al ser expuestos a la L2, es necesario recordar, en primer lugar, que éstas provienen de corpora poco actualizados, además de tener en mente que los requerimientos de los estudiantes dependerán tanto de su nivel de escolaridad, como de su área de desempeño académico o profesional.

Conclusión

Podemos concluir que básicamente no existe una técnica mágica para la enseñanza de vocabulario. Es necesario que tanto el profesor como los estudiantes de lengua encuentren mediante el trabajo en equipo la técnica o combinación de técnicas que mejor funcione para ellos tomando en cuenta sus necesidades, sus intereses, su edad y sus estilos cognoscitivos. Esto es, como profesores de lengua sabemos que la representación en obras teatrales (enfoque kinestético) en ocasiones resulta embarazosa para los aprendices adultos, mientras que la misma técnica puede resultar altamente benéfica en el caso de los estudiantes más jóvenes. Del mismo modo, cualquier profesor de lengua de nivel pre-escolar podrá afirmar que la aplicación de la técnica de lectura extensiva o mapas semánticos puede ser difícilmente incluida en su práctica cotidiana.

Creemos también que es necesario invertir tiempo en la enseñanza directa de estrategias de aprendizaje de vocabulario, debido a que éstas permitirán al alumno enfrentarse a nuevas palabras por sí mismo y finalmente convertirse en un aprendiz autónomo y eficiente.

De igual manera sostenemos que es necesario seleccionar cuidadosamente las palabras que conformarán el vocabulario de nuestros estudiantes; es inútil saturarlos con listas interminables de palabras que no corresponden ni a su nivel de conocimiento de la lengua, ni a sus necesidades comunicativas inmediatas.

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El Uso del Video en la Enseñanza del Inglés Como Lengua Extranjera

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Introducción

En los últimos años, si bien un gran número de maestros de inglés han integrado tecnologías a sus clases, aún existen algunos renuentes a trabajar con ellas. El uso del video como una herramienta pedagógica en la enseñanza de lenguas no ha sido la excepción. Esta herramienta también ha sido relegada o en ocasiones mal explotada ya que existe la tendencia a tratar el video como una recompensa o como un instrumento de diversión, lo cual no es negativo, pero se podría obtener un mayor provecho del mismo si formase parte de una estrategia de enseñanza donde los alumnos pudieran trabajar y al mismo tiempo disfrutar, como reiteradamente lo han señalado diversos autores, entre los que destacan Williams y Lutes (2007), Maggs (2005), Köksal (2004), y Stempleski (2000).

En el contexto de las ideas anteriores, en este artículo exponemos algunas aplicaciones y actividades que pueden realizarse con los videos en los cursos de inglés como lengua extranjera, así como sitios y formas donde puede conseguirse este tipo de material, para cerrar proponiendo la explotación de los elementos para-lingüísticos del video con fines pedagógicos.

Aplicaciones del video en el aula

Por la versatilidad de su formato, el video puede ser utilizado como herramienta de apoyo tanto para la enseñanza como para el aprendizaje.

Como herramienta de apoyo para la enseñanza, el video puede servir para reforzar las presentaciones del maestro; introducir la cultura de la lengua extranjera dentro del salón; subrayar funciones del lenguaje; destacar señales no verbales; y mostrar la relación entre las características lingüísticas y las para-lingüísticas (Cfr. Migliacci, 2002).

El video además puede jugar un papel muy importante para incentivar la motivación de los alumnos, porque entre otros aspectos les permite ver puesto en práctica lo que han aprendido (Amato, 2003) y tiene múltiples aplicaciones como herramienta de aprendizaje para los estudiantes. El video les permite a los alumnos experimentar con lenguaje auténtico; les provee de prácticas de comprensión auditiva, reforzadas por claves audio-visuales. Adicionalmente, el video puede contribuir al desarrollo en los estudiantes de una gran variedad de habilidades lingüísticas.

Lonergan (1984) comenta que la característica más sobresaliente del video es que permite presentar situaciones comunicativas completas: la comunicación puede ser mostrada en su contexto y posibilitar que muchos factores de comunicación sean percibidos por los estudiantes de lenguas. Así, los alumnos pueden ver y escuchar a los participantes en un diálogo; determinar la edad y sexo de los participantes; apreciar la vestimenta y estatus social de los personajes; y percatarse del humor o sentimientos de los personajes por las expresiones faciales y las señas con las cuales acompañan sus intervenciones verbales.

Finalmente, los alumnos pueden ver dónde se está llevando a cabo la acción y la combinación dinámica de sonido y visión puede, según Lonergan (1984) traer la realidad al salón y con ello no sólo hacer que el aprendizaje de los estudiantes sea más fácil, sino también más realista, como adecuadamente lo argumenta Cunningswoth (1984).

Actividades que se pueden realizar con videos

Las actividades que involucran el uso de video pueden clasificarse de acuerdo al momento en que se realizarán; al quehacer que demandarán de alumnos y maestro; y a la intensidad de la práctica que se realizará con ellos.

De acuerdo al momento, las actividades pueden ser preliminares, de desarrollo, y de cierre.

Las actividades preliminares son aquellas que se les pide a los alumnos realicen antes de la proyección del video a fin de prepararlos para el mismo y asegurar un mayor aprovechamiento de lo proyectado. Algunos autores proponen considerar dentro de este tipo de actividades "la conveniencia de presentar vocabulario y otros componentes lingüísticos que se consideren esenciales para la comprensión del material de vídeo" (Barrios, 2007: 3).

Un segundo grupo de actividades son aquellas que se sugiere realizar durante la proyección con la finalidad de mantener o llamar la atención de los estudiantes sobre los aspectos lingüísticos y paralingüísticos más relevantes, así como a los

significados transmitidos a través de dichos elementos. Algunos autores, tales como Barrios (2007) y Phillips (1993) proponen que se realicen varias proyecciones del mismo video para que los estudiantes puedan irse concentrando en varios aspectos a la vez.

Un tercer grupo son las actividades que se recomienda realizar al terminar la proyección a fin de ayudar a los estudiantes a sintetizar lo visto y a la vez, evaluar su nivel de comprensión y/o aplicación de las ideas trabajadas en la proyección. Si bien con fines expositivos hemos presentado aquí las actividades de manera separada, lo que la mayoría de los autores sugieren es que se utilicen los tres tipos de actividades para lograr mejores resultados. Ejemplos concretos sobre este tipo de actividades pueden encontrarse en los trabajos de Barrios (2007); García (2001); y Fernández y Bravo (s/f).

De acuerdo a lo que alumnos y maestros podrán hacer con el video, entre las actividades más mencionadas en la bibliografía especializada destacan las siguientes: visión silenciosa, sonido sin visión, predicción, predicción inversa, secuencia, completar, visión dividida, visión y registro, y cuestionario previo. Sugerimos combinar las diferentes actividades a fin de sacar el mejor provecho del material revisado. A continuación, basándonos en Tomalin (1986), las describimos brevemente:

Visión silenciosa.- Se proyecta un video sin sonido y se le pide al estudiante determine lo que sucede basándose en el contexto, la vestimenta, las expresiones, los gestos y las acciones observadas.

Sonido sin visión.- Es lo opuesto a la visión silenciosa, pero ahora la pantalla del monitor es cubierta de manera tal que el estudiante no la vea pero que sí escuche el sonido. El alumno visualiza mentalmente la escena basándose en lo que escucha y al finalizar se le pide que determine lo que sucede.

Predicción.- Se proyecta el video y en un momento determinado la proyección se detiene y se les pide a los estudiantes que predigan lo que sucederá a continuación.

Predicción inversa.- En este caso el maestro escoge un fragmento del final del extracto de un video. Los estudiantes deben decidir sobre los eventos que ocasionaron la situación presentada.

Secuencia.- El maestro prepara una lista de oraciones con los eventos importantes del video pero en un orden diferente al que suceden, y el alumno deberá enumerarlos de acuerdo al orden en que sucedieron.

Completar.- El maestro les provee a los alumnos copias de los diálogos que se observarán o parte de alguna secuencia y los estudiantes deberán llenar los espacios en blanco.

Visión dividida.- El maestro selecciona un fragmento de video que cuente una historia a través de imágenes. La mitad de los alumnos de la clase ven el video y simultáneamente explican al resto de los estudiantes que no pueden ver el video, lo que sucede en el mismo.

Visión y registro.- Los alumnos observarán el video y registrarán lo que observan y escuchan, tratando de que comprendan no sólo el lenguaje que se está utilizando, sino también el grado de formalidad y emoción empleado en el mismo.

Cuestionario previo.- El maestro les entrega a los alumnos un cuestionario que deberán leer antes de ver el video, y una vez concluida la proyección deberán contestarlo.

De acuerdo a la <u>intensidad</u> de la práctica que requerirán, las actividades pueden ser intensivas o extensivas; sin embargo, de acuerdo a Willis (1983), los maestros pueden administrar mejor su tiempo de clase si examinan pequeños fragmentos de video con prácticas intensivas en lugar de llevar a cabo prácticas extensivas durante la clase. Estas prácticas intensivas con video podrían ayudar a los estudiantes a desarrollar estrategias de comprensión, que podrían posteriormente practicar fuera del aula.

Fuentes y formas de obtención y elaboración de videos

Si bien hasta hace muy recientemente resultaba difícil para algunos maestros de inglés de países no anglo parlantes conseguir material de video en dicho idioma, en la actualidad dichos materiales son relativamente sencillos de obtener o elaborar. Además de los materiales producidos con fines didácticos o comerciales por compañías especializadas, los profesores pueden utilizar al menos otros tres tipos de materiales, a saber: materiales provenientes de los canales de televisión (sobre todo de paga); materiales provenientes de la Internet; y materiales elaborados por ellos mismos y/o por sus alumnos.

Respecto a los primeros, Larimer (1999:21), siguiendo a Furmanousky (1997) y Davis (1998), considera que "Los estudiantes quieren y necesitan ser expuestos a ejemplos de lenguaje y cultura auténticos y cotidianos presentados en formatos visuales estimulantes. Los comerciales de televisión, con sus 25 segundos de contenido de lenguaje y cultura, son una fuente excelente. Los comerciales son cortos y ofrecen pequeños trozos de video enfocados a la sociedad contemporánea, donde se puede apreciar la música y la ropa del momento; el lenguaje utilizado es coloquial; y a menudo estos videos son más adecuados por su longitud para fines pedagógicos que otros".

Una segunda fuente rica en materiales de video es la Internet, donde se pueden obtener tanto materiales de paga como gratuitos. En cuanto a los sitios gratuitos, existen:

Sitios donde se puede obtener material gratuito para la enseñanza del inglés (algunos acompañados de guías didácticas), tales como los siguientes:

> http://www.esl-lab.com/roots/rootsrd1.htm
> http://www.englishmedialab.com/beginnervideos.html
> http://www.download-esl.com/videos.html
> http://www.english-4kids.com/videos.html

Sitios donde se pueden obtener transcripciones de películas o programas de TV, tales como:
> http://www.script-o-rama.com/movie-transcripts-a.html
> http://members.tripod.com/~LauraAMC/

Sitios donde se pueden adquirir videos, muestras de videos o cortos (gratuitos), tales como:
> http://www.dotsub.com/
> http://youtube.com/
> http://video.google.com/
> http://www.cnn.com/
> http://www.bbc.co.uk/
> http://video.msn.com/video.aspx?mkt=en-us
> http://www.archive.org/
> http://www.moviecentre.net/trailers/
> http://www.worstpreviews.com/downloads.php?show=3
> http://0-a.mymovies.net/trailers/
> http://www.alltrailers.net/
> http://movieclock.com/
> http://www.movie-list.com/
> http://www.archive.org/details/opensource_movies

Una tercera fuente son los materiales de video producidos por los propios profesores y/o alumnos, utilizando el formato tradicional o los nuevos formatos digitales[1]. Respecto a éstos últimos: si bien la mayoría de las computadoras actuales trae integrado un programa para la edición de videos (por ejemplo el *Windows Movie Maker*)[2] existen además varios programas de fuente abierta (*open source*) o compartida (*shareware*) que pueden ser utilizados para tal propósito. Entre los más recomendados están el *Jahshaka* **(**que puede ser descargado en http://jahshaka.org/   ) y el *Virtual   dub*   (localizado   en:

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[1] Un fenómeno emergente interesante en este sentido son los recién bautizados "YouTube Professors", que hace especialmente referencia a algunos profesores de varias universidades norteamericanas que han permitido que sus clases, o fragmentos de éstas, sean grabadas y colocadas en el "YouTube". (Cfr. Young, 2008)

[2] De no contar con él, puede descargarse gratuitamente en la siguiente dirección: http://windows-movie-maker.softonic.com/

http://www.virtualdub.org/). Otro sitio interesante es el *tv.isg.si* (disponible en: http://tv.isg.si/site/?q=node/873), un servicio de televisión por Internet, moderado y creado, según información del propio sitio, principalmente por los propios usuarios, donde se puede encontrar un listado sobre diferentes editores de medios para los distintos sistemas operativos. Todos lo sitios anteriores cuentan con diferentes repositorios o contenedores para descarga y algunos además cuentan con tutoriales en video localizables en el sitio de *YouTube* (ir a : http://youtube.com/). Finalmente, es importante mencionar que cuando se edita un video casi siempre se utiliza cambiar el formato del video para que sea compatible con el formato de video del programa editor. Un programa que puede utilizarse para tal fin es el *Total Video Converter* (disponible en: http://total-video-converter.softonic.com/), el cual permite manejar casi todos los formatos de video digitales existentes y es uno de los mejores por sus multiformatos en un solo programa y facilidad de uso[3].

La explotación de algunos elementos para-lingüísticos del video con fines pedagógicos

Un aspecto poco explotado con fines pedagógicos de los videos son sus elementos para-lingüísticos, pese a que ha sido ampliamente comprobado que aproximadamente el 80 por ciento de nuestra comunicación es no verbal: nuestros gestos, expresiones, postura, vestimenta y nuestro entorno son más elocuentes que lo que en realidad decimos (Cfr. Stempleski y Tomalin,1990). El video nos permite ver lo anterior en acción y detener cualquier momento para estudiar la comunicación no verbal en detalle, de tal forma que ésta viene a ser una ventaja más para los maestros cuando diseñan alguna actividad utilizando videos.

Sumándose a la postura anterior, Willis (1983) argumenta que las características para-lingüísticas ayudan a la comunicación y conforman una parte esencial de la comunicación, por lo que los maestros de lenguas deben no sólo distinguir los aspectos visuales que forman parte del mensaje, sino también cuáles de estas características visuales son vitales para la comunicación no verbal y aún más, cuáles características pueden y valen la pena ser enseñadas.

Existen en la bibliografía especializada múltiples ejemplos de cómo explotar los elementos para-lingüísticos del video, entre los que destacan los trabajos de Steinbach (2006) quien ofrece en Internet un material de video que se enfoca en la mímica y los gestos de los protagonistas; Marg (2006) quien comparte su experiencia de trabajar con elementos para-lingüísticos del video utilizando videos de Mr. Bean; y Gebhardt (2004) quien muestra la forma de utilizar cortos de películas con el fin de diseñar ejercicios para enseñar inglés como segunda lengua.

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[3] Agradecemos la colaboración del Mtro. Enrique Villanueva de la SEC del estado de Sonora por su valiosa colaboración para la elaboración de este apartado.

Para la obtención de este tipo de material, los maestros de inglés pueden grabar la programación de la televisión regional comercial y posteriormente analizar cuál material del que se grabó tiene potencial para ser utilizado con fines pedagógicos. Después de seleccionado el material, se analiza de nuevo para determinar las actividades que pueden ser diseñadas. Como este material será utilizado para la explotación de sus elementos para-lingüísticos no importa si el material obtenido se encuentra en la lengua materna de los estudiantes, puesto que se podrían utilizar fragmentos del video sin sonido.

Conclusión

Vivimos en una sociedad adicta a la televisión por lo que no sólo es posible sino necesario sacar provecho de dicha adicción, adaptando y explotando el video como una herramienta de enseñanza y de aprendizaje. En este artículo tratamos de demostrar la aplicabilidad del video para los cursos de inglés como lenguas extranjeras; mostramos de qué manera es posible lograr lo anterior; y proporcionamos sitios donde el profesor puede obtener materiales o herramientas para elaborarlos él o ella misma y/o sus alumnos. ¡A ver se ha dicho!

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Helping Native-English-Speaking Teachers
Adapt Themselves to EFL Teaching: A Chinese Perspective

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With the globalization of English and the rapid increase in the number of English learners around the world (Block & Cameron, 2002; Nunan, 2001), Native-English-Speaking (NES) teachers have become an integral part of EFL teaching in many non-English-speaking countries. After initial training in teaching techniques and a brief exposure to life and culture in the host countries, many of these teachers begin to wonder whether what they want to do and what they are or will be doing in EFL teaching are the same thing. This feeling can get worse when they have actually started teaching, and eventually the teachers may end up having to work at something for which they have no real motivation. Similarly, the types of relationships they have with learners and the people around them tend to be ineffective and frustrating because of cultural differences and a lack of stimulation at work.

To understand why such a phenomenon in NES teachers' classroom teaching occurs, I will examine NES teachers' problems in EFL teaching by looking at their work in the Chinese context. I will first attempt to explore the obstacles that inhibit NES teachers' classroom performance, and analyze how EFL students' classroom learning is adversely affected by these problems. Then, I discuss the sources leading to the development of such problems in China. The discussion emphasizes the necessity of considering EFL students' learning styles and students' actual needs in EFL learning. Finally, I offer some suggestions for helping NES teachers adapt themselves better to EFL teaching.

Although this paper explores and discusses EFL teaching carried out by NES teachers in China, the problems listed in this paper and suggestions for helping NES teachers improve their EFL teaching may apply to NES teachers, teacher educators, EFL administrators, and host teachers in the Mexican context and elsewhere. English is taught as a foreign language in both China and Mexico. An understanding of the characteristics of traditional Mexican educational practices and Mexican learning styles should be useful knowledge both for NES teachers who are already teaching in Mexico and for those who are interested in teaching English in Mexico in the future. This understanding may also be useful knowledge for those who do research on the teaching of English to students in other non-English-speaking countries.

Problems in NES Teachers' Classroom Performance

In this section, I present some problems that Chinese students encounter in NES teachers' classes. I obtained these data from several sources, including descriptions in books and published articles, my collection of student feedback regarding NES teachers' EFL teaching, and my own teaching experience in China. NES teachers' problems in Chinese EFL teaching are classified into the following three categories:

Insensitivity to students' linguistic problems
    Absence of learning English as a second or foreign language
    Ignorance of students' mother tongue

Mismatch in teaching and learning styles
    Global vs. analytical
    Open vs. closure-oriented
    Intuitive-random vs. concrete-sequential
    Hands-on vs. visual

Unfamiliarity with the local culture and the educational system
    Casual behavior in the classroom
    Shortage of local examples
    Failure to match their instruction with the school's expectations

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Insensitivity to Students' Linguistic Problems

Most Chinese EFL students regarded NES teachers' insensitivity to their linguistic problems as the most serious obstacle to their efficient learning in class. Two factors were reported as sources of this insensitivity. The first, the NES teachers' own lack of experience in learning English as a second or foreign language, was the most obvious. The students stated that NES teachers were lacking in insight into typical problems that Chinese students meet in the process of learning English, and were unable to anticipate Chinese students' language difficulties because they themselves had not gone through the complex process of learning English as a foreign language. They further complained that NES teachers did not know exactly what Chinese students needed in English class, so sometimes they could not find the most efficient ways to teach. The second factor that made NES teachers insensitive to students' linguistic problems was their ignorance of the students' mother tongue. Most Chinese students reported that NES teachers were unaware of how the students' mother tongue and the target language differed. In teaching some vocabulary with abstract meaning, for example, NES teachers could not help students understand these words by comparing the words to those in the students' first language.

Mismatch in Teaching and Learning Styles

A mismatch between teaching and learning styles is another problem for students in learning English well in NES teachers' classes. Some students stated that they felt uncomfortable with their NES teacher's global style in the teaching of English reading and listening. In most reading or listening classes, NES teachers only laid emphasis on the overall meaning of a passage. They often asked students to use holistic strategies such as guessing or inferencing, to search for the main idea, but seldom paid attention to the analysis of linguistic details. The students felt that they could learn English better if the NES teacher would explain the entire text sentence by sentence and analyze difficult language structures, rhetorical features, and styles.

Another NES teacher style identified by the Chinese students as inconsistent with their ways of learning is the open style. They reported that ever since they started their education they had learned to expect an accurate answer to each question. However, this was not what they could always expect from a NES teacher. They reported that they would frequently get multiple correct answers whenever they asked a NES teacher a question. Some students argued that everything in their course studies was determined by their examination results and that if a teacher did not give them accurate answers they could not expect to get a high score in the examination.

Closely related to the open style is the intuitive-random style that NES teachers adopted in their classroom teaching. In general, teachers with intuitive-random style deal best with the "big picture" in an abstract, nonlinear, random-access mode and constantly diverge from the planned topic of discussion by telling an amusing anecdote (Oxford, et al., 1992). Many students held that NES teachers' intuitive-random style in class was helpful in creating a friendly and relaxed atmosphere in the classroom, but that such a style was in conflict with their traditional way of learning. They insisted that a teacher behave like an authority, and carry out his or her teaching in a concrete-sequential manner.

The final teaching style that the students felt uneasy with was the hands-on style. Some students mentioned that NES teachers were frequently prone to organize various types of games, role-plays and debates. Although they reiterated that they felt comfortable and relaxed when involved in these communicative activities, they also felt that NES teachers went to an extreme in organizing these teaching activities so frequently. They further pointed out they would prefer to do more reading and other more tangible learning tasks.

Unfamiliarity with the Local Culture and the Educational System

The final problem students found when attending NES teachers' classes was that the teachers were unfamiliar with Chinese culture and the educational system. Many students complained that NES teachers behaved in such a casual manner in class that it was hard for them to focus their attention on learning. In China, a teacher is a respected person who should behave solemnly and seriously towards his or her students, especially in class.

In addition, unfamiliarity with the local culture made it impossible for NES teachers to use local examples in their elucidation of concepts. A common complaint of students was the difficulty they found when NES teachers based their examples on their own experiences outside China. The students were sometimes puzzled by NES teachers' explanations, because they could not see the point implied in these examples. Actually there are many local examples in China which can be used instead to facilitate the students' learning process.

A further concern was the lack of familiarity with the Chinese educational system. Many students commented that some NES teachers failed to match their instruction with the school's expectations or with the students' needs by not following the school syllabus. Such a failure to exactly follow the curriculum made the students particularly worried about their upcoming examinations. Although the examinations are locally set, there are strong expectations on the part of students and the school administration that the content and form should be similar to those of the textbooks. Some students commented that they could not expect to pass the examination if they had not learnt what they were supposed to have learned.

Origins of the Problems in NES Teachers' Classes

The above problems are not uncommon in NES teachers' teaching practices in China, making it difficult for Chinese students to learn English efficiently (Rao, 2002b). In an EFL class like this, the students tend to be bored and inattentive, perform poorly on tests, become discouraged about the course, and possibly conclude that they are not good at learning English and give up. For their part, NES teachers, confronted by low test scores, may become overtly critical of their students or begin to question their competence as teachers and find themselves insufficiently prepared for the job they have been given. Some may even return home without fulfilling their contracts rather than compromising their "pedagogical integrity" (Cahill, 1996:5). Each of these problems, however, seems to originate in Chinese cultural values, the traditional educational pattern and the Chinese EFL setting.

Cultural values in the Chinese context

Three sources of Chinese culture are often claimed to have an important effect on the attitudes and behaviors of Chinese learners (Brislin, 1993). The first is collectivism and the interdependent self in Chinese culture. Chinese society is marked by a strong tradition of filial piety and familism which encompass a non-individual collectivistic orientation among the Chinese (Brislin, 1993). Such a strong collective orientation has resulted in socialization for achievement. In the Chinese cultural context, achievement orientation is based firmly on collectivist rather than individual values. This can have a highly motivating effect on Chinese students because success and failure in a collectivist culture affect not just oneself but the whole family or group. This explains why Chinese students always pay so much attention to all kinds of tests, and would exert themselves in order to obtain a high score in each examination.

The final well-recognized source of influence on attitudes and behaviors of Chinese learners originates in the people's attitudes to power and authority. In China, people in lower positions are expected to obey those who are in higher positions and people who are considered humble should show respect to those who are regarded as superior in society. When this is applied to language learning, it is apparent that teachers are considered to be authorities and students to be "passive" learners. Teachers tell students what to do and students listen and obey.

Traditional patterns of education in China

For a long time, Chinese education has been dominated by a teacher-centered, book-centered approach with an emphasis on repetition, review and rote-memory (Rao, 2002b). Several distinctive features emerge from the above description. First, the teacher is considered as the "fount of knowledge", and it is the teacher who decides which knowledge is to be taught and the students accept and learn this knowledge. In order for teachers to run each course well, a selection of good textbooks is especially important. Teachers devote almost all their effort in class focusing on texts, explaining, analyzing, paraphrasing, asking questions, practicing patterns, reading aloud, retelling, etc., until the students very nearly, if not exactly literally, learn every word by heart.

Such a teacher-dominated and text-focused classroom teaching approach results in a great emphasis on linguistic details and accuracy. For most Chinese students, there is a keen interest in the exact understanding of every word, a low tolerance of ambiguity and a focus on discrete points and specific syntactic constructions (Rao, 2002b). To facilitate the process of gaining linguistic knowledge and a thorough understanding, Chinese students employ repetition as a route to understanding, and make a constant review of what they have learnt (Biggs, 1996).

The Chinese EFL setting

Unlike ESL teaching in English-speaking countries, English teaching in China is characterized by some distinctive features. For example, instead of learning English as a tool for survival in business and every-day life, English language education is a required academic subject which is a part of the state education program and shaped by rigid and mandatory top-down educational policies, and by teaching practices sanctioned by tradition (Liu, 1998). Teachers at all levels in China are expected to cover the curriculum developed by the government. Based on this centralized curriculum, almost all English textbooks are designed to teach grammar, reading, and writing, with little emphasis on listening and speaking.

Another feature of EFL teaching in China is that much of it takes places in the classroom, with little exposure to the language outside class. In general, class time per week for English in most schools in China is limited to about 2-4 hours, far fewer than intensive ESL teaching programs. While such limited class time may be just enough to help students understand how the language works, it does not allow them to adequately practice using it.

Suggestions for Helping NES Teachers Adapt Themselves to EFL Teaching

As we have seen above, English teaching in China is deeply rooted: 1) in Chinese culture; 2) in the basic concepts of its educational system and 3) in its EFL setting. Teaching English in China without understanding these factors could lead to failure (Rao, 2002a). Here I offer some suggestions for helping ESL-oriented NES teachers to be aware of their students' cultural and educational backgrounds and adapt themselves more effectively to a more EFL-style of teaching. I have organized these suggestions according to three different, yet interconnected, groups of individuals: host country teaching colleagues, teacher educators in TESOL degree-granting programs, and NES teachers planning to work overseas.

Suggestions for host country teaching colleagues

First of all, recently-hired NES teachers need to adapt themselves to EFL teaching through the assistance of local teaching colleagues. Once NES teachers have started working, host teachers should involve NES teachers in an orientation program, which should include (a) a description of the curriculum and where the NES teachers' courses fit in, (b) the types and times of English examinations that students take, (c) the role of the textbooks in the curriculum (e.g., Is it necessary to cover them completely? Are exams based on textbook content?), and (d) the types of methodology students are used to. Obviously, a direct way for NES teachers to see how classes are taught is for colleagues to invite them to observe

their classes. In fact, there are many other aspects in which NES teachers and host teachers can complement each other. While NES teachers possess native language authenticity, familiarity and new methodological insight (Govardhan, et al., 1999), host teachers also have advantages, according to Medgyes (1994), in "providing a good model" (p. 55), "teaching language learning strategies" (p. 55), "supplying information about the English language (p. 57), "anticipating and preventing language difficulties (p. 61), "showing empathy" (p. 63), and "benefiting from the mother tongue" (p. 65). Medgyes (1994) further points out that, given a favorable mix, various forms of collaboration are possible both in and outside the classroom-- teachers using each other as language consultants, for example, or teaching in tandem.

In addition, host teachers should offer NES teachers some lessons in the students' first language and help them get some insights into the differences between the Chinese and English languages, for example. The more NES teachers learn about the host language, the better able they will be to teach (i.e., to predict students' difficulties), to move about independently in the country, and to fit into the culture.

Suggestions for teacher educators in TESOL degree-granting programs

In Western-based TESOL programs, the main focus is usually on ESL teaching in Western public schools and colleges (Carrier, 2003), and there exists strong ethnocentrism in TESOL teacher education (Liu, 1998). While some NES teachers are indeed trained to teach English as a foreign language, the TESOL programs for this group of trainees should also focus on EFL teaching in non-Western settings. Liu (1998) suggests that teacher educators involve trainees in ways which would ensure that the program has as close a bearing as possible to their individual teaching concerns and contexts.

Several approaches could be taken to ensure such a close bearing on practical EFL teaching. The first is to give teacher trainees an opportunity to explore "why students in a particular country want to learn English; what the policy of the government of the country regarding English is; what constraints on the teacher's innovativeness might exist; and what social, cultural, and academic adjustments the prospective teachers will have to fit into the existing setup" (Govardhan, et al., p. 124). Secondly, teacher educators must provide courses that help enhance teacher trainees' geographical and anthropological literacy of other countries. EFL teaching is nowadays carried out worldwide. Each country has its own particular social, cultural and working conditions. To help local students learn English effectively, the teacher trainees should learn to respect their students' communities, their culture, their educational systems, and the conditions and ethics of work. Thirdly, an introductory course should be offered to provide teacher

trainees with "the ability to assess the propriety, feasibility, applicability, and practicality of any one or all of the methods against a certain set of political, sociocultural, and pedagogic situations that they are going to be working in" (Govardhan, et al., 1999, p. 123). Finally, prospective EFL teachers should also be trained in areas ancillary, but essential, to classroom teaching, like the differences between EFL and ESL teaching, curriculum and material development, testing and evaluation, EFL administration, the management of resources and learning supports, and the use of information technology.

Suggestions for NES teachers

As linguistic and cultural ambassadors, NES teachers play a unique and important role in helping EFL students master the English language. However, the problems listed above have demonstrated that NES teachers' classroom teaching often faces resistance or even rejection.

To avoid such resistance, NES teachers should, first of all, be very sensitive to the local customs and habits of host countries. They should never feel that they are there to change and uplift the lives of the people in the host countries. Patterns of behavior are so fixed by the time a person reaches the age of 16 or 17 that a teacher cannot hope to influence them in 2 or 3 hours a week when the other 6 or 7 hours a day in class and 10 out of class reinforce them. On the other hand, NES teachers should realize that their personal talents will find outlets in guiding the changes that may progressively emerge. Secondly, NES teachers should be open to, and accepting of, the general and academic culture of their hosts; they cannot assume that their methodology is better than that of their host colleagues, that their training is more advanced, and that they are more privileged because they are native speakers. The final implication is related with how to narrow the gap between teaching and learning styles. As evidenced by the aforementioned data in this paper and confirmed by Rao's (2002a) study, there exists an identifiable teaching-learning conflict between NES teachers and Chinese students. Bridging the gap between teaching and learning styles has, therefore, become a crucial step for NES teachers to improve their classroom teaching. Here are some recommendations for NES teachers to deal with EFL students' learning styles and strategies in the English classroom:

    Diagnose learning styles and develop self-aware EFL learners
    Adapt their teaching style to create teacher-student style matching through a variety of activities
    Foster guided style-stretching and encourage changes in students' behaviors
    Provide activities with different groupings
    Include different learning styles in the lesson plan (for more details, see Rao, 2002a)

Conclusion

In this article I have presented the problems that Chinese EFL students encounter in NES teachers' classes and provided some evidence that there are some conflicts between NES teachers' teaching styles and Chinese students' learning styles. To gain an understanding of these problems, I have provided some insights into Chinese culture and the educational system. In fact, only when NES teachers understand and recognize the roots of their problems in EFL teaching will they be better prepared to develop instructional alternatives to accommodate their EFL students' practical needs. In these aspects, I have offered some suggestions for teaching colleagues, teacher educators and NES teachers themselves, which would hopefully assist them in facilitating their EFL teaching.

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Becoming a Part of a "Community" Online in Order to Acquire Language Skills

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It is a common belief among foreign language students that one needs to go to the country where the language is spoken to really master it (Carter, 1999). Students may not be that far off the mark. Sociocultural theory, which goes back all the way to the work of Vygotsky and Piaget, stresses the need for socialization and acculturalization (adapting to the norms of a new or foreign community) for all learning in general and for language learning specifically. Socialization and acculturalization are the processes by which human beings learn the rules and norms they need to function in a certain social group or community, whether that community is a country, a group identified by race, ethnicity, religion, etc. or a common goal such as a profession (Lantolf, 2006). However, for foreign language learners, the problem has always been how to get or duplicate that experience. Second language learners who learn a language in the country where it is spoken can simply walk out of the classroom and be presented with opportunities to put what they have learned to the test to reinforce and expand upon abstract concepts, such as grammatical rules through socialization. In other words, students can go test what the teacher taught them in the real world. Generally, foreign language learners in their home country have no such opportunity. Outside of the classroom, there is no opportunity and no need to do much more than what is necessary to succeed in the classroom environment, as it is the only "culture" they need to adapt to. Second language learners, on the other hand, have the opportunity and the need to do more than just simply pass tests. They need to survive in a wider environment, and the purpose of the classroom is to be able to do that more quickly. So for the foreign language learner, the need to adapt ends upon leaving the classroom while for the second language learner, the need begins there.

With such motivating factors (or lack thereof), it becomes clear why foreign language learners can be at such a disadvantage. This is not to say that attempts to imitate real world situations, such as conversation round tables, are completely useless; however, they suffer the same problem as more traditional classroom instruction – the restriction to an academic environment, usually with fellow students and teachers, who, more often than not, speak the students' native language as well. So we return to the essential element that the classroom lacks: contact with social situations in which the student must use the target language in order to communicate and adapt. Prior to the Internet, such contact was necessarily expensive (travelling or even talking by telephone) or extremely slow (communicating with pen pals). However, now some options exist that not only

permit students to interact with real speakers of the language in a cost-effective way, but have evolved to create social situations or communities in which the student can and must integrate. Whereas the telephone can provide immediate interaction with a member of the community the students are interested in, they cannot be a member of this community without being there. Through chat rooms, online role-playing games and more intellectual pursuits such as Wikipedia, the Internet provides "spaces" carved out of a larger "virtual world" in which communities are established based on common interests and goals. These communities parallel the communities humans create face-to-face, using one of the most basic tools we have – language (Moshell, 2007). While this use of language may lack intonation or visual cues at the present time because of technological limitations (however, these are steadily being overcome), the very basic elements that the second language learner faces naturally are found here as well: people outside the classroom in a situation where use of the target language is mandated in order to communicate and be accepted into the society, whether that acceptance takes the form of simply accomplishing a task like saying "hello," finding a needed object, or forming friendships with people thousands of miles away.

Sociocultural theory

What ties the various forms of computer-mediated-communication together with foreign language learning is concepts based on sociocultural theory. Sociocultural researchers take no interest in grammatical or other mechanical issues associated with language but rather are interested in how it functions for communication and how a learner develops confidence using this tool. The goal of teaching or learning in a classroom environment is to allow students to master rudimentary concepts such as grammar more quickly than they could by simply figuring out the rules on their own, but always with an eye toward the ability to use these concepts outside of the classroom, unaided by a teacher. The proof that the students have learned is not shown by passing a test, but rather by showing that the students can use what they have learned outside of the classroom. The goal of learning in general is to become a functioning and contributing member of a community, whether that community is another country or a member of a profession. Therefore, learning is social first, and learners themselves need to be active by interacting in their learning environment and that learning environment needs to be the "real world" or barring that, something that simulates it as closely as possible (Lantolf, 2006). The important thing to note here is that language needs to be used as a tool, a means to achieve a goal, not simply the goal itself. And like any other tool, language needs to be employed for the purpose it is designed for in order to be mastered. That use is communication with members of the target community the learner wants to be associated with. However, by virtue of it being "foreign," the target language is not being learned in the geographical region where it is commonly used. Assuming that the vast majority of foreign language learners

cannot travel to another country to "properly" learn the language, what can be done?

Virtual communities

Therefore, according to sociocultural theory, the learner needs to have some kind of community to adapt and integrate into in order for learning to take place. The term "community" like many other sociological concepts has problems with inconsistency and ambiguity and true consensus for a scientific definition does not exist. However, most sociological definitions of the term include: people in a group, social interaction and some kind of common tie or ties as well as the sharing of a "territory" to create and maintain social cohesion (Hamman, 1997). In communities that exist in the physical world, it is not difficult to see how all of these tie together, whether that community is a country or a group of English-as-a-foreign-language teachers who have a convention once a year. So when foreign language students feel the need to go to another country to truly learn the language, they look for ways to involve themselves in social interaction with a group of people who congregate in a specific place and have the common tie of using the target language. Without being physically present, is there some other way to (re)create such conditions?

Internet-based resources may prove to be the next best thing to physically being in another country. The use of media such as chat rooms, online role-playing games and Wikipedia can provide foreign language students "communities" in which they must use the target language for authentic purposes. The idea that media could help define new communities is not really new. Media such as newspapers, television and telephones have been studied sociologically for their effects on consciousness-raising in large-scale communities such as nations (Anderson, 1991). The difference with the World Wide Web is that not only can people in different physical locations be in low-cost long-term contact, but more importantly, the Internet provides tools such as web pages and chat "channels" as kinds of "territories" for groups of people to claim and organize as their own. Even though such spaces are mostly imagined, with possibly as little as a white box with words and a name on the screen, virtual communities evolve organically and most often by the exact same mechanisms used in the real world such as assigning roles and recruiting members by association. And like any other community, the use of language is essential. Most of the peculiarities of online communication, like the use of icons, called "emoticons" (e.g. :D) have been developed to fulfill the same functions as intonation and body language. These are agreed upon by the evolving community (Breeze, 1997).

The use of the term "virtual community" goes back to a book of the same name written in 1993 by Howard Rheingold. In this book, Rheingold talks about the interaction and emotional attachments he had online since 1985 when he

discovered WELL ("Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link")—a computer conferencing system with chat and email capabilities. Then he makes comparisons of the well-known and often-used tools at the time--email, online conferencing, MUDs and MOOs (early forms of virtual reality environments where multiple users are connected simultaneously) with more familiar ways of forming communities to show that the same basic dynamics apply. Rheingold defines virtual communities as "… social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace" (Rheingold, 1993). What makes virtual and "real-world" communities equal are the processes we use to form them, to maintain them as well as the motivating forces such as the need to be accepted by people who become important to us. Almost all of these processes and forces take shape using language appropriately to attain the desired social acceptance.

Types of online communities to explore

Computer and Internet technology have become a lot more powerful since Rheingold started experimenting with online communities in 1985. Interaction time is now faster and new ways of communicating have become available. However, English students at ITESM – Campus Toluca in Mexico using chat rooms, online role-playing games and Wikipedia, report very similar experiences to Rheingold's: making friends and caring about what goes on in their lives, with positive results, as will be seen below. They also report that combined with their prior knowledge of how crucial computer skills are in today's world, being part of an online community increases their motivation as they have the chance to talk to people all around the world,. This echoes ideas and results that have been previously reported by research such as Warschauer's (1997) in the 90s and Moshell's (2007) in the 21st century. Chat rooms, online role-playing games and Wikipedia were chosen as the media to use for these students because most students had already had some experience with all three, although probably not for the same purposes and intensity as they would have as part of their English classes.

Chat rooms

This online resource has withstood the test of time but with some new twists. The basic white box with black text (or vice versa) still exists but now usually comes with new bells and whistles, like options for multi-colored fonts and images. MSN Messenger is probably the best-known chat program and is often-used by students, but I would like to focus on those chats that cater to EFL learners as well as on some really new and innovative ideas. Dave's ESL Café (http://host8.123flashchat.com/eslcafe/) is one of the older resources on the web for both EFL students and teachers. It and the newer ESL Clubhouse Chat (http://www.englishclub.com/esl-clubhouse.htm) are probably the best resources

for students at the intermediate to low-advanced levels. Both are designed specifically for language learners and both are moderated. This means that if participants (community members) are being abusive, they can be kicked out of the chat room, thereby creating a safer, more comfortable learning environment. The only drawback to these chatrooms could be the lack of native English speakers who participate and the temptation to chat in one's native language if and when the opportunity arises.

As a result of advances in technology, two other chat options that did not previously exist are voice-chat, and chat based on a three dimensional (3D) environment. An example of the first is Skype (www.skype.com), whose format intends to mimic that of a telephone, with the added bonus of having text chat to accompany it. In fact, for a fee one can dial a real telephone from the computer on Skype. Added features include search functions, where users can search for chat partners based on language spoken, location, sex, and age and a text chat option, which makes a convenient back-up when users encounter pronunciation difficulties. The major drawback for voice chat programs like Skype, MSN and Yahoo voice-chat is that they use a lot of bandwidth. Wide scale use by students may therefore not be feasible. Secondly, unless one uses a web-cam, which uses even more bandwidth, students are limited to a disconnected voice with no visual cues, much like they would have using a telephone. Like a telephone, voice chat programs are limited to one-on-one communication only, not allowing for practice in group conversations.

Chat in a 3D environment still consists of a rectangular screen with words typed in, but in sites like Cybertown (www.cybertown.com), the chat is set in the lower half of the screen while the upper half is mostly taken up by 3D images of certain town locations like the main plaza. The program also allows users to build homes in the neighborhood of their choice as well as to get a job to earn money to buy virtual items from the markets and from other users. In this type of problem, the sense of physical location is duplicated as much as possible to simulate the experience of being present in a group or community. The images imitate spaces we have created in the physical world (like plazas and houses) with the goal of relating one to another in much the same way we are ordinarily used to.

Since 2003 at ITESM—Campus Toluca, students have been encouraged to use the above resources for various projects for various courses, including those in lower-level classes, with different teachers favoring different chat options. Of course, for use as part of a university course, an evaluation of the students' experiences becomes a necessity. Since the goal of the project is for the students to assimilate as much as possible into the chosen community, and to have authentic interaction with people outside of the classroom, evaluation needs to reflect this type of learning. The type of evaluation that seems to work best is a combination of a chart where students record short notes about each session's experiences and a short (150-300 word) essay at the end of the assignment period to allow students to

expand in more detail on the more interesting aspects of their interactive experience. Other forms of evaluation were tried, such as printing chat conversations and then having the teachers correct grammatical mistakes, but this practice was soon abandoned because it was found that students subsequently severely limited the way they communicated in order to avoid making errors. The reflective essays have the added benefit of monitoring how appropriate the projects are for students as students reflect on what they learned and why. Since 2003, various modifications have been made in these projects based on what students have written in their essays.

What students think of chat projects

One advantage of having students write short essays about their chat experiences is that it gives the teacher really good feedback about what is important to them. Chat is the most-commonly used form of computer-mediated-communication used at ITESM—Campus Toluca and we have had several years of student assignments to learn from. However, the results of projects done by the author's English Advanced A and Advanced B classes in the fall of 2007 can serve as examples. English Advanced A students did text chat using any chat program of their choice. They had to chat 8 different days for a total of 200 minutes. For English Advanced B, the requirement was a total of 120 minutes due to the fact that the students were limited only to voice chat. The only restriction on chat partners was that they not be in Spanish-speaking countries. Contact with native English speakers was not required because the global nature of English-language communication makes speaking with other non-native speakers authentic as long as the students did not share an L1 with their partners, thereby using English as a lingua franca. Evaluation was carried out by means of the log and essay combination mentioned earlier. English Advanced B students also wrote logs and essays about their experiences.

As can be seen in Appendix A, students in both classes overwhelmingly (over 85%) reported finding someone interesting and worthwhile to talk to even though a significant number found problems with finding someone at the beginning (23% in text chat, 45% in voice chat). The main reasons for the difficulty in finding someone were either no one was online (only reported with voice chat), people were not answering student-initiated conversations (31%), or worse, being sexually-propositioned or subjected to foul language (22%). One interesting note was that only 4 of a total of 82 students mentioned feeling rejected because of their accent or their nationality. The probable reason for this is that most students found chat partners initially by using the English-as-a-foreign language sites and the "tolerant" global nature of the World Wide Web. Both situations would lead to communities of people with more international mindsets because all participants choose to be members of a community where they are likely to encounter people different from themselves. In contrast, learners who travel to countries where the language is spoken are likely to encounter those who have no wish to interact with non-native

speakers as well as those who do. Many students also found subsequent contacts by meeting friends of their initial contacts, leading to social networking.

In spite of the initial problems they encountered, most students reported that the project was worthwhile. Most students went over the minimum time assigned. This is especially true in voice chat where the average amount of time spent online was 207 minutes whereas only 120 were required. This could be due to the motivating factor of having the added feature of intonation to make the experience seem more "real." A number of students reported using web cams with some of their contacts to further enhance the experience. The text chat results were not as impressive with an average of 229 minutes where 200 were required.   It is not clear from the essays, however, if this meant that students preferred voice chat since about 7 out of 30 students from the Advanced A class (text chat only) underperformed significantly in the assignment in a number of ways in addition to the total number of minutes spent on the project. However, it is important to note that many of the conversations, whether in text or voice format, were about very similar topics and students in both classes chose conversation partners who were of similar ages and had similar interests, much as they would in any other situation.   Many also reported the desire to continue contact with their chat partners after the end of the project.

Role Playing Games

Role-playing games (RPGs) are activities where participants become part of a story, usually a fantasy-type story, where they either work together and/or against each other. RPGs were originally played on paper with pencils and dice, but since the 1990s nearly all RPGs have become computer-based, with the computer acting as a player and/or referee.   RPG scenarios can be as simple as Crimson Room's (http://www.fasco-csc.com/index_e.php) goal of escaping from a locked room, but more often the scenario is a quest or journey, where players become a fantasy character and must use their skills to obtain treasure and experience. Some popular online RPGs include: Fairyland
(http://www.1010game.com/asp/downloadpage.asp), Runescape
(http://www.runescape.com/) and the simply-titled Quest
(http://www.questrpg.org/).

In most chat rooms, the purpose is basically just to talk, so the only thing participants see is a blank screen with words on it. RPG programs, however, need to display images of participants (usually as simple animated creatures), landscapes, and objects such as weapons and treasure to find and possess. These additions give a sense of physical space along with the ability to converse with other players. The context of a game/quest provides participants with a common interest – the development of the storyline of the game as well as the development of their own

particular characters. Communication, physical interaction and common goals are elements of community as noted above in the introduction.

Brian David Phillips (1993) explores RPGs and their ability to foster language acquisition in *Role Playing Games and the English as a Foreign Language Classroom*. The major advantage that role playing games have is that they contextualize language into functions such as buying and selling, making requests, planning strategies with other players and receiving instructions/training to do specifics tasks, such as building a fire for cooking. Participation in an RPG mimics many real-world communicative situations, such as buying and selling (as well as a few not-so-real ones such as casting spells). Communication patterns must fit the paradigm of pre-established rules in order to be accepted by other participants and the computer and for the learner to advance in the game. Online RPGs provide an element called "cast members," who can be native speakers of the target language who provide interactivity and community for the learner. These cast members can be persons who participate specifically for the benefit of the language learner or can be incidental contacts (Moshell, 2007). However, a major drawback to RPGs can be the fact that the technological generation gap between students and teachers seems to be very wide with this type of activity (Brox, 2004).

As with chat projects, students also create charts to record notes about each time they participate in the game that they have chosen and then write a reflective essay. The purpose of these is the same as that required for chat projects: to record their experiences and then to reflect upon them afterwards. Like in chat projects, the essays have served as a way to evaluate the usefulness of using RPGs for practicing and improving students' ability in English.

What students think of RPG projects

Projects assigned using an RPG as a medium are evaluated in ways similar to projects based on chats. Students complete a log and an essay describing their experiences in the RPG and reflect on what they learned (such as new vocabulary words, learning from mistakes they made, etc.). RPG projects have been used with far less frequency than chat projects for two possible reasons: 1) since teachers, including the author, are not as familiar or comfortable with RPGs, they tend to be less comfortable assigning and evaluating them, and 2) RPGs require more time for both the teacher and the student to become familiar with the individual programs than chats do.

Student feedback on RPG assignments has almost always included comments about the difficulty of learning the rules of the game, which usually require a lot of time before one is able to actually play. Much of the reason for this is that new players must create their characters and learn certain "survival skills" like making weapons, cooking, earning money, etc. before they can even begin a "quest." In

role-playing games like Runescape (www.runescape.com), other players are online at the same time and one can chat with them to ask for help. Unlike chat rooms where the basic goal is to communicate, however, these players are more often interested in pursuing their own objectives, rather than willing to help a new participant. As Fernando U. put it, sometimes he received help when he asked for it and sometimes he didn't and he became frustrated. At one point in the game, when he was supposed to find a wizard for his quest, he was actually "screaming" (writing in all capital letters, considered rude in online communication) for help but didn't receive it from the other players. He reported that he did eventually find the wizard on his own but his frustration with not being able to connect to the other players was evident. Diego C. and Denisse R. reported feeling alone at times in the game even though they could see the animated icons of the other players around them on the screen doing their own tasks. It is not hard to see this kind of situation's similarity to real life. On the positive side, most players report enjoying the game after getting over the initial "culture shock" and becoming competent in the environment. Denisse R. reported that she "became accustomed to using rare (sic. "strange") words like "dagger" and "quest."

Most students who complete such a project often return to it if the option is offered in the following grading period, usually returning to the same game which they had begun. The reason for this is that they have finally learned the basics of functioning in that society and can enjoy playing the game and the stimulation it provides. By far the most popular game to return to is Runequest. What brings students back to these games is the integration and the abundance of visual cues as well as a well-defined structure. Upon returning to the game, these students report having a sense of belonging and knowing what they should do, no matter who else might be in the game along with them at any given moment. They also report that the game challenges their reading skills in that their comprehension is tested because they have to apply the information they read. Relatively few students who chose this option report finding people with whom they form friendships, however. This is because most conversations with other participants seem to be limited to the needs of the game. It is interesting to note here that while RPGs provide more community in the sense of common goals and a better sense of "territory" than chat projects do, they do not seem to encourage the formation of interpersonal bonds that appear to occur far more frequently with students who choose to chat.

Wikipedia

We have seen that students engage in casual "conversations" in chat room communities, and that role-playing game communities involve the student players in the pursuit of common goals in a well-defined setting. A further step in the extent of the student's involvement, but on a much more serious note, is participation in the Wikipedia community (http://en.wikipedia.org). As with chat and role-playing games, participants in the Wikipedia community can establish a

"presence" online via a "user page" and interact with other community members via "discussion pages." However, the common goal of the Wikipedia community is not simply to talk or to play a game, but rather to develop the now-largest encyclopaedia ever compiled. Because anyone can edit just about any page on Wikipedia, interaction in this community is much more complicated than that of the two previous activities. To fully acculturate into this community, one needs to become familiar with and accept a number of established policies such as a *Neutral Point of View* and *Verifiability*. All community members start out as "editors," and have basic abilities such as editing and creating encyclopaedic entries. As editors interact with other members of the Wikipedia community and make contributions (recorded under their name), they can gain a reputation as a trustworthy member of the community. With this status, they can be nominated by a committee of trusted Wikipedia administrators to join their group, giving the new editors additional duties and privileges such as banning those who intentionally and repeatedly deface entries—these are called "vandals".

Because of its complicated nature, opportunities to experience a larger community are greater. As in any other society, the newcomers have to adapt to the rules of the community they want to be accepted into. The English Advanced B class had their first culture clash when they discovered that registering as groups, as required by the class, turned out to be a violation of the Wikipedia policy of one user only to a username (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WP:U#Sharing_accounts). After negotiation with the Wikipedia community, a compromise was reached. All of the students had to register individually, and then "group pages" (e.g. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:School_and_university_projects/ITESM_Campus_Toluca/Appleteam) were set up to accommodate the group work aspect of our course.

Through these group pages, students quickly started connecting with Wikipedians, getting ideas and valuable feedback about contributions. For example, the entries about *Toluca, State of Mexico* and *State of Mexico*, were thoroughly revised by students with suggestions from "mentors" (see Appendix B) who guided them. This seems to be a major advantage of working with a well-structured site, such as Wikipedia. Conversations seem to be easier to establish, the more goal-oriented the community is and there is less chance of vulgar or otherwise inappropriate behaviour taking place. Wikipedia policy specifically states that talk pages are not forums for idle chat (although some does occur, of course). See Appendix B for a sample of Wikipedia interaction.

Wikipedia was the focus of the English Advanced B course for the period August-December 2007. Students were required to establish their presence in the Wikipedia community and to contribute successfully in several ways, including a final project in which they had to write a complete article for the English language version of Wikipedia from scratch. Students wrote reflective essays at mid-semester about their interim experience and, along with writing the article for the final

evaluation, submitted a portfolio documenting the creation, negotiation with me, their teacher, and other Wikipedians and revision processes leading to the final project. While based on the self-monitoring of their experiences in the community and reflecting on how and why they did (or did not) learn during their experiences, the evaluation process here was more complex simply because the interaction in Wikipedia is more complicated. In addition, students needed to produce a result in the form of a product (revision and/or creation of articles for the encyclopaedia).

What is the same about evaluation for all these types of community interaction is that students (and teachers) need to think critically, to analyze the time spent online to determine which experiences lead to learning, and to evaluate what they learned. Evaluation cannot be a mathematical formula; for example, of the number of vocabulary words and grammatical structures learned/used correctly. Instead, teachers need to use the reflective essays to determine how well students integrated themselves into these communities and converse in a meaningful way. This means communication not as an abstract exercise but rather as a means to perform a function (eg. make friends, complete a goal in a game or write an appropriate article). These are all socially-based tasks and require a community and integration into that community.

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What students think of working with Wikipedia

The August-December 2007 semester was the first time Wikipedia was used as the basis of student projects and the community for them to integrate into. For this reason, we have only one semester's worth of student feedback to work with, plus we cannot reliably state that student evaluation of using Wikipedia is due to the inherent nature of Wikipedia or the issues commonly associated with doing a type of project for the first time. Because the course is part of an ongoing action research project on authentic writing, a survey was given to students one month (after the second grading period), two months (after the third grading period) into the project and after handing in their final assignments. Appendix D contains the questionnaire questions and results. The first part consists of four questions:

   I feel that I am sufficiently familiar with Wikipedia to do the writing assignments for the third partial/ final project.

   I enjoy the time I spend working on Wikipedia.

   I like the mentors and other people I have met on Wikipedia.

   I will probably continue to contribute to Wikipedia after the course is over.

Students ranked their agreement/disagreement with these statements from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). After the second month, students were

also asked (the second part of Appendix C): if they felt that their answers had changed from the first questionnaire and if they had or had not, why or why not?

Some change in attitude in favor of working with Wikipedia is seen in the results for the four statements, especially the statement about feeling familiar enough with Wikipedia to do the upcoming assignments. However, this change is not very significant and along with the statement of working with other Wikipedians online (statement 2), their answers did not change. I did notice that students seemed more comfortable with coming to me for help with writing their contributions, and often seemed disappointed when I told them to ask their questions to other Wikipedians or deferred to an opinion (about what is acceptable content) given by members of the Wikipedian community.

When asked if they thought their perception of working with Wikipedia had changed, opinions were nearly evenly split between those who felt more positively about the experience and those who felt the same or even more negatively. Those who responded more positively seemed to do so because they felt more familiar and comfortable working with Wikipedia. This is probably because in the second partial evaluation, students only created their own personal pages in Wikipedia, met Wikipedians online and learned abstractly about Wikipedia's policies and guidelines. It was not until the third partial that students made actual contributions by modifying an existing article, writing a "stub" (a very short, one-paragraph article) and translating an English Wikipedia article to be included in the Spanish version of Wikipedia. For those whose answers did not change, only three felt positive before the experience and still felt positive afterwards. Fortunately, only one student reported feeling more negatively about Wikipedia after one month of working with it. The rest were simply not persuaded that working with Wikipedia was worthwhile and/or that they were capable of participating in the community.

However, feelings were more positive about the experience once the final projects were handed in. The end of the semester survey contained two open-ended questions: "Do you think you will continue to work with Wikipedia?" and "After this course, are you more motivated or less motivated to continue studying/practicing English on your own in ways other than Wikipedia?" "Why or why not?" For the first question, ten students answered that they would continue with Wikipedia, thirteen stated that they would not and eighteen stated that they might. However, when asked in general if they would continue studying on their own twenty-nine said they would; one said maybe and only one said no (due to time constraints). The most common reason given for why they would continue studying on their own was that the course made them see other ways to practice English and how they need to work to use it better for their career and/or in a globalized world.

Conclusion

The purpose of introducing projects based on chats, role-playing games and Wikipedia is to give English-as-a-foreign-language students an opportunity to be in situations where they must use English in a way that could mimic the experience (at least partially) they would get by being in an English-speaking country. Socio-cultural researchers, beginning with Vygotsky and Piaget, believe that learning is a process of adapting oneself to the intellectual and behavioural norms of the community that one wishes to be a part of. The notion of community, defined as a group of people who share a set of beliefs, expectations and behaviours (including language), can be applied to online, virtual organizations of people such as chat rooms, role-playing games and the pages set up on the Wikipedia website (aside from those of the actual encyclopaedia) to assist contributors in learning the norms of the site as well as in communicating with each other. The reason for this is that researchers like Rheingold have shown that the same kinds of intellectual and emotional connections that we form within our real-world (face-to-face) communities are formed in online communities as well, through the same mechanism used in both kinds of communities – language communication. Therefore, if the social connections are the same and are formed by the same mechanism, students should be able to learn and improve their language skills in online communities as they would in face-to-face communities. This is a significant help to foreign language students who normally do not have the opportunity to interact with a community that uses the language they are trying to learn.

Chat rooms, role-playing games and Wikipedia have been used at ITESM-Campus Toluca since 2003 to try and give students this kind of experience with language outside of textbooks and classrooms. They have been used with varying degrees of success. Chat rooms, the first to be tried, have been the most successful. This is probably because they are relatively simple to enter and to learn their social norms. They are also most familiar to students already, since most students at our campus are frequent users of programs like MSN messenger (provoking their prohibition in our computer labs). Since the paradigm of the interaction is familiar and easy to master, students can move on more quickly to the business of communicating in English, the whole point of the exercise. The problems with online chat have to do with the relatively unregulated nature of most chat rooms, leading to encounters with vulgar and sometimes bigoted people.

RPGs and Wikipedia do not usually have the problem of vulgar and bigoted users; however they do present the initial hurdle of becoming familiar with a complicated interface. This delays any significant participation in the community, as students spend time reading instructions, training to do tasks, and generally becoming familiar with how the interface works. In the case of Wikipedia, significant teacher intervention is necessary in order to help students integrate into the community in a meaningful way within the time constraints imposed by the grading periods and the semester. Their main advantage, however, is that they offer a more task-

oriented environment (more than idle conversation) requiring cooperation and sometimes competition, which can lead to leaving a lasting impression on the chosen community, like the articles for Wikipedia written by students in Advanced B.

For all three options, planning is crucial. Teachers need to have a good idea of what they want their students to do and why. In the more complicated online communities, direct intervention and help with the students' adaptation to the community may be necessary. How well the activity is planned and executed may have a significant impact on the students' experience in the online community and how much they learn in the end. For more complicated interfaces, this can lead to mixed results for students, especially the first time the activity is used in the course. However, good planning and appropriate preparation of the students for the probable difficulties they will face will help them overcome such inconveniences faster and keep them from getting discouraged.

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Appendix A

Summary of most common or interesting student comments made in reflective essays in Advanced A, Group 4, Fall 2007 semester (32 students) (Comments are paraphrased to group similar sentiments)

Text Chat

Problems with spamming/sexually suggestive	3
Problems finding someone to talk to	2
Found someone really interesting to talk to	8
Using text chat to help with verbal communication	7
Technological problems (blockage, unable to hear, lag)	5
Feelings of rejection because of accent	1
Surprised by North American/European independence from family ties	1
Hearing about something difficult to accept	Swaziland – offering cows for a bride Morocco – interrupting conversation for prayer Egypt – marriage proposal

Over 95% of the students went over the minimum time. The average time spent on task was 207 minutes. Required 120. Those who did only 120-135 minutes didn't have the required 8 sessions but simply stopped when they went over 120.

Voice chat Advanced B, Groups 1 and 2, Fall 2007 (57 students) (most common or interesting comments in reflective essays)

Met someone worthwhile	13
Hard to find people to chat with	4
Kicked out of room for using all capital letters (considered "shouting")	1
Stereotyping-bigotry	1
Culture clash	Faced negative reaction when student described Day of the Dead in Mexico
Negotiated meaning/resolved breakdown in communication	6
Problems with sexual come-ons/rude language	2
Problems with vocabulary – expressing oneself	5

Student comment: "Finally, I think that this project is very interesting, to have real communication by Internet."

Appendix B

Sample of student/mentor interaction on Wikipedia from group talk pages.

From Appleteam
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia_talk:School_and_university_projects/ITESM_Campus_Toluca/Appleteam

Some ideas for articles that might need creating or fixing...

As a starting point, I (a mentor) first looked at the article for Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education and noticed that it could use some clean-up and work itself... Some ideas:

The article is out of compliance with the Manual of Style in many instances:
It uses external links in incorrect ways.
It seems to be poorly referenced, and could benefit from correctly formated footnotes and more references in general. See verification policy, citation guidelines, footnote guidelines, reliable sources guidelines for more information.
The article could stand to be expanded and then split. Wikipedia uses what is called the summary style; where a main topic article contains a general overview, and redirects readers to specific sub-articles on each topic. For some examples of some feature quality articles on similar schools that use this summary style well, see Cornell University, Texas A&M University and Indian Institutes of Technology. This last one seems the best to use as a model, since it looks like the Indian Institutes of Technology is organized along a similar model to ITESM.
There's some obvious vandalism in the article. See if you can spot it and fix it.

Also, as a stub, consider creating an article about your specific campus of the ITESM, again as part of making the main article comply with summary style guidelines. Just some ideas to get started. As always, if you need any help with this, ask here or drop a note on my talk page. --Jayron32|talk|contribs 02:46, 14 September 2007 (UTC)

From Lovely Girls
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia_talk:School_and_university_projects/ITESM_Campus_Toluca/LovelyGirls)

[*edit*] *Hello*

I (a mentor) would be happy to help you get started on Wikipedia. Would you like to begin a new article? You may correspond with me here. Just be sure to sign your posts with four ~~~~. Thanks.--Appraiser 11:17, 13 September 2007 (UTC)

Hello. Thank you for contacting us. Yes, we (student group) are thinking about writing a new article basing ourselves in other articles. However we think we should start writing a stub about our topic (women in Mexico). Mary ann21 18:27, 13 September 2007 (UTC)Pr3TtY 9rl

I (a mentor) found a few stubs related to Mexican women whom I found interesting:

Maria de Lourdes Dieck-Assad
Karina Falcon
María de los Angeles Fromow
Flora Guerrero
Amalia Hernández
María Teresa Herrera
Marisa Canales
Olivia Trinidad Arias

I (a mentor) would suggest that you choose one that will have plenty of on-line research material to cite in your article. These could all potentially be expanded into more substantial articles. To create a stub, I would suggest looking at athletes who will be competing in the 2008 Olympics. Many of them probably don't have articles yet. Examples might be:

Carolina Valencia
Samantha Teran
The gymnastics team: Marisela Arizmendi Torres, Maricela Cantú Mata, Yesenia Estrada Martínez, Érika Mariene García Aguiñaga, Elsa García Rodríguez Blancas, and Yeny Ibarra Valdez.

Let me know what you're working on.--Appraiser 18:33, 14 September 2007 (UTC)Thanks a lot for the links. I'll (a student) be looking through them during the weekend. However, I won't probably report back until Monday. Hitoko 05:38, 15 September 2007 (UTC)Hitoko

> You might also look at Chicana feminism and History of women in the United States. I know these are articles about the U.S. and not about Mexico but I am mentioning them to illustrate the point that there are no parallel articles about the Mexican counterparts. There is no article titled Feminism in Mexico, Mexican feminists or History of women in Mexico. Of course, the articles that do exist about feminism in the United States are disputed and you might expect the analogous articles about Mexico to be disputed as well. Working on topics that are controversial can be frustrating because what you write is likely to be challenged, deleted and otherwise trampled upon. Nonetheless, I think these are important articles that need to be written. Are you game to take on this challenge?
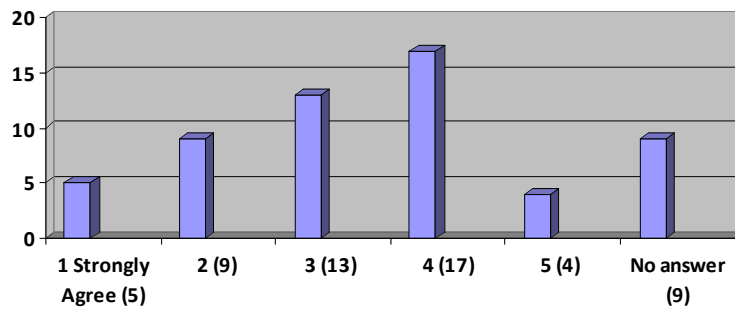> --Richard 05:48, 15 September 2007 (UTC) (a mentor)

Appendix C
Wikipedia Survey Comparison
After one month of working with Wikipedia (end of second partial)
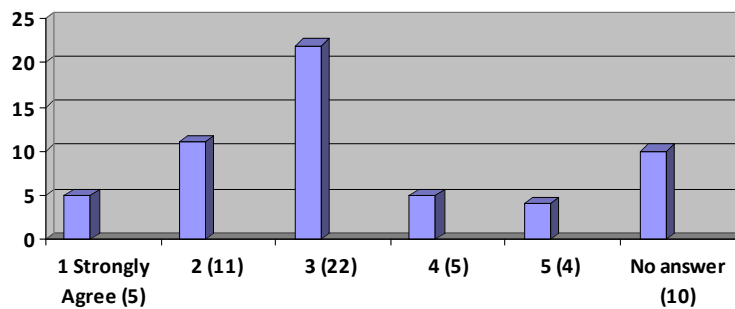**(57 students surveyed)**

1. I feel that I am sufficiently familiar with Wikipedia to do the writing assignments for the third partial
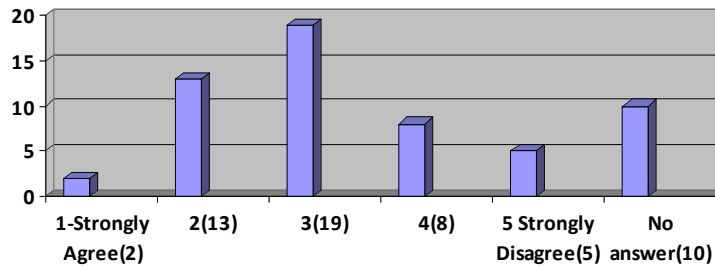
2. I enjoy the time I spend working on Wikipedia.

3. I like the mentors and other people I have met on Wikipedia.

4. I will probably continue to contribute to Wikipedia after the course is over.

After two months of working with Wikipedia (end of third partial, just before doing the final project) (57 students surveyed)

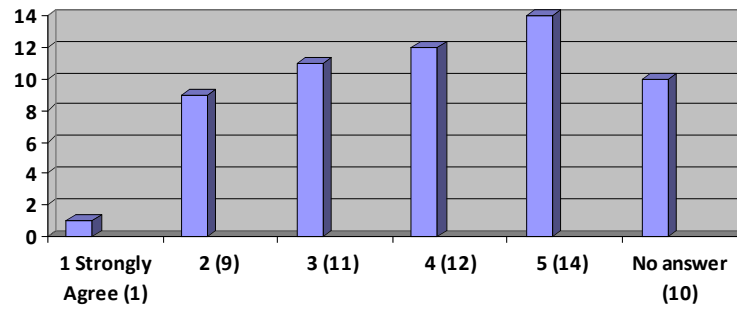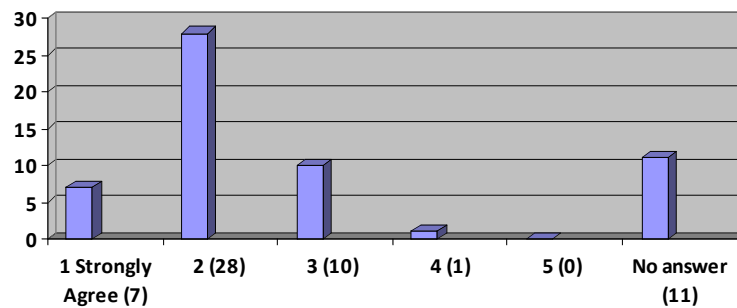1. I feel that I am sufficiently familiar with Wikipedia to do the final project.

2. I enjoy the time I spend working on Wikipedia.

3. I like the mentors and other people I have met on Wikipedia.

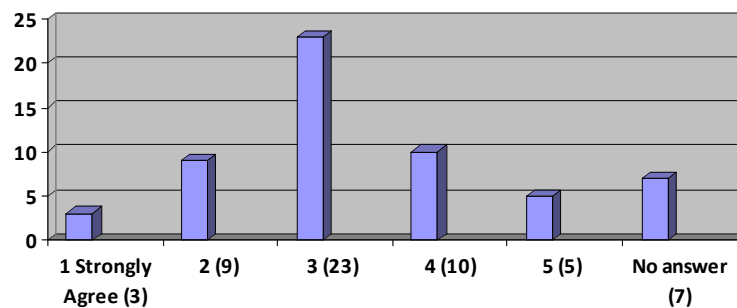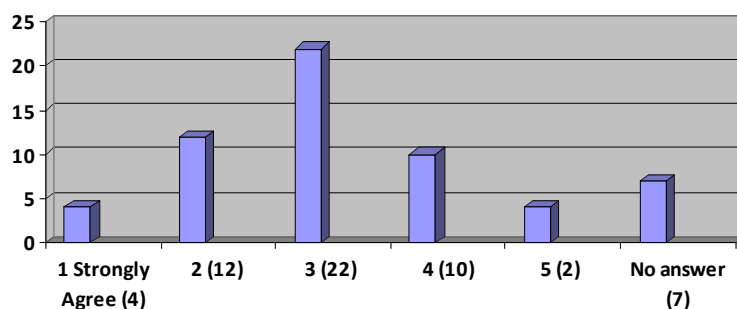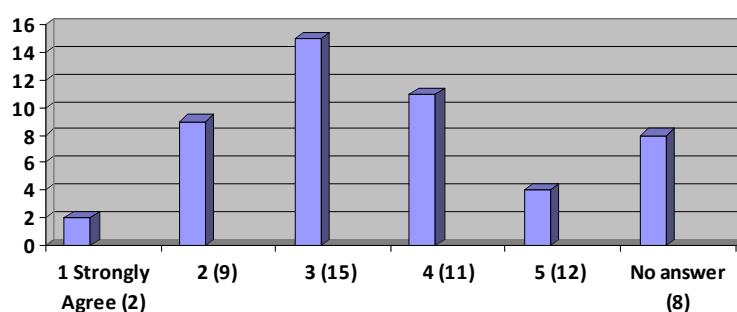4. I will probably continue to contribute to Wikipedia after the course is over.

Are your answers to the above questions different from those you gave after the second partial? Why do you think they have or have not changed? (57 students surveyed)

(Answers below are paraphrased to allow for grouping of similar sentiments)

No. of Ss	Item
18	My answers became more positive about Wikipedia (at least a little)
15	My answers changed because I am more familiar with Wikipedia
15	Working in Wikipedia is a good, proud, enjoyable, real, global experience
12	Doing the modifications and translation assignments in the 2nd grading period helped me understand Wikipedia better
7	The experience improved/was more interesting in the 3rd grading period
Total comments indicating change = 55*	
20	My answers are mostly the same between 2nd and 3rd partial
10	I still do not feel confident working with Wikipedia after making contributions
5	My lack of interest in working with Wikipedia hasn't changed
5	I think Wikipedia is boring and/or not worth the time being put into it
Total comments not indicating change =40*	

*As most students gave multiple comments to this free-form question, the number of responses does not correlate to the number of students who answered the survey (57)

The Versatile Graphic Organizer and its many Guises

By Josefina Santana Villegas
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Introduction

Students in a second language class can sometimes be overwhelmed by the amount of language they have to deal with. Thus, a tool that could help students organize vocabulary into categories, understand the relationship between different concepts, and visualize their prior knowledge could be useful. Such a tool exists and it is called a *graphic organizer*. A graphic organizer is a visual representation of a concept or idea. It can help students make sense of the new learning material by presenting it in a visual display. Graphic organizers are useful for sorting, showing relationships between concepts, making meaning, and managing data (Gallavan & Kottler, 2007). They can help students take advantage of their preferred learning styles and they can also provide different options for assessing or self-assessing learning (Struble, 2007).

In short, the graphic organizer provides support for organizing, understanding and applying information. This kind of support can make a difference for any learner, but is especially useful for students at a beginning level or who have some kind of learning difficulty (Omaggio-Hadley, 1993; Sundeen, 2007).

The purpose of this article is to show how graphic organizers can be used in EFL classes at different ages and levels of proficiency, and to carry out different tasks.

Critical thinking skills and graphic organizers

In 1956, Benjamin Bloom published the *Taxonomy of educational objectives*, which included a listing of the cognitive skills that students need to apply in school and in real-life situations. These skills are classified into six categories: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Bloom, 1956). These are ranked in order from easier to more difficult, with each category including a number of skills.

Table1: Bloom's Taxonomy of the Cognitive Domain

Category	Explanation	Activities
Knowledge	Remember information.	Define, describe, identify, list, match, recall, recognize, select.
Comprehension	Understand the meaning, interpret the information.	Comprehend, distinguish, explain, give examples, interpret, predict
Application	Use the information in a new way.	Apply, construct, demonstrate, modify, produce, solve, use
Analysis	Separate concepts into component parts.	Analyze, break down, compare, contrast, infer, separate
Synthesis	Construct from separate parts.	Categorize, combine, compose, create, generate, plan, summarize, write
Evaluation	Make value judgments.	Compare, conclude, criticize, evaluate, justify

Source: adapted from Bloom (1956)

For example, if we ask students what they remember about a text they read, we are working with *knowledge* and *comprehension* skills. If we ask them to read about a topic, then to listen to a text on the same topic, to summarize each text and to compare or contrast the information in each one, we are working with *analysis* and *synthesis* skills.

Many classroom activities ask students to carry out actions that belong to the categories of knowledge, comprehension, or possibly application, but don't always go into the categories of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, or "higher-order thinking skills". These, however, promote critical thinking that is necessary for success in the real world.

Nowadays, teaching critical thinking skills is becoming increasingly important. Because of the enormous amount of knowledge that has been generated in the past twenty years, it is becoming useless, and perhaps even impossible, to limit our classes to teaching content (Duderstadt, 1997). As Gibson (2002) points out "Whilst knowledge is important, students need the cognitive abilities to solve problems, evaluate, criticise and create; they also need to act independently, be self-motivating and cope flexibly with new situations" (Gibson, 2002: 465). We have to

teach our students the skills they need to find content, discriminate what is valuable from what is not, analyze, summarize, synthesize, and apply what they find to other situations. These are all critical thinking skills.

So, what does this have to do with graphic organizers?

Different types of graphic or visual organizers promote different critical thinking skills in different ways. Graphic organizers have their origins in Ausubel's (1968) advance organizers—devices such as pictures, titles, or grammar reviews that aid comprehension—and and in Anderson's (1977) Schema Theory, which explains the role of background knowledge in comprehension. Concept maps, for example, came out of Novak's 1972 work at Cornell University (Novak & Cañas, 2007) and are based on Ausubel's idea of assimilation of new concepts. Graphic organizers help the students organize their learning into meaningful frameworks that improve understanding and retention (Ausubel, 1968; Novak & Cañas, 2007).

Some advantages of graphic organizers are that they provide useful scaffolding to help students attach the new information they are receiving to what they already know. They also allow students to focus on the specific vocabulary or structures that they need to express certain concepts; they allow the students to engage more actively in the learning process; and they support collaborative learning when students work together to complete them. They "are effective in terms of helping to elicit, explain and communicate information because they can clarify concepts into simple, meaningful display" (Kang, 2004: 58). They do this by helping the learner place the new information onto a kind of map that takes different forms, depending on its purpose.

Graphic organizers can be used in a variety of classes and in different ways. They are useful for planning and drafting compositions (Sundeen, 2007), for enhancing reading comprehension (Gallavan & Kottler, 2007), for developing students' argumentation skills (Nussbaum & Schraw, 2007), and for self-, peer-, and teacher-assessment (Novak & Cañas, 2007; Struble, 2007). They can be used at the elementary (Weisman & Hansen, 2007), secondary (Sundeen, 2007), or tertiary (Nussbaum & Schraw, 2007) levels.

The versatile graphic organizer

Visual organizers can be divided into four different categories: conceptual, hierarchical, cyclical, and sequential (Struble, 2007).

Conceptual organizers, such as Compare and Contrast Matrices or Venn diagrams, help students analyze, categorize, compare or contrast, evaluate, investigate, list, and recall information. They can be used to assess students' understanding of concepts.

Hierarchical organizers, such as Topic/Subtopic Webs, help students break down the information into its component concepts. They place the main information at the top and the subtopics or details underneath.

Cyclical organizers, such as Circle Diagrams, show how actions or concepts are interrelated. They are especially useful for displaying natural cycles.

Sequential organizers, for example, Cause and Effect Charts, Problem-Solution Charts, etc., show sequential relationships of concepts or actions.

A Google search will return a number of websites with downloadable templates for a variety of graphic organizers. Examples of these websites are:
http://www.carla.umn.edu/cobaltt/modules/strategies/gorganizers/index.html

http://www.eduplace.com/graphicorganizer
http://www.teachervision.fen.com/graphic-organizers/printable/6293.html
http://www.sdcoe.K12.ca.us/score/actbank/sorganiz.htm
http://edhelper.com/teachers/graphic-organizers.htm.
The templates from these sites can be adapted and used in a variety of ways.

Using graphic organizers in class

To use graphic organizers in class, it's important to identify what you want the students to do, and what skills you expect them to put into practice. Think about both the language skills and the critical thinking skills you want to emphasize.

The website *Special Connections* references Baxendell in saying:
"Baxendell (2003) has established the following three principles in order to guide the effective use of graphic organizers in the classroom, which are referred to as the "three Cs".

Consistent
    Create a standard set of graphic organizers
    Establish a routine for implementing them in a classroom

Coherent
    Provide clear labels for the relationship between concepts in graphic organizers
    Limit the number of ideas covered
    Minimize distractions

Creative
    Use during all stages of lesson design
    Incorporate during homework and test review
    Add illustrations
    Implement with cooperative groups and pairs"
(from http://www.specialconnections.ku.edu)

In the case of the language class, here are some specific activities that can be done with graphic organizers·:

As a pre-reading or pre-listening activity, have the students use a **semantic map** to brainstorm vocabulary that they might find in the reading or listening.
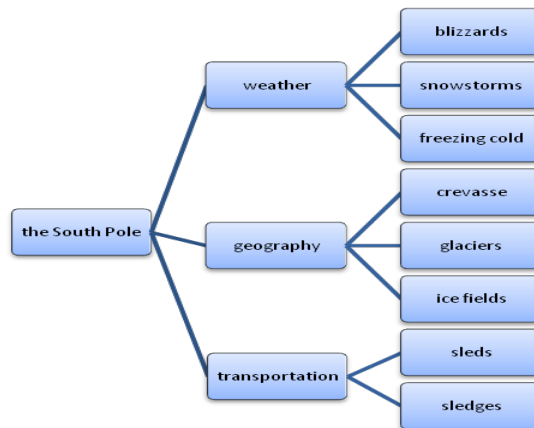
Figure 1: Semantic map

Use a **Prediction Tree** to predict what will happen in the listening or reading.

Figure 2. Prediction tree

After reading or listening, use a **5Ws** chart to sequence and summarize the information and then check comprehension.

· Figure 1 was produced using Word 2007; Figures 2 – 7 were produced using templates from http://www.carla.umn.edu/cobaltt/modules/strategies/gorganizers/index.html. These were used by permission from the copyright holder.

WHO?	WHAT?	WHEN?	WHERE?	WHY?
Philip and his family	had an accident	on Saturday	in the mountains	because there was a bad storm

Figure 3. 5Ws chart

As preparation for an oral presentation, have students complete a **concept chart** about their topic, then use the information to give their presentation.

Made (used) for?	lunch or dinner
parts of?	layers pasta/ meat sauce/ cheese
Gear / equipment?	skillet/ dish / oven
Types of?	meat/ vegetarian
Made of?	pasta/ meat/ tomato sauce/ cheese
Kind of?	Italian dish

Figure 4. Concept chart

Students listen to or read a text and place a series of events on a **time line.** Using that time line, they compare and understand the uses of different past tenses.

Event/character: Jeffrey's trip to Hong Kong	
Hour:	Events:
9:35	took cab
9:50	missed passport
9:52	called assistant
10:20	got to airport
10:45	assistant arrived at airport
11:30	boarded plane

Figure 5. Time line

Student pairs work together on an information gap activity. They place the information they share on a **Compare/Contrast** chart or a **Venn diagram** to visualize the similarities and differences.

Directions to Students: The race to the South Pole: Amundsen and Scott

Roald Amundsen | Both: | Robert F. Scott

- Norwegian
- planned carefully
- 4 men
- 52 dogs
- 4 sledges
- returned successfully

- European explorers
- experienced
- died exploring

- British
- didn't plan carefully
- 7 men
- used ponies
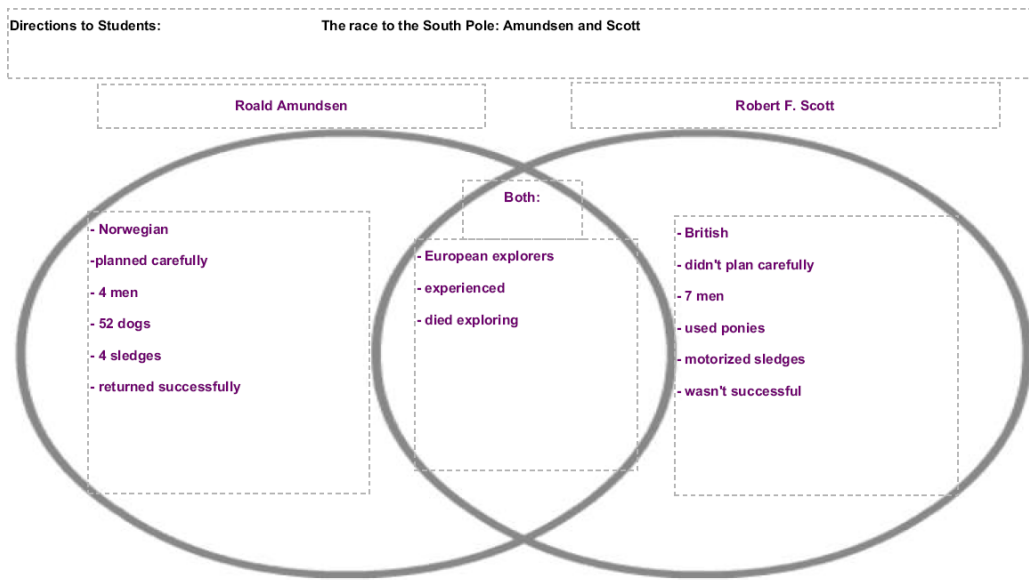- motorized sledges
- wasn't successful

Figure 6. Venn diagram

Student pairs work together on a problem-solving activity (for example, what can we do to control pollution?). They use a **fishbone diagram** to understand the cause- effect relations of the different factors involved in pollution, and from there, begin to look for solutions.
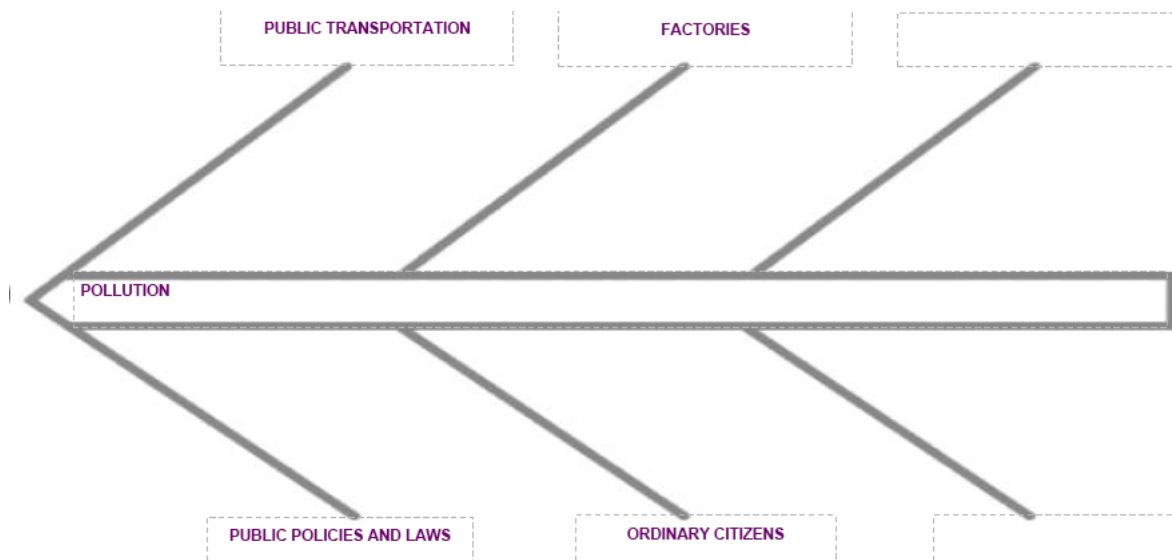
PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION   FACTORIES

POLLUTION

PUBLIC POLICIES AND LAWS   ORDINARY CITIZENS

Figure 7. Fishbone diagram

Conclusion

Using graphic or visual organizers in class aids student comprehension and retention, enhances collaborative learning, increases students' engagement and promotes higher order thinking skills and meaningful learning. They can be used at elementary, secondary, and tertiary levels and in different classes. They are equally effective for teaching vocabulary, for prediction, for checking comprehension, for preparing oral or written activities, or for assessing comprehension. The graphic organizer is a flexible tool that has many applications in the classroom, and as such, is worth including in the language class.

Acknowledgements:

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ELT in Mexican Higher Education should be Mainly ESP, not EGP

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Introduction

Virtually all Mexican institutions of higher education (IHEs) provide English courses for their students nowadays. These are overwhelmingly courses in English for General Purposes (EGP), not English for Specific Purposes (ESP). More ESP is offered in the top private IHEs, but English is not generally a great problem there, anyway: most of their students enter with a fair command of the language, and their English is sometimes good enough for major subject courses to be taught in English. My concern here is not with these top IHEs, but with the others – public IHEs and less privileged private ones – where, in fact, the vast majority of students in higher education are to be found.

In those IHEs most students enter with beginner or low elementary English, and this is a notable problem and academic disadvantage. This very low level of English, even after 6 years of English classes at school, has been confirmed by research reported in González et al (2004). With little, sometimes virtually no English on entry, should the students in these IHEs be provided mainly with EGP courses, as at present, or mainly with ESP courses? Here are typical arguments for the alternatives:

For EGP: It is asserted, or just unquestioningly assumed, that learners need a solid basis of EGP before moving on to ESP and the students entering most IHEs do not have that. Most English courses in IHEs should therefore be EGP in order to establish that basis.

For ESP: Unlike the English-learning population at large, the learners in IHEs are nicely grouped into professional or occupational areas – mechanical engineering, medicine, business administration, nursing, etc. The main reason for providing them with English courses in IHEs is to help them develop as fully as possible in those professional or occupational areas. Most English courses in IHEs should therefore be ESP from the start.

Apart from these typical arguments, there are, of course, others, and some quite substantial reasons, for either alternative. I shall be exploring them in this article on the way to my conclusions and proposals.

The current ELT scene in most Mexican IHEs

There are exceptions, but broadly speaking the current situation in Mexican IHEs is as follows. All state autonomous universities (universidades autónomas públicas) have long had EFL programmes for their students and most other IHEs (universities, technological institutes, polytechnics, etc.), public and private, have followed suit. The obvious rationale for establishing these programmes is to help IHE students acquire a good working command of English so that they have increased access to professional information--and especially the latest information, can handle work situations requiring English, can participate in international conferences and seminars, can (if they are among the lucky or worthy few) take postgraduate courses overseas, etc.

In most IHEs (excluding the top private ones, of course), the English programme starts at false beginner level (some begin with a "Starter" book, not even a false beginner "Book 1"), and the bulk of the students are in beginner, elementary and lower intermediate courses. The IHE programmes vary greatly. Many require all students to "complete" a given number of English courses, usually with no reliable evaluation of their level of proficiency at the end of the programme. Some IHEs provide courses, and often other English learning resources, exclusively for their undergraduates, while other IHEs mix their undergraduates with the general public. Some require their students to pass an English proficiency test to be able to graduate professionally, and they provide courses and resources to help them get there. But these tests vary greatly in validity and reliability, ranging from the IHE's own test (often in conditions of low reliability, e.g. applied and graded by course teachers), through a set minimum score on the Institutional TOEFL (no longer considered to have much validity), to a set minimum score on the full new TOEFL or a similar prestigious test (not strictly enforced by any IHE I know as a condition for graduating).

Unfortunately, there appears to be no solid study of the level of English of students graduating from Mexican public universities and other IHEs (to complement the González 2004 study of students entering IHEs, cited above). However, from over a decade of giving COTE, an open British BA, and other teacher training and programme consultancy in over a dozen state autonomous universities and one technological university (Universidad Tecnológica Cd. Netzahualcóyotl), I have the strong impression that very, very few graduating students would pass FCE (or get a middling score in new TOEFL) and many would fail PET (a low new TOEFL score). Also, relatively few teachers of majors (engineering, medicine, business administration, etc.) appear to have a good command of English, and in some IHEs, virtually none. That situation should have changed through generational shift given that there have been English programmes for students in most IHEs for one, two or more decades now, i.e. an increasing number of teachers of majors themselves had English courses as undergraduates in an IHE, but presumably not very effective courses.

A fair conclusion from all this is that these English programmes, overwhelmingly EGP, have generally not been very successful to date. I believe they have not met most IHE students' and graduates' needs either.

Why is EGP not generally appropriate for IHE students, even beginners?

Most IHE English courses use international EGP textbooks. Even though I have co-authored several, I question whether they – or rather the EGP courses based on them – are appropriate for most IHE students. This is why I think, generally, they are not: some of the "general purposes" included in five of the most widely used EGP textbooks are "shopping", "discussing life styles", "talking about TV viewing habits", "talking about clothes", "describing neighbourhoods", "describing people's appearance", "talking about health problems", "ordering a meal", "describing personality", "talking about movies and books", "interpreting body language", "talking about festivals and customs", "checking into and out of a hotel", "requesting hotel housekeeping services", "describing a car accident", "renting a car", "discussing driving rules", "describing your mood and emotions", "cheering someone up". Yes, "cheering someone up" – perhaps students will do their English teachers the favour once they have been taught how.

Most Mexican engineers (to take a professional area with many branches and many graduates of Mexican IHEs) will never travel abroad in their whole life, and if they do once or even several times, they can usually manage perfectly satisfactorily without English, especially with Spanish in the USA. The overwhelming majority will never ever (outside ELT classroom tasks or simulations) discuss life styles, talk about clothes, order a meal, describe someone's personality, or appearance, rent a car, interpret body language or try to cheer someone up in English. But many may often need to consult technical manuals, read up on recent advances in professional practices and technology, talk business with a foreign engineer or executive visiting their company, etc., in English.

I hear from teachers and have seen in numerous class observations in IHEs that many of the students are not very engaged by the EGP classes they are required to attend. Perhaps their minds are too occupied and preoccupied with their majors – medicine, engineering, accountancy, dentistry, electronics, etc. – which, along with whatever personal and social lives they find time for, must fill most of their thoughts, leaving little space for EGP. There is no guarantee that they would respond significantly better to ESP courses, but those courses would at least have more face validity. ESP courses might not lead to higher levels in the English of IHE graduates than those currently being achieved (though they should), but they will certainly offer them more of the English they will most likely need, and require them to spend much less time, effort and concern on English they are unlikely to need.

Why is most ELT in Mexican IHEs EGP and not ESP?

Here are four probable reasons why Mexican IHEs offer mostly EGP courses to their students, not ESP courses, in spite of the obvious appropriateness of these:

Most of the people who originally set up the English programmes in IHEs and the teachers who first taught them came from EGP backgrounds and ESP was outside the "box" they thought in.

Though many, perhaps most, course directors and teachers now have a BA (or above) in ELT or applied linguistics and know about needs analysis and ESP, they still tend to think ESP can only be done after a strong EGP base is established, and since most students in most IHE English programmes are in beginner to lower intermediate level groups, they are, supposedly, "not ready" for ESP.

Only EGP textbooks are readily available and accessibly priced (ESP books are usually expensive and seldom stocked by distributors), and producing good materials for all ESP areas in-house would be a massive, expensive and risky project for an IHE (large scale materials production is "what publishers do", but not what IHEs are set up to do or experienced in doing).

Most IHE English programmes are well established as EGP programmes and a shift to mainly ESP programmes would require radical restructuring of ELT, which would mean an enormous amount of work, and possibly a substantial investment.

Consider the last reason first. A shift to ESP would indeed require IHEs to carry out a major restructuring of their ELT, assuming it is currently totally or largely oriented towards EGP. But if most of their students really need ESP more than EGP (and certainly more than learning how to shop, describe people's appearance, describe car accidents and cheer people up in English) and are in general likely to respond to it better, surely IHEs are morally and professionally obligated to make that shift. If, on top of that, an IHE has a BA in ELT (and perhaps an MA), from which most of their new teachers come (the case in most state autonomous universities now), in which needs analysis, learner-centredness, ESP, etc., are dealt with, surely it is unprofessional, and even unethical, not to apply these in the IHE's own ELT programmes.

Reason 1 (the EGP orientation of people who first set up IHE English programmes) is history. Though the past can exert a powerful influence on the present, it should not stop appropriate change, and certainly not much needed change. Reason 2 (the belief that ESP requires a strong EGP base) is, I believe, a fallacy, rather like the old one about people needing a good base of grammar and vocabulary before they should try to develop conversation skills. And just consider when medical students, for example, should start trying to read in English – after they have completed several semesters of EGP courses (and learnt how to shop, describe car accidents, etc.), or in their first semester in the School of Medicine?

That leaves reason 3 (the non-availability of accessibly priced published ESP materials – and the all too ready availability of EGP materials). This is a powerful reason for doing EGP instead of ESP, and it was mentioned in an article 33 years ago, when ESP was just getting started in Mexico and elsewhere (and was still called "English for <u>special</u> purposes"):

> *This article points out the difficulties teachers have in selecting suitable materials for teaching English for special purposes. Universal textbooks, designed to suit all possible situations*, are not specific enough. The article proposes ways in which a broader spectrum of materials might be obtained: (1) by producing textbooks with optional components, or (2) by producing a number of specialized textbooks. In the meantime, however, universal textbooks prevail, especially in developing countries, and the teacher is therefore burdened with the extra task of adapting these textbooks to specific situations.*
>
> <div align="right">Payne (1975, p. 30)</div>

*Or, as has been said, "designed for no particular situation at all".

Today, 33 years later, EGP textbooks still prevail, and although specialized (ESP) textbooks have existed for some time, they are costly and not generally available in Mexico and the developing world. Also, some EGP textbooks do have specialized optional components now, though usually only for business, but their design as supplementary material generally means extra cost and extra time on top of the main EGP textbook.

All this adds up to a vicious circle, resistant to change. Neither most EFL course directors and teachers in IHEs nor most EFL publishers are eager to shift from EGP to ESP. But conscientious ELT professionals, knowing the IHE situation and having their students' needs at heart, should be.

Why should IHEs move from EGP towards ESP, even at beginner level?

The main points or arguments responding to this question have been made above, but it is appropriate to pull them together here before proceeding.

EGP courses for IHE students are not generally working well: many students are not engaged by them, and results are, with a few exceptions, not good.

The main goal of English courses for IHE students – to enable them to access professional information in English, handle work situations requiring English, etc. –

would clearly be pursued better through ESP than EGP. A more focused ESP orientation might also engage students not engaged much by the broad, often personally irrelevant language and aims of EGP (few graduates of the IHEs I am talking about will do much, if any, shopping, driving, eating out, socializing, etc., in the USA or elsewhere abroad).

The argument that a solid basis of EGP is needed for ESP is a fallacy; even complete beginners can – and outside classrooms, do – start by learning work related or personal interest related English, not the English of typical EGP textbooks. Also, many IHE students need English in their major from the word go and cannot wait for ESP.

It is worth adding that ESP has its roots in the movement towards functional, learner-centred teaching of the late 1970s and the 1980s, i.e. the movement towards "modern era" ELT, where, supposedly, we are now. In their first chapter, "The Origins of ESP", Hutchinson & Waters (1987) have three sections: "The demands of the Brave New World" (international English for specific professional and occupational needs, not just for general educational accomplishment), "A revolution in linguistics" (from general grammatical rules, etc., to communicative competence in specific uses of English), and "Focus on the learner" (which speaks for itself). ELT in Mexican IHEs generally purports to accept these "modern" perspectives, but somehow tends to ignore that they imply, or virtually demand, ESP in higher education.

How could IHEs move from almost entirely EGP to much more ESP?

At present, I see two viable ways to achieve a general, and successful, shift from EGP to ESP in IHEs, or rather, I see two agents/implementers of change: a group of progressive IHEs, or publishers that see an opportunity (the two might even work together). What is needed for widespread change to occur is the production of pedagogically organized, readily available and affordable sets of ESP materials, starting preferably at false beginner level, the level of most students entering IHEs.

Although it would be a massive, expensive and risky project for a single IHE to try to produce coherent sets of ESP materials for all the areas that need them, it might be possible, with strong central coordination, for a group of IHEs to do so. In fact, something on those lines has been attempted by The British Council and several state autonomous universities in Mexico – but only with free-standing "learning object" materials for learners with a fair level in English, not the pedagogically organized sets of materials (syllabus-based materials) starting at beginner level that I am proposing here. Brazilian universities have also collaborated on a fairly large scale ESP project (Celani et al 2005, Rajagopalan 2006). However, one major problem with this IHE group option is "politics" (need I say more?). Another is what might be called "hyper-academicism" – a reluctance to use theory for a framework

and general guidance only and proceed with materials production pragmatically, as publishers usually do (pragmatism is a dirty word in some academic-scientific circles, even though it has always been a key component of human intelligence). I sense that "hyper-academicism" has been a problem in the Brazilian project since I perceive from my visits to Brazilian IHEs that the situation is generally no better than in Mexico.

If IHEs do not, or cannot, develop a major ESP materials project together, perhaps one or more publishers can, and will, do it for them. However, they would have to take a major decision about their publishing strategy, departing from the "universal textbooks" that have "prevailed" so far, to offer a new kind of product, accessible ESP, for the IHE market. They would first have to feel absolutely sure that there was a large market for ESP materials in IHEs. Given that the young adult market, including IHEs, is flooded with EGP textbooks and some of them are not profitable for the publisher, it is not impossible that one or more publishers will see the opportunity and take the initiative some time soon. They would then have to overcome the problem of the costly and challenging segmentation of the potential ESP market – production and distribution of many different ESP textbooks or digitalized sets of materials for small markets (instead of a single EGP textbook for a large market).

Part of the solution to the segmentation and cost problems, for either a publisher or a group of IHEs, could be to shift largely from print to digital storage and delivery. The time is ripe, and, of course, both publishers and IHEs are already using digital technology widely (IHEs in language self-access centres), but not, to my knowledge, for such a large, mass-consumption, low-cost materials project as I am suggesting. On the other hand, it is probable that many IHEs will want printed textbooks for classroom use for the foreseeable future, so it might not be realistic to stop offering at least the option of printed books. Here is an idea for combining digital and print formats, and, in fact, also combining EGP and ESP.

There could be slim, printed EGP textbooks for the different levels, which would serve as common core classroom material for all students. Then there could be ESP materials for the different groups of students according to their areas of study, stored digitally and delivered electronically (which could be printed out for classroom use if required). The common core EGP textbook could be about half the size of typical international EGP textbooks and, therefore, much less time-consuming and cheaper than they are. It would work, in EGP contexts of likely interest and potential usefulness for IHE students, on the basic grammar and vocabulary that virtually all uses of English share. Then, departing from and consolidating the language and functions in that "syllabus", the ESP material would extend work to the specific language, discourse and skills needs of the different groups of IHE students – English for medicine, for engineering, for business, for tourism, etc. (see Appendix). The common core EGP textbook would give the publisher (or group of universities) a profitable printed product to sell to everyone,

compensating for the fragmented market for the ESP materials (though these could also be economically viable, especially if delivered largely electronically). The core EGP textbook and the ESP materials together would require a similar investment of learner time and money to that currently required by a typical EGP textbook alone. However – the big gain – the combination would so obviously be much more appropriate for IHE learners.

These are just a few ideas, the best I can come up with for now, 33 years after Payne's suggestion of either optional ESP components for "universal textbooks" or complete ESP textbooks. Other heads and confabulations of heads in IHEs and/or publishers can surely come up with more, perhaps better ideas.

Conclusion

I hope I have largely convinced you, if you were not convinced already, that most IHEs in Mexico (and elsewhere in the developing world) should be providing their students with much less EGP and much more ESP. Also, that this shift from EGP towards more ESP can, and should, be started from beginner level, where most students entering Mexican IHEs are in English. However, I recognize that there are substantial obstacles, human and practical, to overcome for this shift from EGP to ESP to be achieved.

It would, in fact, be appropriate that ELT for IHE students should be entirely ESP, but that would involve great complexity and cost – major obstacles to the proposed shift. And, since all ESP branches share common grammar, lexis and discourse features, complexity and cost could be reduced by teaching all students "common core EGP" with the same printed materials and, if necessary or convenient, in classes with students from different majors mixed together. Complexity and cost could also be reduced by storing ESP materials digitally and delivering them electronically. Students could access these materials through IHE computer/self-access centres or through their own PCs. If required, the ESP materials could be printed out and worked on in classrooms.

The human obstacles to this proposal to shift ELT for students in IHEs from EGP towards ESP may be greater than the technical and practical ones. For a group of IHEs to get together in order to produce the necessary materials, there needs first to be a group of shakers and movers within several IHEs with the understanding and the will to push the project. They will undoubtedly face "political" resistance. If they get past that, they will need to watch out for "hyper-academicism" as the project goes forward – too much obsession with theory and detail, and the project will not go forward, but will lose momentum and may even become the subject of innumerable studies and research papers instead of being an efficient factory producing the large amount of good ELT material required to enable a widespread shift from EGP to ESP.

For publishers to produce the necessary materials, they need to perceive a good market for ESP materials in IHEs – at least a few EFL course directors and teachers already attempting ESP and many more who are eager, or at least inclined, to stop drifting with the inertia of EGP and start thinking proactively and innovatively about the students' obvious needs in IHEs – needs that have always been staring us in the face. If good ELT publishers see that, they will be professionally as well as commercially interested. They – or the first of them to decide to go for it – will then need to solve the problems of market segmentation, complexity, cost, etc., developing ideas like those suggested above.

The aim of this article has been to instigate a widespread shift from EGP to ESP in IHEs, in Mexico, and then perhaps, around the developing world. I know that is very wishful thinking, some might even say totally wild thinking. In fact, I will be more than satisfied if this article contributes a little towards a marked increase in ESP in many Mexican IHEs. I pray at least that someone will not come across this article in 33 years time, as I came across Richard Payne's 1975 article this year, and say, "Well, sad to say, nothing much has changed in ELT in Mexican institutions of higher education".

Of course, the best possible change for Mexico as a whole would be if virtually all students entering IHEs brought with them, from school, at least a lower intermediate command of English (and IHEs expected and even demanded that). If that were to happen, and also if virtually all teachers of majors in Mexican IHEs had at least an upper intermediate command of English (because IHEs demanded that), ELT in IHEs would no longer be such a big problem. The boom in beginner-elementary ELT in Mexican IHEs would be over. Good riddance to it! A much healthier and happier boom in intermediate-advanced ELT, perhaps in many schools as well as in almost all IHEs, might be well under way. Mere wishful thinking? Perhaps, but let's hope not.

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Appendix: An example

The following material is for students of medicine, nursing and other health areas who are false beginners in English. From it, you should be able to visualize the EGP core material that these students would have worked with in class before following up with this ESP material, either on a computer or also in class with printouts. The same EGP core material would be used by students of engineering, business, electronics, etc., etc., before they turn to their own ESP material, which you should also be able to visualize.

1 Meeting hospital staff

a Listen and read. [ILLUSTRATION OF PEOPLE IN HOSPITAL]

Hobbs: Nurse, meet our new resident, Sandra Torres.
Brenda: Hi, I'm Brenda Smith. Nice to meet you.
Sandra: Nice to meet you too, Brenda.
Hobbs: Ah, it's 12:30. That's my patient over there. Can you show Sandra around, Brenda?
Brenda: Sure, doctor. Well, Sandra, first meet Alicia, our receptionist.
Alicia: Hi! Where are you from, Sandra?
Sandra: Mexico. But this is my second year in the USA.
Alicia: OK. Well, welcome to Rome County Hospital.
Sandra: Thanks. It's nice to be here.
Brenda: Right, let's look around. This way.
Sandra: Doctor Hobbs is very nice.
Brenda: Yes, he is. And he's a brilliant surgeon.

b Select the correct completions, a, b or c.
1 A resident is   a) a nurse   b) a junior doctor   c) a patient in hospital.
2 Brenda is   a) a doctor   b) a resident   c) a nurse.
3 Sandra and Hobbs are   a) patients   b) doctors   c) surgeons.
4 Sandra is   a) Mexican   b) from the USA   c) in Mexico.
5 The hospital is in   a) the USA   b) Mexico   c) Italy.

2 People in hospitals

a Match the words and the pictures.

[ILLUSTRATIONS: A. NURSE B. PATIENT C. SURGEON D. RECEPTIONIST E. ANESTHETIST]

1 receptionist _D_   2 nurse __   3 anesthetist __   4 patient __   5 surgeon __

b These are the positions of doctors in US hospitals. What are they in your country and language?

<div align="center">Attending Physician</div>

Senior Resident ↗

Resident ↗

Intern ↗

c Listen to words from a and b. Number the order of the words. Practice the pronunciation.

__ anesthetist   _1_ attending physician   __ intern   __ nurse   __ patient   __ senior resident   __ surgeon

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3 Places in hospitals

[ILLUSTRATION OF HALLWAYS IN HOSPITAL WITH SIGNPOSTS]

a Look at the picture. Read the signs (cafeteria, pharmacy, etc.).

b Write words from the signs under the pictures.

[ILLUSTRATIONS/ICONS OF: 1. PRIVATE ROOM 2. HOSPITAL PHARMACY 3. CHILDREN'S WARD 4. OPERATING THEATER   5. MATERNITY WARD   6. DOCTOR'S OFFICE   7. MEDICAL LABORATORY]

1 _*private room*__   2 _____   3 _____   4 _____

5 _____   6 _____   7 _____   8 _____

c Listen to the words and practice the pronunciation.

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4 Looking around a hospital

a Listen and read.

Brenda: OK, Sandra? Just look at the signs. The cafeteria is that way, left, and...

Man: Excuse me. Where's the pharmacy?

Brenda: It's that way, to the left.

Man: OK. And where are the private rooms?

Brenda: They're the other way, down this hall to the right.

[ILLUSTRATION – SAME AS MAIN LLUSTRATION ABOVE BUT WITH THE PEOPLE IN THE CONVERSATION]

Sandra: Look, there are signs on the wall.

Man: Oh, yes! Sorry! My wife…

Brenda: No problem. You're welcome.

Man: Thank you, thank you.

Brenda: Well, let's start with the children's ward. There are 20 beds, and it's divided into…

b Select the correct completions, a, b or c.
1 The cafeteria is a) to the right   b) in a ward   c) to the left
2 The man is a) a doctor   b) a visitor   c) a patient
3 He is in a) the hall   b) the pharmacy   c) a private room
4 His wife is in a) a ward   b) the pharmacy   c) a private room
5 The children's ward is a) a private room   b) for twenty patients   c) to the left

5 Conversations in hospitals
a Complete the conversations with phrases from the box.
Conversation 1
A: Hi, Bob. 1__H__, Fred Hill. Fred, this is Bob Clark, our top anesthetist.
B: Nice to meet you, Fred. 2_____ around here?
C: No, I'm not. 3_____ Boston.
B: Well, 4_____, and to Pacific Shore Hospital.
C: Thanks.

[BOX:
A this way   B Excuse me
C You're welcome   D I'm from
E welcome to California F It's down the hall
G where's the laboratory H Meet our new intern
I Are you from   J past the maternity ward]

Conversation 2
A: 5____. Is the maternity ward 6_____?

ward]

B: Yes, it is. 7_____.

A: Thank you. And 8_____?

B: It's down this hall too, 9_____.

A: Thanks a lot.

B: 10_____.

b Listen and check.

6 The cardiovascular system

a Look at the 3 illustrations and read the 3 texts. Match the texts and the illustrations.

[ILLUSTRATIONS: A. SCHEMATIC DIAGRAM OF BLOOD CIRCULATION   B. NURSE TAKING PATIENT'S BLOOD PRESSURE   C. CROSS-SECTION OF HUMAN HEART
UNDER EACH, "Text number __" FOR STUDENTS TO WRITE CORRESPONDING NUMBER OF THE TEXT]

1. The mammalian heart, including the human heart, is not a single pump; it is two pumps. In each, there are two chambers, a total of four chambers in the heart.
2. The cardiovascular, or circulatory, system, consists of the heart, the lungs and the blood vessels. There are three distinct components in this system: the pulmonary circulatory system between the heart and the lungs, coronary circulation within the heart, and systemic circulation around the body, from and to the heart.
3. Blood pressure is the pressure of blood against the walls of blood vessels, normally the large arteries, i.e. systemic arterial blood pressure. Systolic pressure is the maximum pressure in the arteries in the cardiac cycle, and diastolic pressure is the minimum pressure in the cycle (the resting phase).

Note: i.e. = that is (from Latin "id est")

b Read texts A, B and C. Select 1, 2 or 3 in "This continues text 1 – 2 – 3".
A. Normal values for an adult human are approximately 120 mmHg (millimeters of mercury) systolic and 80 mmHg diastolic pressure, but there are large variations from person to person. There is also variation in an individual, from heartbeat to heartbeat and in the course of a day (the circadian rhythm).
   This continues text 1 – 2 – 3
B. The right auricle receives impure blood from the body, and the right ventricle pumps it to the lungs. The left auricle receives purified, oxygenated blood from the lungs, and the left ventricle pumps it around the body.
   This continues text 1 – 2 – 3
C. The function of the systemic circulatory system is to transport nutrients, e.g. glucose, and oxygen to every part of the body, and to transport carbon dioxide and waste away from the body.
   This continues text 1 – 2 – 3

Note: e.g. = for example (from Latin "exempli gratia")

_____

7 The cardiovascular system

a Complete this section of a high school class on the cardiovascular system. Use words from the box.

[BOX:
A body   B nutrients   C blood   D left   E minimum   F arteries   G lungs   I waste   J pressure   K right
L maximum   M pump]

The cardiovascular system is the heart, the 1__G__ and the blood vessels. This system transports 2_____ and oxygen to the body, and transports carbon dioxide and 3_____ from the body.
   The heart is the 4_____ for this circulatory system. In fact, it is two pumps. The 5_____ ventricle pumps impure 6_____ to the lungs. The 7_____ ventricle pumps purified, oxygenated blood to the 8_____.
   The pumping heart creates blood 9_____ in the system. This is the pressure of blood against the walls of the large 10_____. Normal blood pressure for an adult is approximately 120 mmHg for systolic pressure (11_____ pressure in the cardiac cycle) and 80 mmHg for diastolic pressure (12_____ pressure in the cycle). Is your blood pressure OK?

b Listen to the class. Check your completed text.

[ILLUSTRATION: YOUNG AMERICAN BIOLOGY TEACHER GIVING A CLASS TO A HIGH SCHOOL GROUP, USING DIAGRAMS LIKE THOSE IN EX. 6 ABOVE]